

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **SOUTHALL SCHOOL**

Telford

LEA area: Telford and Wrekin

Unique reference number: 123631

Headteacher: Alistair J M Bates

Lead inspector: Judith Charlesworth

Dates of inspection: 14<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> March 2005

Inspection number: 268634

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Special  
School category: Community  
Age range of pupils: 4 – 16  
Gender of pupils: Mixed  
Number on roll: 137

School address: Off Rowan Avenue  
Dawley  
Telford  
Shropshire  
Postcode: TF4 3PX

Telephone number: 01952 592 485  
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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body  
Name of chair of Mrs S C Harris  
governors:

Date of previous March 1999  
inspection:

## CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Southall is a larger than average school for pupils aged four to sixteen with moderate learning difficulties, and their attainment on entry to the school is below or well below that expected for their age. It is due to be re-organised to secondary-age only in September 2006 in a Local Education Authority initiative to re-phase the two current all-age special schools for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. Consequently, there are no children under five years old, and fewer five to seven year olds than in the past. There are currently 137 pupils on roll. There is a greater percentage of pupils with complex needs than average for this type of school. In particular, there are twice the usual number of pupils (12%) with autistic spectrum condition (ASD); more than twice the usual number with social and emotional behavioural difficulties (15%); 12% with communication difficulties and around 8% with severe learning difficulties. Almost no pupils now have moderate learning difficulties alone, which follows the national trend. The numbers of pupils from minority ethnic groups and with English as an additional language are low, but a high number of pupils (37%) is entitled to free school meals. Five pupils are in public care. Until 2004, the school was part of an Education Action Zone which brought it additional technology equipment and community links. A small number of staff are involved in an outreach service, funded and organised by the Local Education Authority, which supports pupils in their mainstream schools.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21501	Judith Charlesworth	Lead inspector	Science; art and design; music; English as an additional language
19342	Tom Heavey	Lay inspector	
2840	Christine Gilder	Team inspector	English; design and technology; modern foreign language; special educational needs
23390	Mel Blackband	Team inspector	Mathematics; personal, social and health education; citizenship; work related learning; physical education
32963	Joan Lock	Team Inspector	Information and communication technology; religious education; geography; history

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

Southall's effectiveness is **satisfactory** and it provides **satisfactory value for money**. School effectiveness has recently been affected by its strenuous efforts towards implementing the Local Education Authority's (LEA) plans for re-designation as a secondary school, and the associated uncertainties that are out of the school's control. Classroom teaching is good but its overall effectiveness is limited by other factors. Learning, the curriculum, leadership and management all have strengths but are satisfactory, taken overall. Pupils' personal development is very good and their educational achievement is satisfactory.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils flourish within the strong, caring and nurturing ethos; provision for their personal development is very good;
- Pupils are enthusiastic about school, and generally have very positive, respectful attitudes, warm relationships and good behaviour;
- The skill and dedication of the teachers and teaching assistants support learning well;
- The new special provision for pupils with additional educational needs effectively supports their achievement;
- The managers are showing exceptional drive, work and enthusiasm for creating a new, innovative secondary school;
- In recent times, the current curriculum has suffered from lack of development and subject leadership, and the introduction of a new timetable in subjects such as food technology and art without an evaluation of its effect;
- The assessment of pupils' developing skills to inform planning is unsatisfactory.

School improvement since the last inspection has been variable due to a number of factors including new staff and its redesignation, but is satisfactory overall. Some aspects have improved well, such as provision and pupils' achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) and design and technology. Some aspects have improved and then declined again, such as subject monitoring by curriculum co-ordinators, and the provision of a daily act of collective worship. Some aspects have not improved enough, such as specialist facilities for science. Alongside this, however, have been a number of improvements which have strengthened the provision considerably, and are the "advance party" of the systems and structures for the new school. Examples are: the introduction of a renewed emphasis on behaviour management and pupils' personal, social and emotional development; an effective, nationally recognised system for assessing and tracking pupils' progress over time English, mathematics and science; and the effective system of support for pupils with additional special educational needs.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

Pupils' achievement is **satisfactory** overall. It is good in class 1, for pupils in Years 1 and 2; in class 3, which is for complex needs, including several autistic (ASD) pupils, in Years 4 and 5, and in the classes for years 10 and 11. Achievement is satisfactory in other year groups. Throughout the school, pupils achieve well in English and very well in speaking and listening. They achieve very well in personal and social education in classes 1 and 2, and in those classes for pupils in Years 10 and 11, and well in all other age groups. This success is due to the emphasis on these aspects throughout the curriculum. Most pupils with additional educational needs achieve well due to careful identification and provision of the support they require. However, in other subjects and age groups, pupils' achievement is held back somewhat by inconsistencies in the application of school systems, such as curriculum planning, implementation and development; unsatisfactory assessment for learning and in most subjects, inadequate leadership and management. Pupils' personal development is **very good** overall and they show **very good** attitudes to their work. Pupils' attendance, behaviour, moral and social development are **good**, and their spiritual and cultural development are **satisfactory**.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The quality of education provided is **satisfactory**. Teaching in class is **good**, particularly for the youngest and oldest pupils, and teachers and teaching assistants are skilled and competent. However, the effectiveness of this teaching is limited by weaknesses in other aspects of the school's work. Consequently, teaching and learning, overall, are **satisfactory**. In particular, both the curriculum and assessment of pupils' skills are **unsatisfactory**. The curriculum is not being fully implemented in all subjects, for example there is no careers education for pupils aged 11 - 14, and timetabling changes are affecting the implementation of others such as food technology. Assessment is improving, but day-to-day assessment is not yet consistent and the new system has not yet yielded information that can be used to underpin planning. Resources are satisfactory, but the accommodation is unsatisfactory and not suited to secondary-age pupils. The school hall is too small for physical education or use as a dining room, and there are, as yet, no specialist science facilities. The attention given to pupils' care, health, safety and welfare is **good**. The provision of support and guidance for pupils is **satisfactory**, with strengths in monitoring and promoting pupils' personal development. The school does not yet consult pupils formally. Links with parents are **very good**, and those with the community and other schools and colleges are **good**.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership of the new headteacher is good. He has a very good, clear vision for the new school and is successfully leading work to develop the new systems and structures required. However, he and the senior managers have not kept a close enough eye on current school provision, aspects of which are becoming unstable. The leadership of other key staff is good and they have been important in implementing new systems, developing what was already in place and supporting other members of staff. Curriculum leadership and subject management are, however, unsatisfactory overall. Governance is satisfactory, but governors' time has largely been taken up with the re-designation; recently, therefore, they have not held the school sufficiently to account nor ensured that all statutory requirements are fully met.

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

Parents are largely very pleased with the school, although worried about the effect of the re-designation on their children. Almost all pupils say they enjoy school. Some older pupils are worried about behaviour, and a few of the oldest say that bullying is not dealt with quickly enough.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The most important things the school should do to improve, already in the school improvement plan, are:

- Reinstate active subject leadership so that each subject has someone to keep an overview of teaching, learning and its development;
- Review curriculum arrangements to ensure that any gaps that have appeared in subject teaching or as a result of the re-organisation of the timetable are considered and dealt with;
- Develop a consistent approach to lesson planning, and day to day assessment and its use to support planning for learning;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that all statutory requirements for the curriculum are met;
- Provide a daily act of collective worship.



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

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

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

Pupils' achievement is **satisfactory**.

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

- Pupils throughout the school achieve very well in speaking and listening;
- Pupils in Years 1, 2, 10 and 11; those in class 3 (pupils with complex needs including ASD in Years 4 and 5) and most of those with additional educational needs achieve well;
- The focus on preparations for the re-designation of the school has meant that standards in a small number of subjects are slowly slipping, and in danger of doing so in others.

#### **Commentary**

1. The last inspection identified that pupils made very good progress in speaking and listening, and this is still the case. Support for the development of speaking and listening is threaded throughout the school day, and is integral in the ethos of care and respect. Staff are very good role models. Pupils are taught that it is important to listen to each other carefully, to think before they answer and to respect what others say. Their confidence builds and they feel free to express themselves. An increasing number of pupils admitted to the school have communication difficulties, often associated with ASD. The school is becoming very adept at drawing out and developing these pupils' speaking and listening skills and as a result, it is often difficult to identify them in class. Throughout the school, staff reinforce the importance of developing a wide subject vocabulary. They provide good practical activities to help the development of speaking and listening according to pupils' age and needs. By the time the pupils reach Years 10 and 11, they hold mature, lively conversations, expressing their views about a wide range of matters to both adults and their friends.

2. The youngest pupils, and those in class 3, achieve well because of very good teaching and the support from teaching assistants. Careful records are kept, which track pupils' developing skills, and lessons are very well planned to make sure that pupils enjoy their work and that each individual is properly challenged. Pupils' personal development and communication skills are at the heart of all activities, and consequently they achieve particularly well in these areas. Similarly, the oldest pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve well because of the ethos for learning in these classes. Pupils are encouraged to be as independent and adult as possible, but are supported to do so by very skilled and competent staff. The young people respond very well to this approach and are remarkably mature, thoughtful and knowledgeable, considering their age and difficulties. The accredited courses give a good, firm central spine to teaching and learning and enable pupils to achieve well.

3. Most pupils with additional educational needs achieve well because of the expert help they receive. In part, this is the result of the new system of support, which provides identified individuals with targeted help for a block of time. Although only recently introduced, this is having a very good effect on these pupils' achievement. In addition, pupils' achievement is often ensured by good lesson planning which identifies what individuals should learn, and how this should be supported. Good quality resources and the skills of teaching assistants make a good contribution here. However, inconsistency in lesson planning means that not all pupils with additional needs receive the right support

which adversely affects their achievement. One small group of pupils affected by staffing changes in the school are those who would benefit from signs or symbols to help with their communication. Whilst a few teachers are adept at supporting these pupils, this is not the case throughout the school. Since there is a local shortage of speech and language therapists, and the school's expert in this field has left the school, these pupils do not always get the help they need, which affects their progress.

4. The school developed steadily in the first few years following the last inspection. Curriculum planning and organisation were significantly improved; considerable work and staff time was put into widening the range of accreditation offered, and both have had positive effects on standards. However, recently, development has been slowed down by preparations for the school's re-designation, which in turn has slowed pupils' achievement somewhat. Nevertheless, preparation for the future has also had some benefits. For example, areas with a recently renewed emphasis, such as on the provision for pupils' personal development, assessment, and support for pupils with additional educational needs show improvements with a positive impact on pupils' achievement. The interim timetable has resulted in benefits as well as difficulties. For instance, changes to the timetable for food technology means that more students have access to the subject, which makes a positive contribution to their personal development; on the other hand, it also means that pupils in Years 7 to 9 have less art and design than previously, and that this subject is no longer taught as planned, which has a negative effect on achievement. Whilst staff and pupils find the new length of lessons in English and mathematics (a full morning for each) difficult to manage at times, nevertheless five pupils have achieved a higher level of accreditation in these subjects than that they were previously predicted to do.

5. Work related learning and a modern foreign language are not formally taught in Years 7 to 9, as they should be, which limits pupils' overall achievement in these subjects. A promising new assessment system has not yet yielded enough data to be used for setting targets for improvement in pupils' performance in English, mathematics and science, although it will shortly do so. As a result of all these factors, pupils' overall achievement has been affected. Nevertheless, in all subjects pupils continue to achieve at least satisfactorily because of the good grounding they have had and the considerable skills of the staff.

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

Pupils have very good attitudes to school, and their behaviour is good. Other aspects of their personal development including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. Very good punctuality supports pupils' good attendance.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils develop very warm relationships with staff and are very happy to be at school;
- Very effective strategies have been put into place to improve pupils' behaviour and personal development;
- A small residual core of pupils does not respond readily to the school's efforts to manage them, and some pupils think that bullying is not always dealt with quickly;
- Provision is very good for pupils with additional educational needs.

### **Commentary**

6. This aspect of the school was judged to be a strength in the last inspection, and remains so. Relationships are characterised by warmth and mutual respect, which makes a great contribution to the school's strong caring ethos. Staff are very effective in promoting a climate of care and friendliness that gives pupils throughout the school a feeling of confidence and security. In consequence, pupils of all abilities show their delight in working on a task or answering questions without fear of failure.

7. The school makes very good provision for pupils who have difficulties other than, or in combination with moderate learning difficulties. The number of these pupils grows year on year – particularly those with ASD and emotional and behavioural difficulties. The consistency with which staff manage these youngsters creates a remarkably calm, purposeful learning environment in which pupils thrive.

8. Inspectors share the view of the overwhelming majority of parents that their children like coming to school – a view endorsed almost unanimously by pupils of all ages in their response to the pre - inspection questionnaire. They greet staff and friends cheerfully as they arrive at school, and apply themselves diligently to their tasks. Regardless of gender, race, ability or disability, pupils socialise happily outside the classroom – for example when playing in the playground, or attending a lunch club. Pupils eat their lunch in their classrooms, chatting sociably with friends and staff. The resultant happy atmosphere creates a sense of wellbeing that greatly supports pupils’ learning and personal development, and encourages their attendance, which compares favourably with similar schools.

**Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2002-3 (%)**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.0	School data	0.7
National data	8.2	National data	1.8

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

9. Pupils’ behaviour is generally good, and at times very good, especially when linked to very good teaching when they are highly motivated to learn and fully involved in their lessons. The new systems to acknowledge and praise good behaviour and attendance are very effective. There is, however, a small number of troubled pupils whose behaviour impacts badly on their peers, causing some disruption in lessons. Importantly, a significant minority responding to the pre-inspection questionnaire voiced their concerns about such behaviour. The oldest pupils also report that they think bullying is not always dealt with effectively – a view shared by some parents. The school is responding well to this and is well aware of the importance to effective learning of good behaviour and personal development. A number of measures have been put into place in the last year to improve both. Crucial to this strategy are the high expectations set by the school regarding acceptable behaviour and the safety of both pupils and staff. The rise in the number of exclusions at the start of the implementation of this strategy reflects those higher expectations, but exclusions are now decreasing as the small number of pupils concerned begin to understand the implications of their challenging behaviour. At the same time, the school’s managers have set the emotional and personal development of pupils high on their list of priorities, giving this provision equal importance to the academic curriculum. Currently, there are insufficient formal means of gathering pupils’ opinions and listening to their concerns. However, the new tutorial system helps to address pupils’ personal issues, and the School Council is to be reinstated in the near future, in a new form with elected members, following a previous attempt which did not work.

**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	131	37	1
Mixed – White and Asian	1		
Asian or Asian British – Indian	1		
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	3		
Chinese	1		

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

10. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are successfully promoted in taught lessons, tutorial time and through the ethos of the school. Pupils' social and moral development are good. Through discussion and a range of activities, pupils come to have a very good understanding of their own and others' feelings, the plight of those less fortunate than themselves and how they might support them. They have contributed to fundraising for various charities. The new citizenship curriculum has successfully introduced pupils to the benefits and structures of an organised, democratic society. The very effective way behaviour is managed includes sharing with pupils the ways in which they are expected to conduct themselves. This gives them a good understanding of right and wrong and the moral code underlying the way we live. Members of the public comment on the very good behaviour and social skills of the pupils of Southall School, particularly when they are on educational visits. Pupils' spiritual and cultural development are satisfactory. Assemblies help promote pupils' spiritual awareness, for example by creating a special atmosphere with candles and music, and the school sets up a large number of specific activities and workshops to support pupils' multicultural awareness, such as a visits from African or Indian dancers, and educational visits to France. However, these aspects of pupils' development are insufficiently threaded through the formal subjects of the curriculum.

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided is **satisfactory**.

### Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is good, and learning is satisfactory. Assessment is unsatisfactory.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- The great majority of teachers are very skilled;
- Teaching assistants provide very good support for both teachers and pupils;
- Learning is adversely affected by the lack of consistency in planning and assessment across the school;
- Assessment has not improved enough since the last inspection.

### Commentary

#### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 43 lessons*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (4%)	11 (25%)	21 (48%)	7 (16%)	2 (4%)	0	0

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

11. Southall has good teachers. They are hard working, skilled and committed to their pupils and the school. Since the last inspection, they have devised and implemented many developments to improve teaching and learning, including maintaining and developing their own professional skills, for example in the use of ICT. However, external factors have limited teachers' effectiveness. These factors include changes to the timetable and curriculum; the lack of subject management; and the lack of a consistent approach to lesson planning. Consequently, learning has been satisfactory in recent times.

Characteristics of the most effective teachers are:

- A detailed knowledge of each pupil so that work can be pitched to challenge them at an appropriate level and meet their individual needs;
- A lively, interesting and age-appropriate approach which engages pupils and motivates them to concentrate and learn – they want to please;
- A clear focus on pupils' communication skills and personal development, whatever the lesson;
- Very good behaviour management skills which keep the atmosphere calm and trouble-free most of the time;
- Very good subject knowledge which means that they can draw out and extend pupils' knowledge and understanding;
- High quality lesson planning which identifies the purpose of the lesson, what each pupil should learn, how support should be deployed and afterwards, how well each pupil has done;
- Support staff are skilled, well-briefed and deployed well; this helps pupils learn effectively.

12. Southall also has good teaching assistants. They, too, know each pupil very well. They are very skilled at working with them, individually or in small groups, to help them understand, learn and keep focused on their tasks. Teaching assistants work seamlessly with the class teacher, using their initiative discreetly and appropriately. Many instances of this very good work were observed; one example was in a science lesson for eight and nine year olds, many of whom have ASD. Pupils were divided into groups of three or four, one per adult, to complete an exercise on materials and their properties. A teaching assistant with one group looked at each pupil's chosen illustration with them, drawing out why that material would not "work" – for example a glass hose-pipe or a rubber bicycle. She then supported each pupil to think of the materials that would work, and then to a completely different degree for each child, helped them to formulate words or sentences to write their findings down. These concepts were very difficult for the pupils, but the session was so successful that they did not want it to end when the time came for the class to get back together again.

13. There is no doubt that class teachers know each of their pupils very well. The main weakness identified at the last inspection was teachers' burdensome and individual approaches to making records of pupils' work and progress. Since then, several different systems have been used, and teachers have diligently completed each one as required. However, the systems changed so that the data produced year on year could not be compared, and the position identified at the last inspection did not improve sufficiently. The new headteacher recognised this very quickly and introduced a (final!) new, commercially produced approach to recording progress for 2003-2004. This provides detailed records that show very small steps of progress in English, mathematics and science. At the end of this academic year, the system will produce its second set of data so that progress can be readily determined, pupils' achievement judged and steps to improve both implemented. The new system of subject leadership is based on implementing improvements indicated by how well pupils are learning across the curriculum. A new, very helpful system for the assessment of pupils' personal development has also been introduced. This provides detailed information which contributes to setting targets for improvement, and allows pupils' progress to be tracked systematically over time.

14. There are inconsistencies in everyday assessment for learning. Not all teachers ensure that each pupil is clear about what they need to do next to succeed, and because

there is no common format for planning lessons, not all teachers show this on their planning either. In the most effective lessons, teachers present the opening session with a clear statement about what the whole group is going to learn, followed by the 'targets' either for groups or for each pupil. The closing session is used to review how everyone got on, noting good achievement for individual pupils as well as difficulties they might have found. Some teachers keep careful notes about how each lesson went, particularly noting individuals' successes or difficulties to form the basis of work in the following lessons.

15. Where possible, pupils' work is discussed with them and marking provides additional support, but nevertheless, marking of written work, whether completed in class or for homework is still too variable. Some very good examples are available of lively, personal comments written to each pupil. The impact of this on raising pupils' achievement is visible in these subject work-books, when the following piece of work shows the pupil trying to put the advice into practice. Too often, however, work receives only ticks, or minimal comments that reflect the pupil's effort or presentation rather than their knowledge and understanding.

### **The curriculum**

The curriculum is unsatisfactory overall due, in particular, to weaknesses in the curriculum for the 11 – 14 year olds. There is a good range and number of activities additional to the curriculum. Accommodation and resources are unsatisfactory overall; resources are satisfactory, but the accommodation is unsatisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Improvement has been insufficient since the last inspection;
- Several good new systems have been introduced in readiness for the re-designated school; however in some cases, their benefits have been counterbalanced by "teething problems";
- Curriculum development has been hampered by the re-designation plans;
- The school provides very well for pupils' personal development.

### **Commentary**

16. Much good work has taken place since the last inspection to improve the weaknesses identified in the curriculum, and this has had a positive effect on standards. Schemes of work for all subjects based on national guidance were created and implemented, and associated assessment procedures put into place to track pupils' progress and support planning. The range of accreditation provided has been extended and strengthened which has had a positive impact on standards attained by the oldest pupils. The length of the school day was adjusted to meet guidelines. Activities to enrich the curriculum, such as visits to the *Enginuity* centre to support science, visitors from the community to support personal, social and health education (PSHE) and competitive sporting activities are good. However, some weaknesses still remain and others have crept in. Not all statutory requirements are met. For example, a modern foreign language and careers education are not formally taught to pupils aged 11 – 14; some pupils aged 14 -16 are not taught a well-defined science course, and not all of them have been properly disapplied from this requirement. Similarly, two pupils placed in classes out of their age group have not been disapplied from their statutory curriculum. The scheme of work for religious education does not yet fully reflect the requirements of the most recent locally agreed syllabus. The accommodation, which had weaknesses identified in the last inspection, has not improved sufficiently, although this is largely out of the school's hands.

There is still no specialist science room and the school hall is much too small for physical education. Some accommodation weaknesses have been addressed in the building developments planned for the new school. However, these have been scaled down since the original plans were discussed with the school and so will not entirely eliminate them.

17. In preparation for the secondary-only curriculum needed for September 2006, some organisational changes have been brought in, resulting in both benefits and limitations. Class sizes have been reduced, with very positive benefits to pupils' learning, although this has put a strain on the limited accommodation, and this means that classes have to "box and cox" to use available classrooms that are not necessarily their own. A very effective system for supporting pupils with additional educational needs has been introduced, and additional class time with form tutors, which extends morning and afternoon registrations, contributes well to pupils' personal development. However, these and other developments have impacted on the interim timetable, which has undergone modifications. Evaluation of the effects is underway, but nevertheless, some difficulties currently remain. Time for subjects such as art and design, food technology and design and technology has been restricted. More pupils than previously now have access to specialist teaching in these subjects, which is positive, but the curriculum as currently planned cannot be carried out. In addition, a "carousel" arrangement whereby practical subjects are taught in half-termly blocks to mixed age groups, means that the curriculum which is planned for teaching in single year groups cannot be carried out without adaptation.

18. Interim timetabling and organisational changes have also affected the balance of some subject teaching. For example, English and mathematics for the 14 -16 year olds are taught once a week each, over an entire morning. Whilst on one hand, this means that pupils can be taught in smaller groups, which raised their standards of attainment and allowed more to gain higher levels of accreditation, on the other hand they are not given the opportunity to practice and develop their skills regularly enough, and staff say some find the length of time difficult to manage. Within some subjects there is an imbalance of the skills taught, such as an emphasis on number in mathematics.

19. The main reason for these difficulties is that the subject manager system had been put on hold whilst the school dealt with other priorities. For some time staff were unsure about their future in the school in relation to the re-designation plans, and so pro-active subject leadership was ceased until this had been clarified. Aspects of many managers' role such as monitoring, evaluation and development of the quality of teaching, learning and curriculum are not at the moment taking place. A new-style role, focusing on standards, teaching and learning has now been developed and implementation is underway. This will gather pace as data from the new assessment systems produces information on how well pupils are learning in each subject. The new post of curriculum manager, for reasons of efficiency, was temporarily taken on by the new head teacher whilst he also created the structures and curriculum ready for the re-designated school. This responsibility is scheduled to be handed on to the permanent post-holder in September 2006, when additional management posts also focused on teaching and learning will come into play. A further difficulty arose when a science specialist appointed for January 2005 did not take up the post at the last minute, creating problems in maintaining the quality of provision for the 11 – 14 year olds. None of these identified difficulties were unrecognised by the school, and plans are in hand to address them all. Nevertheless, subject management was given a lower priority whilst other issues facing the school were addressed first, which has led to the weaknesses identified.

20. The re-invigorated priority placed upon promoting pupils' personal development has been very successful. The strengthened curricula for citizenship and personal, social and

health education; the new behaviour management system; the recently introduced assessment of pupils' personal development with targets for improvement and the introduction of tutorial time to address school, curriculum and personal issues have all combined to make provision for pupils' personal development very positive.

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

The school makes good provision for the care, welfare, health and safety of its pupils and satisfactory arrangements for their support, advice and guidance. The extent to which the school involves pupils in its work is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The detailed knowledge of pupils' personal needs is based on caring relationships, and pupils' personal and emotional development are given high priority;
- Health, safety and personal hygiene are well promoted across the school community, apart from lunchtime arrangements, which are unsatisfactory;
- Arrangements for consulting with pupils and eliciting their views are not sufficiently formalised.

### **Commentary**

21. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The strengths have remained, and some aspects have improved, such as assuring the health and safety of pupils when off-site. However, there has been insufficient improvement in the assessment of pupils' achievements to support their learning.

22. Strong relationships between adults and pupils make pupils feel well cared for and in consequence, they trust adults and readily confide in them about personal matters. Adults in turn come to know pupils very well and are able to give appropriate support, both informally and formally. Examples range from providing biscuits for an early morning snack for those pupils who might not have had breakfast, to setting appropriate targets for improving behaviour and personal development. The impact of this caring approach is felt in the classroom, where pupils thrive and strive to achieve their personal targets. The school has good links with outside agencies, such as the Education Welfare Officer and Educational Psychologists. They make a good contribution to the support given to pupils in need. Since a fresh emphasis has been placed on promoting pupils' welfare in the school, formal guidance is now offered on the basis of assessed need, and is therefore more structured. Teaching assistants make a very good contribution to the initiative. The newly introduced tutorial system at the start of morning and afternoon sessions also supports pupils' welfare. The same cannot yet be said for academic guidance, since there remain inconsistencies in the vital process of assessment for learning.

23. The support for pupils with social, emotional and behavioural difficulties is proving very effective. Day to day management of pupils in class is good and arrangements for providing intensive support at times of crisis are effective. Some very good support by fellow pupils was also seen. On one occasion, for example, a pupil returned to class after a voluntary cooling off period. Upset on his return, time was spent reassuring the pupil that he has the support and affection of everyone in the class. At the end of the lesson, pupils received extra points for their sensitivity and support for their troubled friend.



24. The school has a high regard for the health and safety of pupils. Careful arrangements at the start and end of the school day ensure that their safety and security are not compromised. These arrangements are well supported by weekly alarm tests, termly fire drills, risk assessments of the premises and comprehensive first aid arrangements. Child protection procedures are closely followed and pupils in public care are carefully monitored. The school places an emphasis on healthy eating, and provides a particularly wide choice of fresh, nourishing and well-presented food. This healthy approach to eating is also supported in the classroom. For example, in a Year 10 lesson on *healthy living* pupils measured out by the teaspoonful the amount of sugar they consumed in an average day in snacks and drinks. For some, the measuring cup overflowed, but the exercise effectively delivered the school's message about healthy living, and some pupils resolved to change their diet. Lunchtime arrangements, however, are unsatisfactory. The school hall is small, and is only used for serving food, not eating it. The pupils take their lunch back to the classrooms. Whilst there are considerable social advantages to this, there are also disadvantages as social interaction between age groups is limited, and some pupils have to carry their meals across the playground to the mobile classrooms in all weathers.

25. Staff know individual pupils well and discuss matters with them during the day, for example in form tutorial time. However, with the demise of the School Council and the lack of a formal system for consulting pupils, there is no routine way of hearing their views on matters that concern them as a group, or for involving them in the school's work and development. This leaves a gap in the school's understanding of what is going on. One such example was that the headteacher was surprised to learn from inspectors that so many pupils had identified behaviour as a concern.

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

The school's partnership with parents is very good. Links with the community and with other schools and colleges are good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents' views of the school are very positive;
- Parents make a good contribution to their children's learning;
- The school is working with determination to extend its external links to further enrich and enhance pupils' education.

### **Commentary**

26. The strength of this area, as identified in the last inspection, has been maintained. The great majority of parents who met the inspectors, and those responding to the questionnaire, expressed very positive views about their partnership with the school. They agree that their children like coming to school and are making good progress. They say that behaviour is generally good, and they applaud the leadership of the school and the quality of teaching, care and concern for their children. Parents feel well informed about their children's progress, and say they feel comfortable approaching the school about any concerns. They do, however, worry about the re-designation and the overall effect upon their children. The school does its best to keep parents fully informed of developments and changes to the re-designation plans, but nevertheless, the frequency of these cause anxiety for parents.

27. For their part, parents actively support their children's learning by ensuring their regular attendance, and by communicating with the school through the *home book* and the *word book*. Parents respond well to questionnaires sent home by the school and so help to shape its work to an extent. For example, they recently completed an assessment schedule on their child's personal development, to give the school additional information for the new progress-tracking system. Since the arrival of the new head teacher, parents are better informed about their children's progress and what is happening in school. They are more involved in the process of annually reviewing their children's Statements of Special Educational Needs, and improved annual reports mean that discussions at parents' evenings are more productive. The prospectus and governors' annual report to parents are now fully compliant and are supported by a newsletter at the start of each term. As well as matters of general interest, this contains information about what pupils will be studying during that term, giving parents the opportunity to support their children's learning. A small but very active Parent-Staff Association raises considerable sums of money for school equipment and activities. Such social events are well supported by parents eager to help the school.

28. Although a small number of teachers take part in supporting pupils in their mainstream schools, their time is funded by the Local Education Authority and the provision is not managed by Southall. There are no specific guidelines for this work, which is negotiated school by school, but it is well regarded by the receiving schools who report that their pupils have made good progress as a result. Southall staff are looking forward enthusiastically to developing their outreach work, once a clearer strategy and funding are outlined.

29. The school is working hard to extend its community links in the wake of its recently ended involvement in an Education Action Zone project that brought modern technology into school. The school has good links with local establishments that support the social and citizenship programmes. Sponsorship by local commerce also provides vital links with the business community that the school is eager to develop in order to cement its place at the heart of the local community. The school encourages its pupils to give as well as to receive. Pupils show their concern for those less fortunate than themselves by raising considerable sums of money for local and national charities, which makes a worthwhile contribution to their personal and social development.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership of the head teacher and other key staff is good. Management is satisfactory, as is the governance of the school.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The head teacher has a very clear vision for the new school and has identified and begun to implement some of the new systems and practices needed;
- Governors play a very active part in planning for the school's re-designation and are committed to the head teacher's vision for future development;
- Important improvements in the school have been hampered by changes to the plans for the re-designation and delays in its implementation;
- The governors' role is developing, but they need a greater focus on raising standards and providing challenge for the school leadership;
- The leadership team and other key staff are strongly committed to ensuring all pupils benefit fully from school, and provide very good role models for pupils and staff alike;

- Uncertainties about future funding, accommodation and staff training pose a great challenge in maintaining staff and governor morale.

## Commentary

30. The past three years have been a turbulent period at the school. The LEA's plans for its re-designation as secondary-only in 2006 were put into place, and the previous head teacher was asked to implement them. However, both he and his deputy retired in 2003 after a long period of stable and respected leadership. A new head teacher was appointed to complete the project, and governors and key staff say they regard themselves as fortunate to have secured a second able and committed leader for their school. A long-serving senior member of staff secured the deputy head teacher position. Together they have a complementary blend of skills and abilities to lead the school through its next period of intense change.

31. The head teacher has conducted an extensive and realistic school self-evaluation review of procedures and organisation and has created a well-defined management plan to prepare the school for its new role. Much of the head teacher's time in the last year has been spent in developing and implementing innovative systems and structures to underpin and improve the management of the school, the quality of provision and pupils' achievement. This was done with the full recognition that some of the current systems and practices would not be maintained, or would be altered as a result, and the inspection took place during this time of transition.

32. The governing body has also benefited from exceptionally stable leadership. Until recently, a Chair had been in post throughout the school's 30 year history, and he still remains a governor. The new Chair is also strong and capable. The full governing body is wholeheartedly behind its new head teacher, and shares his vision for the future. Governors are clear-sighted about some of the difficulties involved in managing major change on two fronts at once, and have helped the head teacher resolve some early communication difficulties, particularly with parents.

33. The complexities of planning and negotiating the details of this demanding process of major change have absorbed a very significant amount of management time for the senior team and the governing body. There have been several unforeseen consequences. The first school development plan captures the head teacher's personal view of the improvement agenda. He is clear about the need for a more consensual approach to the process of improvement planning in the next cycle, and plans for this are already in place. Governors' energy, activity and command of detail of the re-designation process is undoubted. However, their focus on the development and supporting negotiations with the LEA has been at the expense of developing their role in interrogating the school's current performance and helping shape priorities for raising standards. Furthermore, their monitoring has not picked up the full range of statutory requirements they need to ensure, which was a weakness noted in the last inspection. School improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory overall. Whilst very many aspects of the school have improved and developed, some weaknesses have not been addressed, such as statutory curriculum requirements. Others, such as implementing suitable assessment for learning systems, have improved, plateaued, and are now on their way up again, due to early identification by the new head teacher, and processes put in place to improve them.

34. Despite the challenges facing the school, its key staff remain committed to ensuring an inclusive and positive ethos that welcomes and supports an increasingly diverse population of young people. In line with national trends, 'traditional' pupils with moderate learning difficulties are being replaced by pupils with more complex needs. The recently introduced additional provision for these pupils – one of the structures implemented in preparation for 2006 - is very effective and very well led. The school is planning to continue its enriched support programme in the new school from 2006. All senior staff with secured leadership roles for 2006 are very good practitioners, able to lead improvements credibly and with authority. The day-to-day running of the school and the budget is efficient and effective. The senior administration officer is a member of the senior management team, which helps cement the link between school development and budget planning and monitoring very effectively.

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

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,543,889	Balance from previous year	56,559
Total expenditure	1,512,120	Balance carried forward to the next	88,328
Expenditure per pupil	10,080		

35. Important changes to the LEA's plans have had an adverse effect on morale. For example, the criteria for staff expressing preferences for their future school base changed and staff had to re-apply for their own jobs. The school currently works on a primary model where non-specialists teach most subjects. The need for teachers to become subject specialists and concern about re-training has led to a dip in their confidence. Building plans have been scaled down leading to fewer key specialist teaching areas in the new building. For example, plans for enhanced sports facilities have been shelved. Uncertainties about transfer admissions for September 2005 and funding levels mean continued delays in planning. These hurdles still need to be cleared before the school can put the high quality provision it has planned into practice.

## **OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES**

### **Work Related Learning**

Provision for work related learning (WRL) is **satisfactory** overall.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Work related learning has been well adapted for the needs of pupils in Years 10 and 11;
- The statutory requirement for a careers lesson for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is not met;
- Work experience is very well planned and organised for Year 11.

### **Commentary**

36. Where the work-related curriculum has been properly addressed, provision is good. However, although included in PSHE, there is no well-defined scheme of work for careers education for pupils in Years 7 to 9, which is a statutory requirement. This aspect of work-related learning is unsatisfactory. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 benefit from a vocationally-oriented curriculum which has been carefully adapted to take account of differing abilities. Much of the pupils' work is based around accredited units of study from the National Skills Profile. Pupils with additional special needs successfully follow courses in Accreditation for Life and Learning. Teaching is good; the pupils are motivated by the variety and challenge of the courses and they achieve well. Teachers have adapted the courses successfully to introduce pupils to the world of work. For example, pupils in Year 11 completed a unit of work, in a local college, on manufacturing in which they learned about working practices by designing and making a bar of soap and its packaging. The pupils researched suitable perfumes and discussed the best way of completing the practical work. Written work and photographic evidence of the finished products confirm that the pupils made good progress in their understanding of the manufacturing process and of relevant health and safety issues.

37. Teachers have productive links with colleges of further education and employers, and are keen to develop these further. At Telford College, pupils in Year 11 make good progress in learning to use tools and equipment safely in experiences of car maintenance

and electrical repairs and enjoy the responsibility of working in an adult environment. There are good relationships between teachers at the college and the school. Staff plan courses together and the practical work at college is effectively followed up on the pupils' return to school.

38. Leadership is good, and management satisfactory although work experience for pupils in Year 11 is managed very well. The pupils who spend one day each week at local places of employment maintain a diary of their experiences. For example, some pupils take part in the very well organised 'Walled Garden' conservation project. They learn about horticulture by working in a small organic garden which supplies local restaurants. The owner, a teacher, is employed by the school to teach the pupils about, for instance, the identification of tools and seeds and the correct methods of planting out, which they can then use on their work experience. The same approach was used for car mechanics and building skills. Each aspect of the pupils' involvement in work experience is effectively linked to accredited units in practical work skills which the pupils complete as part of their portfolio for the National Skills Profile. The co-ordinator of work experience maintains very good records of pupils' placements and details of monitoring visits, and supplies clear information for parents. The co-ordinator sets particularly high standards in ensuring the welfare and safety of the pupils, which is a great improvement as this was a weakness identified in the last inspection.

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

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 - 4**

### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

#### **English**

Provision for English is **good**.

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

- Pupils achieve very well in speaking and listening throughout the school;
- Pupils with additional needs achieve well;
- Pupils could achieve even more if there was a more systematic approach to teaching reading, writing, spelling and handwriting through the school;
- Teaching and learning in class are consistently very good in Years 10 and 11 and are good elsewhere in the school, but teachers' use of assessment is weak;
- Leadership of the subject is good, and management is satisfactory.

#### **Commentary**

39. Pupils achieve well in English overall; the oldest and youngest in the school achieve very well. The confidence pupils show when they are speaking is strikingly consistent throughout the school. The youngest pupils extend their vocabulary and use of language quickly because teachers use stories and books that children enjoy. Right from the start, pupils learn that it is important to listen to each other with attention and respect. They listen thoughtfully to others' answers and views and are good at showing their appreciation of these. During story telling and group work, staff questioning is well matched to individual pupils' abilities. This builds pupils' confidence to answer. Some starter activities involve the whole class answering in unison and are clearly most enjoyable.

40. Secondary pupils achieve very well in discussion. This is because vocabulary development is sustained and a premium is placed on supporting self-esteem and personal development. During the inspection, there was a wide range of effective discussions during English lessons, including environmental concerns, presenting arguments for and against the use of child labour in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and smoking. There were thoughtful question and answer exchanges between Year 11 pupils preparing written pieces on their hopes for the future. In many other subject lessons, inspectors highlighted very good standards in speaking and listening.

41. Whilst pupils achieve well in English, the approach to developing their reading, writing, spelling and handwriting is not yet fully consistent, particularly between Years 3 and 9. This, however, is improving due to the efforts of the subject leader; similarly, pupils' pleasure in reading is developing because the range of literature used has recently been extended. Pupils have reading diaries and are encouraged to share books at home. There is some good practice in spelling. A lively and challenging class of secondary youngsters enjoyed a rapid-fire spelling test, in which the teacher had devised a personal list of ten words for each pupil, based on her detailed knowledge of the areas they need to improve. Some classes have regular handwriting practice, but the school's preferred form of cursive script is not always promoted, or consistently corrected.

42. Teaching seen in lessons was good or very good. It is particularly strong in the five groups in Years 10 and 11. Teachers have developed approaches that closely match the pupils' abilities. This is rewarded in the quality of pupils' attitudes to the subject, the care they take with their folders of work and their concentration and application. Crisp pace and lively, well-structured lessons engage all pupils' interest. Relationships are very good between adults and pupils and any difficult

behaviour is well managed. Teachers and support staff use humour well, and pupils enjoy these moments.

43. In recent years several different approaches to recording pupils' progress have been used and as these have measured learning in English differently, they cannot be usefully compared. This means that progress cannot be securely demonstrated, and targets for improvement are based on the teachers' individual knowledge of each pupil rather than a robust whole-school system. This has been put right in 2003-4 with a single, clear approach to recording progress by all teachers, but has yet to yield the second set of data which will show how far pupils have progressed over the year.

44. There is no doubt that teachers know and understand the current strengths and weaknesses of each pupil's work, but they do not all focus enough on these individual needs in their lesson planning. Marking pupils' work varies from very helpful, personal and lively remarks, with clear suggestions for improvement, to brief phrases. All pupils do an extended, free, unassisted piece of writing once a month. However, teachers do not always mark these for accuracy for fear of discouraging youngsters, although this approach does not help them improve. For example, one pupil uses the verb *to watch* every time he writes about his leisure time. His work shows seven different, uncorrected spellings of it, repeated every month for six months. The subject leader's action plan identifies marking as an area for development.

45. The main weaknesses identified at the last inspection were inconsistency of practice, lack of an agreed programme of what would be taught, ineffective assessment and record keeping, and insufficient subject leadership and management. Provision in the subject improved following the inspection, and the current subject leader works very hard to support teachers individually, and has secured improvements by ensuring that literature is well used and that accredited courses, in place for Years 10 and 11, now meet National Curriculum requirements. Subject leadership across the curriculum has taken second priority to other necessary school developments, and improvements noted in the English development plan have not, therefore, yet been put into place. In addition, there is now insufficient use of signing and symbols to support lower attaining pupils and those with communication difficulties. Some of these pupils should achieve more, although most pupils with additional special educational needs achieve well because they receive effective extra help with their difficulties.

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

46. Speaking and listening are so well promoted throughout the school day and in subject lessons that pupils' achievement and progress in this aspect of literacy is very good. Lessons in many different subjects include clear references to developing the correct subject terminology. As yet, this strong emphasis is not matched in reading, writing for a range of purposes, handwriting and spelling. Worksheets sometimes rely too much on single word or phrase completion, rather than seeking short sentences or paragraphs conveying carefully ordered information. Several lack demanding text to engage and challenge higher attaining pupils and there is not enough emphasis on reading a wide range of different types of material in other subjects. There is too little emphasis on maintaining good handwriting throughout the subjects of the curriculum.

### **French**

47. Provision does not meet the statutory requirement to provide a modern foreign language in Years 7 to 9 and there has been no change to this position since the last inspection. Some pupils in the age group have been formally disapplied from learning a modern foreign language, but this is not the case for all. Later this year, however, the school will hold a French week, when the emphasis, as far as possible throughout the week, will be on French and France.



48. No lessons were taught in Years 10 and 11 during the inspection, and written work was limited, so the quality of teaching and learning for these pupils cannot be judged. The school has been unsuccessful in recruiting a part-time French specialist, but the current co-ordinator is committed and enthusiastic, and keen to foster an enjoyment of French life and experiences. Pupils are scheduled to participate in an educational visit to France this year and plans are well advanced for two visits, one for higher attaining and one for lower attaining pupils. The emphasis for both groups will be on using the French language in leisure and recreational settings.

## **MATHEMATICS**

Provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is satisfactory overall and is good in Years 1 to 6;
- The quality of teaching and the pupils' learning is adversely affected by the lack of structured curriculum planning for Years 7 to 9;
- The quality of lesson planning and the use of assessment for learning are inconsistent;
- The role and influence of the co-ordinator is limited so progress in the development of the subject has been erratic.

### **Commentary**

49. Teaching is good in Years 1 and 2 and pupils make good progress. The teacher plans effective, practically-based lessons which maintain the pupils' interest and which challenge them to achieve well. Teaching in lessons is also good in Years 3 to 6. In some lessons, pupils make very good progress. For example, in a Year 4 lesson on telling the time, the pupils worked enthusiastically when learning about clock faces through well-planned activities, and they were delighted with their achievements. Teaching in Years 1 to 6 is characterised by good lesson planning which enables teachers to maintain a brisk pace and in the best lessons to adapt work very successfully for the differing abilities of the pupils. The pupils respond well and they enjoy mathematics.

50. Teaching in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory and pupils maintain a satisfactory level of progress. The effectiveness of teaching is reduced by insufficient use of the national strategy for mathematics, and the fact that the non-specialist teachers are not confident in the subject and often rely on activities found in a commercial scheme. These activities are not sufficiently adapted to the particular needs of the pupils. There is no overall plan to show what teachers should teach to each age group. Teachers plan many lessons to consolidate or revisit previous work and whilst this is important, it is at the expense of challenge and further progress. Pupils do not always build on their previous learning; work is sometimes repeated unnecessarily as pupils move between classes, and the main emphasis tends to be on teaching number skills. Although most teachers have computer-linked whiteboards they were not used sufficiently for interactive work during the inspection.

51. Lesson planning is inconsistent because there is no set structure throughout the school. The best planning takes full account of the adapted work and support needed for individuals. In other lessons, teachers do not plan as effectively, and the success of the lesson relies much more on the quality of support provided by teaching assistants. Although teachers have a very good knowledge of their pupils' ability, the quality of assessment of pupils' progress to support planning for learning varies. This aspect of provision has shown little improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers in Years 1 to 3, for example, maintain excellent daily records. This helps them to plan specifically for the needs of each

pupil. In these classes, targets for pupils' progress are clear and the pupils' success is easily measurable. In other classes, the lesson planning does not provide sufficient detail about the learning activities for individuals, or their expected progress within the lesson. Targets set for pupils are thus more generalised, and less effective as a measure of progress.

52. Throughout the school, the very competent teaching assistants make a significant contribution to pupils' learning. They work confidently with individuals and small groups and provide a valuable level of support and encouragement. The behaviour of pupils is generally very good because of the quality and level of support they receive. They remain interested in their work and concentrate for relatively long periods. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 gain nationally recognised accreditation, and the school made special arrangements for two pupils to be taught mathematics in mainstream school, where they achieved on a level with their peers which is a very good achievement.

53. There has been satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection, but development has been inconsistent – particularly in the two years prior to the new head teacher's arrival. He recognised the imperative for development in this subject, and mathematics has been the pilot subject for the audit/plan/management of improvement pattern of the school's new, proposed subject-leader role. The weaknesses identified in the inspection have already been identified in the subject audit, and developments are outlined in a realistic and promising mathematics action plan. Nevertheless, the leadership and management of the subject are presently unsatisfactory because until recently, the co-ordinator had not been in a position to lead developments to improve the identified weaknesses until more of the school's new systems, including the use of assessment data, had been implemented.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

54. The use of mathematics in other subjects is satisfactory. For example, some of the younger pupils' science work included graphs and pictograms to show different eye colour and routes to school. Pupils sometimes use simple measurement in design technology, and weighing and sorting when cooking. During the inspection, older pupils measured the differences in the height of bouncing balls as part of work on forces. In general, however, teachers do not specifically link work in mathematics to their teaching in other subjects and do not show these links in their planning. This has been recognised in the subject's development plan.

## **SCIENCE**

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The leadership, management and development of science have stalled, which has adversely affected the quality of provision;
- Teaching in lessons is often very good, but in some important instances suffers from the lack of suitable assessment and planning;
- A small group of pupils does not receive formal science teaching in Years 10 and 11, which is a breach of statutory requirements.

### **Commentary**

55. After the appointment of the previous co-ordinator as deputy headteacher, the provision for science suffered a setback when a specialist teacher appointed for January 2005 did not take up post at the last minute. The timetable had been adjusted to allow for specialist teaching at secondary level, and so the gap was filled by a supply teacher who is not a science specialist, and who does not carry out any of the responsibilities allocated to the subject leader. The subject manager's role has been returned to the previous post-holder who has many other demands on his time and currently does not monitor planning, teaching, learning or subject development. Leadership and management are therefore presently unsatisfactory. A few lower attaining pupils who follow both of the work related accredited courses for Years 10 and 11 do not have formal science lessons as they should, although they cover some of the material through other subjects.

56. The school has very recently gained parental consent for this, but disapplication had not been confirmed through the annual review of the pupils' Statement of special educational needs, although the process is now underway. This situation, too, is unsatisfactory. The quality of science provision is, therefore, patchy, and pupils' achievement, satisfactory overall although often good or better for given classes, rests entirely on the competence of individual teachers.

57. Taken overall, teaching in the lessons observed was good, with some very good teaching in the primary department and for the accredited courses for Years 10 and 11. The most effective teaching was based on good scientific principles, adapted to meet the individual needs of pupils and the age group concerned. For example, a class of eight year olds extended their knowledge about materials and their properties through very good discussion about whether items made of unusual materials – such as metal pants - would work. The concepts were reinforced by a well-chosen activity that engaged their attention very successfully. The teaching assistants were instrumental in ensuring that each pupil participated and was challenged to the maximum degree. These young pupils' achievement during this lesson was excellent. On another occasion, Year 11 pupils made very good progress in furthering their understanding of the same concept. In this case, they compared the bounce of balls made of different materials; one group was innovative in measuring bounce using a video camera. In this lesson too, the team work between teachers and support staff was exceptional and supported learning very effectively. However, some teaching is less effective, and on one occasion observed it was unsatisfactory. This was due to lack of subject knowledge and the teacher actually taught the class wrong facts. This insecurity would, in the normal course of events, have been picked up by a fully functioning subject manager who routinely monitors lesson planning.

58. Where teachers were most effective, the lack of systems for lesson planning and assessment to underpin the planning had little effect. These staff know the pupils so well that they can pitch work to properly meet individuals' needs. However, less effective teaching suffered from the lack of good planning, including that for individuals with different skill levels within the class. On one occasion, a pupil with severe learning difficulties was not given adapted work or support to complete work which was difficult for the highest attainers in the class. She did little and learned nothing in this lesson.

59. The system used until last year for assessing pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding is very basic and insufficiently fine-tuned to work independently of teachers' additional knowledge about individuals. A robust system for tracking pupils' progress over time has only recently been introduced and has not yet yielded data that can be used to improve pupils' achievement, or to adjust curriculum planning. There is no specialist accommodation for science, which was a weakness identified in the last inspection.

Current building plans for the re-designated school include a specialist science room, although these plans have changed over time. Resources are adequate, and good use is made of the community to enhance pupils' experiences. For example, a group of secondary pupils visited the local science park – "Enginuity" during the inspection.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

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

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils build up their skills systematically as they get older;
- Some members of staff have insecure subject knowledge which restricts pupils' learning;
- Planning is not sufficiently up to date or consistent.

### **Commentary**

60. In the last inspection, provision and pupils' achievement in ICT was judged to be unsatisfactory, and improvement in both was a key issue. This has now been addressed and both provision and achievement are now satisfactory. Overall, improvement has been satisfactory.

61. Teaching in ICT was limited during the inspection, as was evidence of pupils' work. Consequently an overall judgment on the quality of teaching cannot be made. However, pupils clearly build up their skills systematically as they move through the school, and achievement is satisfactory. By age seven, pupils use a word processing program to write their names and play simple word and number games. By age 11, with some help, they can program the movements of a simple floor-based robot and use a website to select and play simple games. By 14, pupils use a CD-ROM to gain information. They word-process more complex pieces of writing and use a spreadsheet program to produce bar charts, for example to illustrate the results of a science investigation. In a very successful presentation produced for assembly, pupils illustrated their slides with their own digital photos. The oldest pupils' work goes towards their national accreditation, and some pupils gained the Certificate of Educational Achievement in one year, which was a very good achievement for them. They add designs to their work to enhance its appearance by using various software programs and illustrations from the Internet. Pupils are beginning to make multi-media presentations, such as an animated sequence including voice-over and music.

62. The quality of the teaching observed was mixed. The main characteristics of less effective lessons were time-wasting and teachers' lack of subject knowledge. For example, one teacher was unsure about very basic processes such as moving and inserting text, undoing the "last" action or restoring a previous function. At other times, pupils had to wait their turn, and lost interest whilst doing so. Pupils did not learn as much as they could in these lessons. More often, however, teaching was good and pupils learned well. Where teachers use the interactive whiteboards, pupils are clearly stimulated and motivated to learn and many teachers use video clips and pictures as well as their own writing to engage the pupils. For example, a lesson on the crucifixion was given added meaning by the use of a video animation of Christ's nailing to the cross. Other good lessons gave pupils the opportunity to use the technology to write answers for the whole class, make choices giving their reasons, or show what they have learned. Pupils enjoy using the computers, digital cameras and video cameras and microphones, and say they wish they could do more. The

subject is well supported by a lunchtime club which encourages pupils to practice their skills.

63. Teachers' lesson planning is of inconsistent quality as there is no whole-school approach, and some does not sufficiently reflect individuals' specific needs. Subject leadership and management are unsatisfactory, as they have not been given priority within the current school development plan because of the re-designation issues and re-allocation of subject responsibilities. The co-ordinator has introduced a scheme of work, supports staff with ideas and resources and organises training, for example in the use of the interactive whiteboards. The effectiveness of subject leadership is limited by the lack of a clear assessment framework to determine pupils' progress and drive improvements, combined with the current "hold" on subject leaders' monitoring of teaching and learning in lessons in most subjects.

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

64. ICT is used satisfactorily across the curriculum and supports learning in subjects like art and design through the production of animated videos; physical education by the use of videos to show pupils how to improve their movement; the creation of bar charts in mathematics and science, and in editing work in English. However, teachers do not always specifically plan for using ICT to support learning, or for developing pupils' skills through other subject lessons, and so opportunities for developing and reinforcing learning are often missed.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Religious Education**

Provision in religious education is **good**

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

- Pupils enjoy learning about religion and achieve well;
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

#### **Commentary**

65. No teaching was seen for the 14 -16 year olds but teaching for the 5 -14 year olds is good. Pupils benefit from sensitive teaching which covers much more than facts about different religions. Good resources, visits to places of worship and visitors to school all give pupils a good appreciation of different faiths and customs and bring the subject alive. Teachers are well supported by very effective teaching assistants who work in close liaison with them to reinforce pupils' learning. Through religious education, pupils learn to appreciate different opinions and beliefs and to listen to their peers with respect. They are encouraged to empathise with others and express their own feelings through the skilful use of drama and discussion. On one occasion, for example, the youngest pupils were asked to describe how Jesus' disciples must have felt during the crucifixion. The pupils were able to talk about sadness and to draw pictures of the disciples looking sad. Further up the school, a class of fourteen year olds learned why Buddha explained life in terms of the four *noble truths* and the *eightfold path*. They discussed the meaning of the *four noble truths* and one pupils said "you would be happy if you didn't want so much," showing that she truly

understood this difficult concept. Sharing thoughts and feelings in this way helps pupils develop a real sense of their own identity and self worth, and evidence shows that pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding develop systematically as they mature.

66. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. Some aspects of leadership and management of the subject have recently deteriorated, due to the current whole-school position regarding subject leadership and management in the light of the re-designation, and are currently unsatisfactory. Whilst pupils achieve well, their achievement was very good at the time of the last inspection. The co-ordinator provides useful guidance to teachers and maintains the good range of resources. However, there is currently no monitoring of teaching and learning, and so no firm basis on which to plan improvement or revitalise the subject to its previous very high standard. Timetable anomalies prior to January 2005 meant that religious education was not always taught on a regular basis in each class, although this has now been recognised and rectified. The quality of teachers' planning is inconsistent, which occasionally limits progress. Furthermore, the scheme of work has not been refreshed to follow the latest locally agreed syllabus.

### **Geography and history**

67. No lessons were observed in history or geography, so no judgement can be made about the overall quality of provision. Teachers' curriculum planning is appropriately based on national guidelines. Pupils' work shows that their skills, knowledge, and understanding has developed systematically. In both subjects, pupils' learning is well supported by visits, resources and the use of the Internet and books for research. Staff clearly make the lessons as lively and practical as possible to bring the subjects alive for the pupils. For example, a class of nine year olds learned about the past through the practical experience of washing clothes in the Victorian way. They dressed in Victorian workers' costumes, used *dolly tubs* and scrubbing boards, and ironed using old smoothing irons. In geography, older pupils learned about the symbols used on Ordnance Survey maps. They made a large model showing features such as uplands sheer cliff, lake, settlement and flood plains before going on to represent these features on their own maps using symbols. Pupils' work shows that satisfactory links are made with other subjects such as English and information and communication technology.

## **TECHNOLOGY**

### **Art and design**

68. Judgements about the overall quality of provision and pupils' achievement in art and design cannot be made, as there were too few lessons observed and the school lacks systematic records showing pupils' progress, although photographic evidence of individuals' work over the years shows a clear progression in their skills. Pupils' work shows clearly that they develop their skills and creativity systematically, and in all age groups, work is interesting and well composed. In the last inspection, pupils were judged to make good progress in art and design, and indications are that this is still the case.

69. In both lessons observed - one with primary and one with secondary-age - pupils took exceptional care with their work; in the first to closely observe and then draw and paint a cut fruit or vegetable, and in the second to paint designs on clay pots that they had made in an earlier lesson. Whilst the skills and abilities of the pupils varied considerably within each group, nevertheless, their finished products showed that they had tried hard and the work was attractively completed. Pupils' art work is displayed around the school and shows use of a satisfactory range of media. It includes two and three dimensional work, textiles

and computer-generated work. Older pupils were in the middle of making an innovative cross-curricular animated presentation of The Ugly Ducking - one of several that they had completed with the support of Wolverhampton Art Gallery. The pupils had made the scene settings and figures themselves. Pupils' work is always carefully presented, and often properly framed which indicates the status given to it. It often has a "nature" theme, for example trees or animals, and is placed with commercially produced pictures by well known artists; this juxtaposition enhances both sets of artists' work. Displays around the school and in classrooms are all well presented and attractive, promoting pupils' aesthetic appreciation, and showing a good standard by Year 11, reflected in the good results in the Certificate of Educational Achievement..

70. The specialist teacher has a very individual, informal, style of teaching which works well in this subject. Lessons are well thought out and resources always ready to hand, but the teacher barely intervenes once the pupils have started work. He makes practical suggestions and draws pupils' attention to this and that – including each others' work – and senses when to bring the class together for a moment or two, or to change activity. The quality of pupils' work and their positive attitudes and behaviour show that this approach is successful. Support staff are well deployed to work with small groups or individuals to help them stay focused on their work, and the teacher handles any challenging behaviour well and unobtrusively.

71. The planned curriculum and assessment of pupils' skills has fallen by the wayside since the recent introduction of new pupil grouping and timetabling arrangements. Teaching is now often in mixed age groups and pupils have lessons in "blocks" – usually half a term at a time – with no further art and design lessons for one or two further blocks of time. Lessons can be very long for those with less concentration. The teacher says that he tries to provide "a bit of everything" for the pupils, and whilst this is clearly the case, the situation is not satisfactory. At the moment, pupils' skills are still developing well due to the good grounding they have had. However, this momentum will quickly slow down without the structure of a well-defined and executed curriculum plan, underpinned by suitable assessment of pupils' skills.

## **Design and technology**

72. Only three lessons were observed - all for pupils aged 13 and over; this is insufficient to make judgements about the overall quality of teaching and learning. However, observations, discussions with staff and pupils and pupils' work shows that provision for work with resistant materials, such as wood and plastic, has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. Provision for food technology remains very good, with some innovative and imaginative approaches being taken both in the primary phase and in Years 10 -11. Pupils' work suggests that all are regularly engaged in designing and making activities, and that some of the higher attaining pupils in the primary years are challenged well to evaluate and improve their work.

73. Records indicate that pupils' achievement is satisfactory in working with resistant materials, but the range of tasks and activities remains too narrow in the secondary years. Too many projects consolidate existing skills and processes rather than furthering them, and pupils' own evaluation of their work is insufficiently thoughtful and does not often enough lead to improvements. Whilst the teaching observed was satisfactory, with evidence of a good choice of activities to maintain pupils' interest, planning does not indicate what individuals with different skill levels are expected to achieve. Pace and challenge tended to slacken towards the end of each lesson.

74. Pupils achieve very well in food technology lessons. In a very good Year 10 lesson, a team of teachers and support staff worked extremely effectively to enable a large group of lower attaining pupils to participate fully, consolidate and further their skills, and really enjoy what they were doing. The latest timetable arrangements, however, are posing difficulties for staff in ensuring that the

oldest pupils cover the material planned. Conversely, recent changes to the timetable have meant that pupils in the primary phase now have access to food technology where they would not have previously.

75. The accommodation for both strands of the subject is satisfactory. However, current planning for the development of the school building during 2005 – 6 means that the resistant materials workshop, based in a mobile classroom, will be removed in Summer 2005 with no alternative until the building works are completed. Consequently, courses in working with resistant materials cannot be provided on site during this time, which will have a very adverse effect on pupils' learning in this subject.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Music**

76. No lessons were observed during the inspection, and there was insufficient other first hand evidence to make judgements about the quality of provision, teaching, learning or pupils' achievement in music.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

77. There was insufficient first hand evidence to make an overall judgement on the quality of provision and pupils' achievement in physical education. However, pupils' work, teachers' planning and discussions with staff and pupils indicate that throughout the school, pupils follow an appropriate curriculum - devised and taught by a specialist teacher – which enables pupils to develop their skills systematically. Pupils say they enjoy their lessons. Photographic evidence shows a good variety of activities and all pupils have swimming lessons at a local swimming baths. Physical education is well supported by a good range of extra activities. Pupils receive rugby and soccer coaching and take part each year in the area special schools' sports activities. They are encouraged to take part in dance activities such as country dancing and rock and roll. Most of these take place in school because of the difficulties of transporting pupils.

78. Resources are satisfactory. There is a range of basic equipment such as balls and hoops and the teacher has made good use of outside agencies in gaining extra resources. Accommodation is unsatisfactory. The outside provision is satisfactory for summer/good weather use, but the school hall is much too small to be used as a sports hall, particularly for older pupils. Furthermore, because of its position in the school, the hall is also a constant thoroughfare during lessons. Changing facilities are very shabby and too small and the showers, although used regularly by pupils, are of poor quality.

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

Provision for both personal, social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The curriculum effectively links PHSE and the study of citizenship to enhance pupils' interest and understanding in both subjects;
- Good links with the community support pupils' understanding;
- Teaching is good and pupils' achieve well;
- The subjects are well led and managed.



## Commentary

79. Pupils achieve well because teaching is good and the curriculum is well constructed. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 make very good progress and their work is very successfully linked to accredited courses. Pupils throughout the school have developed very good attitudes towards PHSE and citizenship.

80. Pupils make good progress overall through Years 1 to 9. They make very good progress in Years 1, 2 and in class 3, for pupils in Years 4 and 5 with complex needs including ASD, since they follow a good formal curriculum and because, in addition, teachers successfully incorporate aspects of the subjects into everyday school life. In lessons pupils learn about topics such as bullying and valuing friends, and such topics are reinforced in daily sessions. Staff are particularly effective in overcoming the social and communication difficulties of pupils with ASD, as observed, for instance, in a very good lesson in class 3 where all the pupils took part in 'circle time' and communicated a positive message to a friend. A well-planned assembly for pupils in Years 7 to 9 incorporated the celebration of their successes with consideration of the lack of opportunity for pupils in Africa. In specific PHSE lessons pupils learn about keeping safe, for example, saying 'NO', and the dangers of drugs and alcohol, and they gradually develop an age-appropriate understanding of sex and relationships. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 learn about their rights and responsibilities as adults and this work in citizenship is continued very successfully through Years 10 and 11.

81. The pupils benefit from the good partnerships the school has developed with adults from the wider community. Teachers are liaising successfully with local colleges to give pupils more opportunities to continue their education. The pupils' understanding of issues in citizenship and society is improved by meeting visitors, such as the community policeman who is a regular visitor, the school nurse and local clergy. A school governor, who is also a magistrate, has been involved in showing pupils how the court works and the school has been visited by the mayor and local Member of Parliament. All such experiences deepen the pupils' understanding of the structures underlying a developed democratic society.

82. Teaching in PHSE and citizenship is good and very good in Years 10 and 11. Lessons are well planned and proceed at a good pace. Teachers have good subject knowledge and link the curriculum effectively to the pupils' targets in personal and social development. Teachers have high expectations of the pupils and through effective questioning ensure that all pupils develop their knowledge and understanding. For example, some pupils in Year 10 pushed a volunteer round school in a wheelchair. Through the experience of trying to climb steps with the wheelchair and get through narrow doors, aided by a high standard of questioning from the teacher, the pupils gained a very good understanding of the problems of the disabled. Teaching assistants make a very good contribution to pupils' learning. They effectively support groups and individuals and work in productive partnerships with teachers, often leading discussions or providing intensive teaching to pupils with additional needs.

83. The subject is well led and satisfactorily managed. The curriculum has recently been audited and amended and the subject leader is developing strategies for improving the assessment of pupils' progress, since it is very limited and is. Resources are good and are appropriately based around the requirements of the curriculum. Overall, provision in the subjects has improved well since the previous inspection.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

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