

INSPECTION REPORT

SOUTHLANDS SCHOOL

Tynemouth

LEA area: North Tyneside

Unique reference number: 108653

Headteacher: David J Erskine

Lead inspector: Katharine Halifax

Dates of inspection: 10th – 12th January 2005

Inspection number: 268635

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:	11 – 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	112
School address:	Beach Road Tynemouth North Shields Tyne and Wear
Postcode:	NE30 2QR
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Eddie Addison
Date of previous inspection:	January 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school caters for pupils aged 11 to 16 years. Situated in the south-east corner of North Tyneside, the school serves the whole borough. Pupils come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds, though many are from low income families. The school can cater for 129 pupils; currently there are 112 on roll. All pupils have statements of special educational need for moderate learning difficulties. The pupil population has changed since the last inspection; many now have emotional, social and behavioural needs with some having a history of extreme behaviour. Attainment on entry to the school is well below that expected of pupils of this age. Almost all pupils are of white British origin, and all speak English as their main language. There are more boys than girls in most classes. Nine pupils are in the care of the local authority. The school has a specialist unit for pupils whose emotional and behavioural difficulties affect their learning. A significant number of pupils spend part of their week either in secondary schools or in college. The school is subject to reorganisation within the local authority's strategy for *inclusive schools*. The work of the school has been recognised through a number of nationally recognised awards including Young Enterprise Award, Barclays New Futures Award, Healthy Schools, Investors in People, Truancy Busting and a Careers Education Guidance Counselling Award.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
25439	Katharine Halifax	Lead inspector	English Religious education Music Special educational needs
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23390	Mel Blackband	Team inspector	Mathematics Design and technology Physical education
8810	Sue Aldridge	Team inspector	Science Personal, social, health and citizenship education French
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school. Good teaching and good learning opportunities have resulted in good achievement and the very successful promotion of pupils' personal development. Very good links with mainstream schools, colleges, and the community contribute significantly to pupils' learning. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Strong leadership has enabled the school to continue to improve at a good rate and respond to local and national initiatives and its changing intake of pupils.
- Good teaching has resulted in good learning and good achievement for pupils of all capabilities.
- Pupils' personal development and achievement is very successfully promoted through the support and guidance they receive, opportunities to work in mainstream schools, and through the work related programme.
- The provision in the specialist unit for pupils with extreme behaviours is very good.
- The high absence rate of a few pupils affects their achievement.
- The curriculum could be managed better especially in ensuring suitable time is allocated to information and communication technology, and to English.

Improvement since the last inspection is good. The issues to improve registration, safety in the car park and policies identified in the last report have been addressed. In addition, the results in national tests for pupils in Year 9 have improved, as has the range of national awards for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Staff have adapted to the diverse needs of pupils with complex and challenging behaviours. An increased number of pupils have a positive experience of mainstream education. Attendance rates are not as good as at the time of the previous report, though this is partly due to the changing intake of pupils. Staff have the capacity and enthusiasm to maintain school improvement.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Students' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	Personal and social education
Year 9	Good	Very good
Year 11	Good	Very good

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

Achievement is good in both age groups. Pupils achieve well in English, mathematics, science, religious education and physical education. Achievement in personal, social and health education and in citizenship (PSHCE) is very good. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 gain a useful range of national awards that prepare them well for life after school. While pupils achieve well in information and communication technology (ICT) in the units they do and in using the technology in other subjects, achievement overall is only satisfactory because they are not taught all parts of the required programme. There was insufficient evidence to form judgements in humanities, French, art and design, design and technology and music. All pupils leave school with some form of nationally recognised award.

Pupils' **personal development is very good** because of the very good provision for their **spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**. Overall, pupils have a **positive attitude** to school and are **well behaved**. Most pupils are very well behaved, though on occasions the extreme behaviour of a minority affects the learning of others in their group. Similarly, though most pupils attend well, a

few have high rates of absence this makes **attendance overall unsatisfactory**. Punctuality at the start of the day and in lessons is satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. Teaching and learning are good. Particular strengths are in the way adults gain and maintain pupils' interest and in the way they manage pupils' behaviour. Teaching and learning in science and in personal, social, health and citizenship education are very good. The way teachers assess pupils' achievements is satisfactory. Where teaching was less effective, lessons lacked urgency so pupils' rate of learning slowed. Despite some omissions in the provision for information and communication technology, the curriculum is satisfactory with a rich and varied programme of experiences and a very good programme that prepares pupils very well for life after school. However, the timing of some lessons affects pupils' achievement. Pupils receive very good care and support. Very good links have been established with mainstream schools, the community and a wide range of other professionals, all of which contribute to pupils' well being and achievement. The partnership with parents and carers is satisfactory.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are, overall, good. The headteacher has built up a good development team and staffing complement. He has strong sense of direction and leads by example. Governors are supportive of the school and have formed suitable committees to aid their work. However, because they do not meet legal requirements in some of their policies and other documents, overall, governance is unsatisfactory.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Most parents and carers speak highly of the school. They particularly like the friendly atmosphere and the dedication of the staff. Pupils enjoy school life. They report they especially like games, science, working in mainstream schools, going to college and the After School Clubs.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- continue to monitor and improve the attendance of pupils who are persistent non-attendees;
- improve pupils' learning especially in ICT and some English lessons by ensuring a better balance of time allocated to these subjects;

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- ensure the school has a policy for the curriculum and for pupils with special educational needs;
- ensure the programme for science and for information and communication technology includes all elements;
- ensure the content of the governors' annual report to parents and the school prospectus meet requirements.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Despite an increase in the number of pupils with behaviour problems and in those who lack interest in education, as at the time of the last inspection achievement is good. On arrival at the school, attainment is well below that expected of pupils of this age. Nevertheless, taking account of previous learning and special educational needs, and as the result of good teaching, pupils make good progress. There is no significant difference by age or gender.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils of differing capabilities achieve equally well
- Achievement in personal, social, health and citizenship education is very good because topics are interesting and relevant to pupils' needs and prepare them well for life after school
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve well in nationally recognised awards
- Pupils do not achieve as well as they should in some aspects of information and communication technology

Commentary

1. Pupils of all capabilities achieve well because of good teaching by teachers who are subject specialists and who have a very good knowledge of their pupils. Pupils in all year groups are set by ability for English and mathematics and work is carefully matched to meet pupils' needs. In all subjects, higher attaining pupils are identified early and encouraged to work towards General Certificate in Secondary Education, (GCSE). Through very good links with secondary schools and very good support, some pupils now achieve GCSE grades C to G in mathematics, science, physical education and design and technology. The achievements of all pupils are recognised through accreditation by Oxford, Cambridge and Royal Society of Arts (OCR), the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) and the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). Those who have a particular gift or talent are identified early and put in contact with specialist organisations. Currently one Year 8 pupil has been selected to play football for the Year 8 team at a nearby secondary school. A previous pupil is on the books of Newcastle United and has been selected for the England Under 18 football squad.

2. Equal attention is given to lower attaining pupils, with skilled support from teachers and classroom assistants they achieve equally well. The only exception being, on the few occasions when work in one aspect of English is too difficult and they become overwhelmed so their rate of progress slows. Pupils in the Extended Provision for the Inclusion of Challenging Children (EPICC), the specialist unit for pupils with extreme behaviours, frequently arrive with a very negative attitude to education. With help and support and a very good behaviour management programme, in a relatively short time they are able to integrate into the main body of the school for some of their lessons. Their rate of progress is good both in the unit and in the school. Achievement is equally good. While some return successfully to mainstream education, because of their age, the majority transfer in to the main part of the school and achieve well in nationally recognised awards.

3. Achievement in personal, social, health and citizenship education is very good because, in addition to the taught programme, all aspects of school life support work in this important subject. The effectiveness of the programme is evident in pupils' personal development. Teaching is very good and topics are very relevant to pupils' lives and needs. Daily routines and the end of lesson review coupled with focused targets in individual education plans contribute very well to achievement in this area of learning. Through their work, pupils gain maturity and self-esteem enabling successful transfer by Year 11 into appropriate courses or employment.

4. Since the last inspection, there has been a significant increase in the number of nationally recognised awards achieved by pupils in Years 10 and 11. All leave with some form of accreditation with a high percentage having awards for English, mathematics, information and communication technology, and personal social and health education. Effective links with colleges have led to certificates in retail, food hygiene, care of the elderly and engineering amongst others. The awards have improved pupils' employment prospects and resulted in almost all leavers moving on to open employment, further education, or work based learning. These placements include additional GCSE subjects and courses in catering and sports leadership.

5. In information and communication technology, pupils make good progress in lessons and acquire a good range of skills in the topics they cover such as word processing or using computers to make a presentation. However, because of the short time allocated to the subject, the teacher cannot cover the full programme set out in the National Curriculum such as using technology to model and control the environment. Furthermore, while some teachers use computers very well to support teaching and learning, for example, in English and history, there is less evidence in mathematics or in science. Insufficient opportunities have been provided for pupils to use programs to handle and present data in these subjects because the computers have not been reliable.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Adults help pupils develop their personal qualities through very good provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This leads to positive attitudes and good behaviour. Attendance is unsatisfactory. Punctuality is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Attendance is below the national average, although some pupils manage 100% in a term
- Though the exclusion rate is high, most pupils behave well and form very good relationships
- School routines and a very good programme support pupils' personal development
- Pupils are helped to appreciate the rich cultural mix of society

Commentary

6. Attendance rates have slipped since the last inspection and are below those expected of a school of this type. While this is partially explained by the changing intake of pupils, it is also due to the disaffection of a minority of pupils and their parents. Furthermore, the attendance of some pupils in Years 10 and 11 has declined since the local authority made changes to its transport policy. Managers have made attendance a priority and, working closely with the educational welfare officer, have introduced a number of incentives including certificates and the opportunity to win prizes for pupils with 100% attendance. However, even this, together with weekly class incentives is failing to capture the interest of a few older pupils.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	11.6	School data	2.6
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.

*figures for pupils in this type of school

7. Staff are very skilled and lead by example in forming very good relationships. They provide very good models of how to behave appropriately, and treat pupils with respect. They have very high expectations of behaviour and apply the behaviour management system consistently so the

majority of pupils respond very well, enjoying the rewards of the points system. Pupils are expected to agree their own behaviour targets each week, giving them clear understanding of what is expected of them, and of right and wrong. Parents attending the meeting reported there had been some bullying, but were satisfied that incidents were dealt with promptly. In response to this, and to pupils' concerns, a survey has been conducted to identify areas of the school where pupils feel unsafe. Discussions in PSHCE lessons and in assemblies are having an effect with no incidents of intimidation or bullying being observed during the inspection. The rate of exclusions has risen since the last inspection. Pupils with extreme behaviour who had previously been sent out of borough now attend the school. Despite their history, evidence shows good improvement in the behaviour of these highly volatile young people with exclusion being used as the final sanction, and only when staff and other pupils are at risk.

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	111	29	2
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	0	0

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

8. Pupils' spiritual, social, cultural and moral development is very well promoted through a wide range of visits, visitors and through collective worship. Pupils are encouraged to consider those who are less fortunate, raising funds for Children in Need and the MacMillan nurses for example. The consideration of natural disasters such as volcanoes encourage an awareness of the lives of others, this was particularly so during mature discussions of the impact of the recent tsunami. Staff have ensured the programme for citizenship is relevant and meaningful to pupils focusing on topics such as vandalism. Pupils' social development is very well developed through daily routines and through residential experiences where, in addition to living alongside others, they face personal challenges such as fear of heights when tackling an assault course. Pupils make significant gains in their social development through the very well organised links with mainstream schools and colleges. An example of how one pupil put their social learning into practice was observed when he was seen counselling another by encouraging him to take his problems to a member of staff and not run away.

9. Though the school has an all white population, pupils have numerous opportunities to appreciate and experience cultural diversity. In religious education they have visited places of worship of the major world faiths and taken part in a Sikh wedding. Topics such as *difference* and *racism in football* are discussed with maturity. This, however, is not at the expense of their own cultural heritage. Visits to Durham Cathedral, Hadrian's Wall, the Fishermen's Mission, Bede's World and local castles aid their appreciation of the wealth of history surrounding their town.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Assessment of pupils' progress is satisfactory although its practice lacks consistency.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers are very good at motivating and encouraging pupils
- Lessons are well structured so pupils learn at a good rate

- Pupils' behaviour is very well managed
- Teachers endeavour to include all pupils in all aspects of lessons
- Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to improve their literacy
- Though satisfactory, some aspects of assessment need improvement
- A small amount of unsatisfactory teaching was observed

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 49 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (2%)	13 (27%)	24 (49%)	9 (18%)	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.

10. Since the last inspection, staff have invested a great deal of time in professional development, in improving individual education plans and in adjusting to the changing population, particularly the management of pupils with a history of violence and extreme behaviour. As a result the good teaching reported in at the time of the last inspection has been maintained with teaching in well over three-quarters of lessons being good or better. This is reflected in pupils' learning and achievement. Teachers work hard to provide activities that are interesting and motivate pupils. For example, in history, pupils gained a greater understanding of inequality as they became *barons* sharing out the land; or in English where pupils wrote imaginatively about the contents of a handbag, learning at the same time about vocabulary, letter sounds and some of the rules of spelling. Teachers have a good knowledge of their subject and maintain pupils' involvement through well-planned activities and appropriate questions and explanations. The best lessons are structured so that pupils know from the onset what they need to learn. These are characterised by imaginative, vibrant teaching, very good subject knowledge, a sense of urgency and skilful questioning.

11. Teachers manage the use of lesson time very well. Punctuality is rewarded, so lessons begin promptly. Adults are successful in creating a calm, purposeful atmosphere so pupils generally settle quickly. At the start of most lessons, starter activities effectively recap previous work, checking pupils' knowledge and understanding, and preparing pupils well for new learning. Teachers allocate suitable amounts of time to different activities so lessons rarely lose pace and interest. Lessons end with a review where pupils consider what they have learned, what they found difficult and what they found easy. This ensures pupils understand what they need to do to improve. Where teaching was less successful, or on occasion unsatisfactory, some explanations lasted too long and the pace of the lesson slowed. Furthermore, in these lessons teachers did not always follow the planned activities, and time allocated for reviewing learning and behaviour of pupils was cut short. Some parents expressed concern that their child does not receive sufficient homework. Homework is set if parents or pupils ask, and contributes well to pupils' learning and achievements.

12. Staff manage pupils' behaviour very well. Pupils are aware of their teachers' high expectations and standards, and know teachers are consistent in using the whole school strategies to ensure good behaviour. Where instances of inappropriate behaviour were observed, these were quickly dealt with, sometimes allowing the pupil time out of the classroom to collect their thoughts while others continued with their work uninterrupted. Pupils clearly understand their personal behaviour targets. In the best lessons these are referred to and emphasised by teachers and pupils respond well. Most teachers allocate sufficient time at the very end of each lesson to discuss each pupil's behaviour and effort, and to explain how improvements could be made. On the few occasions where the management of pupils' behaviour was less successful teachers did not consistently emphasise the targets for improvement and gave a lesser status to the discussion of behaviour and the awarding of points.

13. Teaching and support staff are effective in supporting pupils with additional needs, especially those with behavioural difficulties. They ensure that pupils from the EPICC unit are fully

included in all activities and support staff are particularly effective in keeping these pupils on task and helping them to develop the confidence to take a full part in lessons. One teaching group is made up solely of boys, with more boys than girls in most other groups. Nevertheless, all adults take care to ensure girls are fully included in all activities, including discussions and practical work. Teachers ensure that classroom assistants are fully briefed about pupils' tasks and ability, so their support for individuals enables pupils of all capabilities to make good gains in the knowledge and skills they acquire. Very good teamwork is a feature of many lessons and when linked to the very good relationships between adults and pupils the outcome is a high level of challenging activities in which pupils are fully involved and where they gain confidence from the skilled support they receive.

14. Teachers provide well for pupils to improve their basic skills, especially in language and communication. Numerous occasions were observed where pupils improved their reading and spelling because they were expected to read from worksheets and textbooks, then were expected to spell the new vocabulary. Similarly, pupils made very good gains in speaking and listening because teachers expected them to discuss their work and reason their answers and to follow increasingly complex instructions.

15. The assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress is satisfactory, though inconsistent. The impact is that pupils, though aware of behavioural targets, are less secure in knowing how well they are doing in their learning. The monitoring of behaviour is a strength and particularly for the pupils in the EPICC provision. Assessment in English is good. Detailed reading and spelling records are maintained. There is good practice in several subjects in recording progress in individual education plans and in the compilation of pupils' achievement portfolios but these practices are variable. Teachers have a very good knowledge of their pupils and this enables them to allocate support to individuals as necessary. There is, however, no agreed system by which regular assessment of pupils' progress is used to help teachers adapt their planning and teaching to take account of the differing abilities of their pupils. The school has recently introduced a commercial package which measures progress in small steps though this is not intended for day-to-day assessment. The use of the system will, however, provide useful annual information when more data becomes available.

The curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory. Opportunities for enrichment are very good. Staffing and resources are good. The accommodation is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum, though broad and relevant, lacks balance in some subjects
- Provision for extra-curricular activities and enrichment of the curriculum is very good
- Very good opportunities to work in mainstream schools extend the curriculum and contribute to achievement
- Individual special needs are well addressed
- Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of their education
- The length of the school day does not meet recommended levels

Commentary

16. The school makes every effort to ensure that all pupils have access to the most appropriate curriculum, whatever their level of ability, or special educational need. Pupils benefit from a broad and relevant curriculum as the school has embraced government initiatives and increased opportunities for pupils to work alongside their peers in mainstream schools. However, because strategies have been added without an effective overview of the effect on the timetable, the overall balance has been lost. The time for information and communication technology is insufficient to permit the teaching of all areas of the curriculum, for example non-computer technology, control and measurement. The teaching of pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9, for physical education in the adjacent secondary school, while valuable in itself, displaces lessons in the core subjects. Some pupils have all their English lessons on two days of the week, and none on the remaining three, and it was

observed that pupils studying English during the last period of the day did not achieve as well as others being taught at a more appropriate time.

17. A very good range of educational visits and visiting specialists supports pupils learning very effectively. Experts providing workshops have included an artist in residence, an author and musicians. There are well attended after school activities on most evenings and a youth club twice a week, which is open to pupils from other schools. Residential trips, including to France, promote pupils' personal development very well. The summer school provides both academic and social opportunities and also works very well as a form of induction for Year 6 pupils joining the school in September.

18. The inclusion team, one teacher and two support staff, is very enthusiastic and committed. They organise and support pupils in a range of schools and colleges very well. The programme started four years ago and has expanded rapidly to include all pupils. Parental and pupil preference is to stay in Southland and access accreditation through mainstream links. Having Southlands as a secure base gives pupils who could not cope with full-time mainstream education, the confidence to work at the appropriate level in their chosen subjects. Catch-up lessons are suitably provided when pupils miss important subjects such as English, mathematics and science, unless in the subject being studied for GCSE in the mainstream school. Pupils are very well supported when in mainstream. Planning, organisation, recording and monitoring are all very good. The support staff, who are fully involved in all aspects of the programme, make a significant contribution. Relationships with the schools and colleges are very good.

19. Well structured careers advice, enterprise activities and work related learning give breadth to pupils' experience and provide opportunities to develop good community and college links. Vocational courses within the school and off-site, such as video production and boat repair, encourage pupils to consider a variety of career options. Representatives from all the agencies involved spoke very highly both of the school's organisation and of the pupils' response.

20. Although the accommodation is less than good in some areas, such as facilities for physical education, and some external classrooms, the impact on the curriculum is minimal because of the staff's very good use of available accommodation and resources. However, in science, the accommodation limits pupils' achievements. The science room is not equipped well enough to enable pupils to work independently. Shortcomings in terms of physical education and games are overcome through use of off-site facilities. Staff are sufficient in number, well qualified, experienced, and committed to the well-being of their pupils. The school is well maintained and enhanced by attractive, interesting and informative displays. Specialist accommodation and resources for information and communication technology, and for the EPICC group, are very good and used well to improve achievement.

21. The taught time at present does not meet the recommended levels for any of the pupils, especially for pupils aged fourteen to sixteen. This affects pupils' achievement, especially in ICT. The school is aware of this and is seeking ways to address the situation.

Care, guidance and support

Pupils are very well cared for and they receive very good support, advice and guidance. Staff value and involve pupils well in the work of the school and in its development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff are very successful in providing personal support, advice and guidance for pupils
- Pupils are very well cared for in a safe and healthy environment
- Pupils with additional special educational needs are very well supported
- Very good arrangements prepare pupils very well for life after school

Commentary

22. The head teacher takes the lead in setting the ethos of care, order and structure through his high expectations for behaviour and attitude. Adults provide a high standard of care. They have a comprehensive understanding of pupils' needs and development. All pupils are valued as individuals. Staff have adapted well to the changing population. Pupils who are known to the police and those with mental health needs are helped to face and come to terms with their problems. As a result, pupils build trusting relationships with adults and other pupils, and grow in confidence.

23. As at the time of the previous inspection, staff ensure that pupils are safe and very well looked after. Health and safety are high priorities. Comprehensive procedures for child protection, and for children who are looked after by the local authority, are in place. All staff have received suitable training and are kept well informed about any changes. Staff are vigilant and pupils are carefully supervised at all times. All the necessary health and safety measures are in place and regular checks of potential risks are undertaken. The health and safety of pupils in lessons is clearly identified in teachers' planning, for example when using candles in religious education, and power tools in design and technology. The criticism of safety in the car park at the end of the day, identified in the previous report, has been remedied. Pupils are encouraged to adopt a healthy lifestyle through the PSHCE programme, in food technology and through the *healthy eating* after school club. The school was awarded the *Healthy Schools* mark at its inception eight years ago and in each subsequent year.

24. Pupils with behavioural needs, particularly those in the EPICC unit, are very well supported. They benefit from a detailed behaviour plan and the strategies identified are followed consistently by all staff. All adults are committed to supporting these pupils and many instances were seen when staff displayed sensitivity to the additional needs of these pupils, for example, in the style and form of questions. Pupils in the unit receive a high degree of individual support to enable them to work alongside their peers in the main part of the school. They respond by working hard and with increased concentration. Pupils who are part-time in the unit are made most welcome. The support all pupils in the unit receive has a significant positive impact on their improved behaviour and attitude to learning.

25. Equally, pupils with medical conditions and those with physical needs are very well supported. Health professionals visit the school regularly. They speak highly of staff and how their advice is carried out. For example, support staff work in close liaison with the speech and language therapist giving pupils the opportunity to practice their programme as required. The detailed exchange of information between all agencies and staff at the school ensures pupils are able to take full advantage of learning opportunities. All adults are aware of additional needs through a comprehensive list produced by the special educational needs co-ordinator. Similarly, staff are aware of pupils who are in the care of the local authority. They monitor the progress of these pupils carefully and communicating well with other professionals involved.

26. Pupils know their views matter and make them known through the School Council, pupil questionnaires and discussions in tutor time and PSHCE lessons. The Council, comprising of elected members from each class, is well organised with well-run monthly meetings and suitable agendas. It is currently organising fund raising events for the victims of the tsunami. Following concerns expressed by pupils about bullying, staff have undertaken a survey of *hot spots* around the school.

27. Staff work closely with adults at other schools and colleges. This allows them to provide very good support for pupils taking courses in these establishments. Support staff are sensitive to individuals knowing when to stand back and when to offer reassurance. As a result, pupils become more independent, confidently working with those of the same age in mainstream education. This prepares them well for life after school. In addition, opportunities to take a range of national awards, experiences of college, Connexions and the *Moving On* project give pupils self-assurance, so by the time they leave the school they are very well prepared for the next stage of their life.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The partnership between parents and the school is satisfactory. Links with the community and with other schools and colleges are very good, contributing very well to pupils' achievements.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Extensive links with the community benefit pupils' learning and personal development
- Very good links have been established with local schools and colleges
- Staff support parents well, but some information for parents does not meet legal requirements

Commentary

28. Staff make very good use of the local and wider community to provide experiences to benefit pupil's academic and vocational learning as well as developing their social and personal skills. Visitors into school and visits out of school enrich pupils' learning. For example in history, the construction of castles is made more meaningful through visits to Bamburgh and Alnwick Castles. Similarly, a residential experience in France enabled pupils to practice their vocabulary while learning more about the history and geography of Paris. In addition to an increased awareness of citizenship, links with the local church assisting with the luncheon club for senior citizens and at a playgroup enable pupils to gain vocational accreditation through Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA). Similarly, those pupils in Year 11 working in a local supermarket earn accreditation in retailing.

29. Links with other schools and colleges have been increased significantly since the last inspection and are now very good. A very well organised summer school with the primary schools which feed into Southlands School have enabled pupils transferring from Year 6 to feel confident and familiar with their fellow pupils and surroundings in their new school. In addition to the wide range of activities offered during the summer holidays, pupils in Year 8 work with those in their last year at primary school, for example making badges and Christmas cards. Very good links with local secondary schools enable higher attaining pupils to gain GCSE in mathematics, science, physical education and design and technology. Southlands pupils are welcomed by pupils in the receiving schools and, as a consequence, are very well behaved and keen to learn, rising to the expectations of the mainstream settings. Furthermore, staff at Southlands work closely with colleges and appropriate agencies enabling pupils to experience vocational courses. Pupils are enthusiastic about the courses they attend, often being the only student from their school, whether repairing boats, making a curry, serving lunch to the elderly or learning about the retail trade. Staff in mainstream schools and colleges report that Southland's approach has not only benefited its own pupils, but also pupils with special educational needs in mainstream schools in ensuring individual needs are met.

30. Links with parents are satisfactory. At present, because of a lack of support by parents and due to the wide geographic area served by the school, there is no parents' association. While staff try hard to involve parents, a number have little contact. To address this staff offer to transport parents into school for meetings and the annual reviews of their child's statement of special educational needs. Where this is not practical, annual reviews have been conducted in the pupil's home. The appointment of a learning mentor is very successful in supporting parents in managing their child's behaviour. Parents report this has a positive effect on their home life. Though there is no official newsletter, parents and carers are kept informed of school affairs through regular letters. Parents attending the meeting prior to the inspection commented they are kept well informed about their child's progress and needs. They find the prospectus informative and helpful. However, this and the governors' annual report to parents have several omissions, especially concerning the Disability Act and security. This means they do not meet legal requirements. Nevertheless, parents attending the meeting and responding to the questionnaire report the school is exceptionally well run with good communication.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership by the headteacher and key staff is good. Governance is unsatisfactory. Management is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher and staff share a strong commitment to providing for all pupils, whatever their needs
- Teamwork is particularly well developed and most effective
- The management of the whole curriculum is an area for improvement
- Governors are supportive but do not fulfil some of their key responsibilities
- Staff development is managed well
- The school's finances are managed well

Commentary

31. Despite some uncertainties about the timescale for the implementation of the local education authority (LEA) policy on inclusion, staff share the headteacher's vision for the school's future. This vision is consistent with the LEA's policy and with national developments. The school's commitment is demonstrated clearly in its successful development, since the last inspection, of provision for pupils with challenging behaviour in the EPICC provision.

32. The headteacher is particularly successful in motivating staff to work in teams. There are a number of teams that are most effective and whose work is highly regarded by staff in other schools, members of the LEA and other professionals. These include the team who support pupils linking with mainstream schools, those who support pupils with challenging behaviour in the EPICC provision, and those who manage work related learning. These teams include teaching and non-teaching staff as well as other professionals not employed by the school. Since the last inspection, the school has become more outward looking, sharing its expertise with those in other establishments, and making a strong contribution to developments within the LEA.

33. In general, staff share a view about which are the most important curriculum areas for pupils at Southlands. However, whilst there are policies for individual subjects, the school does not have an overall policy for the curriculum. As a result, although subjects are well co-ordinated, the whole curriculum is not. There are no clear guidelines about what sort of curriculum the school seeks to provide, consequently, there are no benchmarks against which provision can be monitored. There is no member of staff responsible for the whole curriculum. Over the years the timetable has evolved in a piecemeal fashion because of the need to respond to national and local initiatives, leading to some imbalance and timetabling anomalies particularly in English and ICT.

34. As a group, the governors are supportive and have a range of skills pertinent to their roles. One is a serving teacher and another an accountant, for instance. However, they do not have a clear enough understanding of their role in holding the school to account. As a result, although a few have noticed ways in which curriculum provision could be improved, they have not spoken out. They meet with sufficient frequency and have suitable committees; a few visit the school and report back, in writing, about what they have observed. Governors also ask subject leaders to make presentations to them on provision and developments in their subjects, but this process is not rigorous enough to uncover weaknesses. As a result, governors are unaware that ICT does not meet requirements. They have sought clarification on the implementation of the LEA policy on inclusion, but in general they provide too little challenge. They do not meet their statutory duty to have a curriculum policy and a special educational needs policy; their annual report and the school's prospectus omit certain pieces of required information.

35. Performance management for teaching staff is well established, although there are no similar arrangements for non-teaching staff yet. A member of the senior management team co-ordinates the training for staff well. There is a suitable means of identifying the training needs of non-teaching staff and those that were asked said that their needs are met. Support staff have opportunities to take part in whole school in-service training, and several have benefited from

opportunities to learn new skills as part of the Key Stage 3 strategy. Teaching is monitored by senior staff and suitable feedback and support provided. Teachers already have the recommended proportion of preparation, planning, and assessment time built into their timetables. The quality of teaching in the school testifies to the success of the school's arrangements for supporting its staff.

36. The school's finances are well managed, and funds are used well to support the school's development priorities. A sensible contingency is maintained. A school bursar provides good support to the governors and headteacher, and the recommendations of the most recent audit report have been implemented well. The three office staff work efficiently as a team; they relieve teachers of administrative tasks and are increasingly able to take on one another's roles if necessary. The school runs smoothly.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,326,166	Balance from previous year	109,943
Total expenditure	1,344,640	Balance carried forward to the next	91,469
Expenditure per pupil	10,844		

37. Financial and educational decisions are carefully considered to help the school decide whether it is providing best value. The school challenges itself by setting whole-school targets to raise achievement, improve behaviour and increase attendance. Consultation with those with an interest in the school is a strength. The school regularly seeks the views of its pupils, parents, other schools and LEA personnel; it acts on the observations made in an effort to improve what it offers. It compares itself with other schools by using available information and visiting similar schools, and seeks to ensure that it achieves value for money in all the purchases that it makes.

Work related learning

The provision for work related learning is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The work related learning programme is very well led and managed
- The links with local businesses, Connexions, and the colleges are very strong and facilitate a coherent programme beginning in Year 7 and culminating in appropriate accreditation as well as good working experiences.
- The *Moving On* courses provide a wide range of opportunities as well as the chance to learn alongside pupils from other schools.

38. Work related learning is very well integrated into the school curriculum to present pupils with a coherent approach. The very wide range of courses and activities provided gives pupils the opportunity to sample and make informed choices. Staff are very committed and constantly monitor and evaluate, seeking ways to improve the provision. Comments from partners such as employers, Connexions, and the colleges emphasise the very good example set by Southlands to other schools in the area. Employers said that the school was supportive of the pupils and sensitive to the needs of the employers. The effective co-ordination of work related learning, both in school and in partner institutions, is very impressive. The programme is well resourced and efficiently organised.

39. Pupils are taught from Year 7 to make the link between the curriculum subjects, their attitudes to work, the school's code of conduct and employability skills and qualities. In Years 7,8, and 9, *Enterprise* activities are based on visits to local businesses, and include learning about

hygiene, health and safety, equality, and working with others. Pupils learn to design packaging and price products as well as make them. The very good relationships with all those involved in the work related learning programme, enable the school to assess and record pupils' progress effectively. From Year 7 onwards, pupils are involved in planning, recording and evaluating their experiences and gain accreditation through ASDAN and AQA units.

40. From Year 9, there are stronger links with Connexions and pupils prepare for *Moving On* in Year 10. Through this initiative, pupils become familiar with local colleges, learning other than in school, and with pupils from other schools. After induction days, one for example to the Army Exhibition at Catterick, and the transition planning meeting, pupils choose their options for the following term. Choices include Health and Social Care, Catering, Word Processing, Tourism, Drama, Dance & Performance, Motor Project, Joinery, Sport and Leisure, and many others. Pupils are very well prepared for the next stage of education or for working life.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because of good teaching, though on occasion the progress of lower attaining pupils slows
- Achievement in writing is very good
- Learning slows in some lessons timetabled at the end of the day
- Language and literacy skills are promoted well in other subjects
- Subject leadership and management are good

Commentary

41. The good progress identified in the previous report has been maintained. Teachers follow the three part lesson with useful introductions and recap of previous work to check pupils understand what they have learned. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace so pupils maintain interest. Teachers and support staff work well as a team enabling effective small group and individual work. English is taught by seven teachers with a further nine taking part in quiet reading. Some of these are subject specialists and all have taken part in suitable training. The majority plan work that challenges pupils. However, occasionally, non-specialist teachers provide work which is not matched to the ability of lower attaining pupils, especially those working at levels below the National Curriculum. This sometimes overwhelms this very small number of pupils, so their rate of progress slows. Nevertheless, because pupils have lessons with more than one teacher of English, and because of quiet reading sessions, the achievement of these pupils is, overall, satisfactory. Teachers of pupils in Years 10 and 11 have a very good understanding of the requirements of national awards, reminding pupils how they may gain additional marks thus helping them attain higher grades.

42. Managers have identified the way pupils in Years 7 to 9 speak and listen as an area for improvement. Teachers focus well on this aspect expecting pupils to think and reason their answers to questions. While this is working well in most groups, some teachers still accept one word or single phrase answers. Though a few pupils have a speaking and listening target in their individual education plans, other than an end of year assessment, there is no recording of the skills pupils have acquired or areas they need to improve. In Years 10 and 11, pupils achieve well in this aspect through a recognised course resulting in OCR levels 1 to 3. This aspect of English contributes well to pupils' social development in all age groups by for example; recognising and describing how facial expressions reflect mood.

43. Pupils achieve well in reading because all classes have four short sessions each week. During this time, pupils take part in a range of various activities which foster an interest in reading and which increase skills. For example, studying a text in depth, playing word and spelling games and group reading. The co-ordinator has provided training and a comprehensive guidance pack for all teachers on how to teach reading. Non-specialist teachers report they find this very useful. As a result pupils extend their strategies to read new words, become more fluent and have greater understanding of what they are reading.

44. As at the time of the last inspection pupils continue to write imaginatively and at length. This is because teachers are knowledgeable and choose tasks that are applicable and of interest to pupils. They help those who are less enthusiastic writers gain confidence by providing useful

structures to help them get their thoughts on paper. Good use is made of a commercial computer program to improve spelling. Pupils write for a range of purposes. For example, letters, stories, and opinions such as *Should mobile phones be allowed in school?* Very good use is made of computers to draft, refine, and present work. Pupils are justifiably proud of the end result. A particularly good example of pupils' creativity was observed in Year 10 when they considered *A day in the life of a pair of shoes*. Imaginations were fired as pupils entered into the spirit of the shoe, suggesting adjectives to describe their particular pair for example, *hand-made, expensive, leather shoes made in England for the Prime Minister*.

45. In order to accommodate the numerous initiatives the school is involved in, the timing of English lessons has suffered. For example, other than quiet reading, pupils in Year 7 have no formal English until Wednesday; other classes have two lessons on the same day. A number of groups have English lessons last thing in the afternoon. Inspection evidence shows, despite good teaching achievement in these lessons is not as good and pupils' rate of learning is reduced. In lessons observed at the end of the day, pupils visibly tired, could not sustain concentration, and found writing a chore.

46. Leadership and management are good. The co-ordinator is a good example as a practitioner for other teachers. Though some groups have up to three teachers a week for English and a further three for quiet reading, the subject is effectively organised for this not to affect achievement. Teachers are clear about which aspects of the subject they teach, for example creative writing, spelling or grammar so there is continuity in the knowledge and skills pupils acquire. The co-ordinator monitors what is taught carefully and is providing support and mentoring for teachers who are not subject specialists. The recording of pupils' achievements is good. In addition to termly reading, comprehension and spelling tests, which are used to identify gaps in learning, pupils maintain an individual reading record. While this is a useful record of books that have been read comments are often *brilliant reading* or *well done* rather than identifying what pupils found difficult and need to work on. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development by for example, issues raised by books such as *Of Mice and Men* and the film *Bend it Like Beckham*. Pupils' cultural awareness is furthered through theatre visits and visiting drama groups.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

47. Language and literacy are promoted well in all subjects. For example in physical education, pupils improve their listening by following increasingly complex instructions. Key vocabulary is highlighted in all subjects and written so pupils recognise how the word is spelled. The use of word searches and quick-fire spelling games further improve pupils' word recognition and spelling. In most subjects teachers provide opportunities for pupils to read from a worksheet or text, drawing on their knowledge of initial letter sounds, and breaking a word into parts, to read new vocabulary. While some opportunities are provided for pupils to write at length for example, in history when describing causes for the First World War, all too often the only recording is filling in missing words with few opportunities for pupils to write imaginatively.

French

48. This subject was not a particular focus for the inspection, and too little evidence was gathered for judgements to be made on provision. One lesson was seen, and in this teaching and learning were both good. There was a lively starter that had pupils revising vocabulary, and this was followed by a good range of appealing activities that enabled pupils to learn the names of members of a French family. A game of *pelmanism* rounded the lesson off, and this helped to reinforce pupils' learning. Pupils were well motivated throughout the lesson; they clearly enjoyed the activities and all could recall one or more names of family members by the end. Although the main emphasis was on listening and responding, there were opportunities for pupils to read and write the vocabulary introduced in the session.

MATHEMATICS

Provision for mathematics is **good** and standards have been maintained since the last inspection

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because teaching is good
- The curriculum is well planned and incorporates a suitable scheme of work
- Pupils are effectively motivated and encouraged so they respond well
- The subject is well led and managed

Commentary

49. Though there has been a change in the intake of pupils, as at the time of the last inspection, pupils achieve well. They enjoy the well planned and interesting lessons and are well motivated by their teachers. As a result they make good progress in their learning. There are no significant differences between the achievement of boys and girls. Pupils with additional needs such as those in the EPICC provision achieve equally well because they are effectively integrated and supported. Pupils benefit from a highly structured curriculum which is broad and balanced. The National Strategy for mathematics has been successfully adapted to the needs of the pupils and this has added rigour to their learning.

50. Many of the pupils in Years 7 enter the school with low levels of attainment. They make good progress through Years 7 to 9 and higher ability pupils perform relatively well in national assessment tests at age 14. By the end of Year 9, many pupils are familiar with basic arithmetic and construct and make use of a variety of data through graphs and pictograms. Pupils have weekly lessons that specifically develop their competence in number, telling the time and using money. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve well in accredited courses. All pupils leave with some form of nationally recognised award. Higher attaining pupils benefit from the opportunity to study GCSE at nearby secondary schools.

51. Teaching is overall, good, with one very good lesson being observed. The best lessons are characterised by very good relationships between pupils and staff and by the challenge and high expectations which teachers have of pupils' learning. Teaching proceeds at a good pace and teachers use questions effectively to establish what pupils understand and can do. Teachers manage lessons well, giving appropriate time to a variety of activities, and ensuring at the end of lessons that pupils have time to reflect on what they have achieved. As a result pupils progress at a good rate. They concentrate on their work for long periods, confident in the high quality of support that they receive from their teachers and knowledgeable classroom assistants. In the few lessons where teaching was less effective, though still satisfactory, teachers allowed activities to last for too long and the support is not effectively targeted to individual pupils. In these instances the pupils became restless and achieved less well. Teachers and classroom assistants mostly form effective teams. They manage behaviour very well and are particularly effective with pupils with additional behavioural difficulties. Teachers have a good command of the subject and this enables them to give clear explanations and to ask relevant questions. For instance, pupils in Year 9 introduced to complex three-dimensional shapes at the beginning of the lesson mastered key words such as *polygon* and *vertices*. By the end of a very well taught lesson they had constructed a series of pyramids and prisms and confidently described the process and the results.

52. Assessment is developing well. Pupils have suitable targets for mathematics, which are reviewed regularly. Their achievement is appropriately evaluated and recorded so teachers have a good knowledge of their pupils' ability and progress. Teachers currently make annual assessments of each pupil's attainment. While the amount of data is currently limited, it is intended that as this accumulates it will support the target setting process. While some teachers record the topics pupils have covered and the knowledge they have acquired, this is not however always used effectively to plan for the needs of individual pupils in each lesson. Plans do not always take account of the pupils' different abilities and levels of understanding. Although teachers provide well for lower attaining pupils through the extra support they allocate, extension work for higher attaining pupils sometimes lacks challenge so pupils complete it quickly with little effort.

53. Management of the subject is good. The co-ordinator has constructed a detailed and appropriate action plan which is well grounded in her review of the subject's development. Through her knowledge of the subject as a specialist mathematics teacher she is effective in advising and supporting other staff. She has developed very good schemes of work, which ensure progression in pupils' learning. The co-ordinator has however very little opportunity to observe her colleagues teach or to monitor standards within the department except on an informal basis. Although teachers make use of a range of commercial software programs, the use of information and communication technology to support teaching and learning is underdeveloped.

Mathematics across the curriculum

54. Opportunities for pupils to increase their mathematical understanding in other subjects are satisfactory. In design technology, for instance, pupils are taught to measure accurately and to weigh cooking ingredients carefully. Pupils are shown how to apply their knowledge of angles and two-dimensional shapes as they design projects in wood and plastic. In science they measure and present their findings in graphic form. Specific work is undertaken in physical education to enhance the pupils' knowledge of distances and time, using stopwatches. In some attractively displayed art work the pupils have gained an appreciation of patterns and geometric forms through their use of shading and their work on creating shadows of letters and numbers.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good
- Pupils' achievements are limited by the school's accommodation for science
- Assessment is good in Years 10 and 11
- Leadership is very good

Commentary

55. Pupils of all ages, genders and capabilities achieve well in science. This is linked to the very good quality teaching they receive and to pupils' positive attitudes and enjoyment of the subject. However, the school's accommodation does limit pupils' achievements. There is a science room, but this is not equipped well enough to enable pupils to work independently. There are only three gas taps, for instance, and this means that pupils have to work in groups when using Bunsen burners, even though most in Years 10 and 11 are capable of working independently. As a result, although pupils make very good gains in other aspects of practical and investigative science, and in their knowledge and understanding of the subject, their achievements are good overall. In the most recent national tests, most Year 9 pupils reached Level 3, and a few reached Level 4. By Year 11, all pupils are successful in the OCR Entry level examination, and a few pupils in Year 10 are following full GCSE courses in mainstream schools.

56. During the inspection, all lessons seen were at least good, and most were very good or excellent. The three-part lesson is well established, and starter sessions are successful in getting pupils thinking scientifically and reviewing and reminding pupils of previous learning. Practical activities are used most successfully to enable pupils to find out for themselves, to predict, observe and work out why certain results are found. Activities appeal to pupils, who tackle tasks with enthusiasm, and a lively pace keeps pupils engaged very well throughout sessions. A particular strength is the contribution of support staff. They are well briefed, and provide just the right amount of help, thus encouraging independent working as well as developing in pupils a sense of achievement. Teachers identify in their plans which scientific terms are to be introduced; these are carefully explained, and used frequently so that pupils become familiar with them; pupils'

understanding of these is checked too, but not enough is done to ensure that they learn how to spell these correctly.

57. Pupils' listening skills are well developed in science lessons. For example, in a Year 8 lesson, pupils were challenged to pick out at least one fact from a short video about the invention of the light bulb. Pupils concentrated well and in the recall session all showed that they could relate at least one fact. In addition, by listening to one another they learnt from their peers. Numeracy skills are similarly reinforced well; pupils learn to measure and to record using line and bar graphs, for instance. Teachers cater well for pupils of different abilities, either by providing support or different resources. In one starter, for instance, pupils were to find words in dictionaries; there were two sorts of dictionary and all pupils could read one or the other. Teachers also plan different learning outcomes for pupils of different abilities, and these are challenging.

58. The subject makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development. Teachers identify in their plans the links between science and citizenship, for instance. In an excellent Year 8 lesson, pupils found out that one of the inventors of the light bulb was from their own locality, and they gained an appreciation of the importance of conservation of energy. This lesson started in a darkened room lit only by candles, and the expressions on pupils' faces as they entered showed keen anticipation. The lesson objectives were explained at the start, and during the session, the teacher revisited these and awarded points along the way. This kept pupils' motivation high; their behaviour and enthusiasm were excellent. As with all lessons, pupils' safety and well being were taken carefully into account. Pupils soon learn about safe practices and they know and respect the rules made.

59. Assessment is satisfactory. It is better in Years 10 and 11 than in Years 7 to 9. In Years 10 and 11, detailed records are kept that show what pupils have achieved and what needs to be revisited; this assists in filling gaps in learning. Teachers have started to collect information on levels that pupils reach, but this is not yet sufficient to show the value added over the years. Although samples of pupils' work are collected, these are not levelled, annotated or dated, and therefore do not give sufficient evidence of attainment. Co-ordinators do not yet analyse assessment information, although they contribute to whole-school target setting in the subject.

60. The subject is very well led. The Key Stage 3 strategy has been effectively used to review the provision in the subject and to identify areas for further development. For instance, the subject improvement plan shows that the use of ICT by pupils is an area for further development. The Key Stage 3 co-ordinator is a leading teacher for science in the area and has established productive links with other schools. The two committed and hard-working co-ordinators have substantially improved several aspects of the subject since the last inspection, including planning and accreditation. The accommodation remains a barrier to further improvement. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **unsatisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The amount of time allocated to the subject is insufficient to cover the full ICT curriculum
- In lessons, teaching and learning are good
- Resources are used well to improve achievement and encourage independence

Commentary

61. Information and communication technology shares a slot on the timetable with food technology and resistant materials. As a result, pupils receive instruction in ICT in four-week blocks of one lesson a week, followed by eight weeks with no lessons. This lack of continuity affects the achievement of pupils as work has to be recalled and consolidated after so long a gap. Additionally, in the short time available, it is impossible for the co-ordinator who is the sole ICT teacher, to comply with the requirements of the National Curriculum. Missing elements include the understanding of how technology affects everyday life, and data handling beyond a very basic level. There is neither the time nor the equipment to teach the use of technology for control and measurement. However, the teacher knowledge of ICT and its good use in other subjects contributes to overall satisfactory achievement.

62. Pupils learn well in lessons that are well planned and well structured. They develop word processing skills and transfer them effectively when using publishing and presentation packages. Work in files and on display shows good achievement in the topics that are covered. The teacher has a good command of the subject, is enthusiastic and keen to improve provision. Pupils respond well and are very motivated to learn. Assessment procedures are satisfactory, but lack the necessary detailed ongoing recording that aids planning different activities for differing capabilities.

63. Though there has been investment in staffing training and in resources, improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory because of the reduction in time allocated and because some aspects of the subject are not taught. Resources, including computers and software, are plentiful for the present curriculum content. However, the lack of *sensors*, and *turtles* or *robots* restricts what can be taught. Nevertheless, good use is made of ICT to encourage pupils to undertake personal research, to solve problems and work on their own or as a member of a group as each task demands. The co-ordinator manages the subject well within the time constraints, with good medium and short-term plans.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

64. Information technology is used well in other subjects to enhance both teaching and learning. Teachers make very effective use of data projectors and digital cameras, and pupils use their word processing skills to improve the presentation of their work. In addition, pupils search the Internet for information in a range of subjects, including the humanities. There is no formal monitoring of ICT across the curriculum, but the co-ordinator is aware of what is happening and available to advise on request.

HUMANITIES

Geography

65. It was not possible to observe any lessons in geography, but examination of pupils' work clearly indicates good coverage of both human and physical geography. Good attention is given to *mapping* skills and this is reinforced in physical education when *orienteering*. Written work is well presented and well illustrated with maps, plans and pictures.

History

66. Insufficient lessons were observed to make a judgement on provision, but in the two lessons seen, pupils learned very well as a result of skilled teaching. One very good lesson for a Year 9 class really brought history to life through imaginative teaching. Through the excellent use of technology, and role play, pupils gained a greater understanding of Norman England following the invasion by William the Conqueror. As they donned helmets and crowns they suggested made suggestions how and where to build a new *motte* and *Bailey Castle* which eventually became their home city of *Newcastle*. The second very good lesson was with an individual pupil from EPICC who

was sufficiently well encouraged and motivated that he stayed focused for the whole lesson making very good gains in his knowledge of Charles II.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because of good teaching
- The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral social and cultural development.
- Assessment is an area for improvement

Commentary

67. Pupils in all year groups achieve well. Those from the EPICC unit are sensitively supported in lessons with their peers in other classes and encouraged to take an active part. Teaching and learning are good overall, with one very good lesson and one unsatisfactory lesson being observed. Where teaching is most successful, pupils enjoy a sensory experience through the use of candles, music and incense, all of which are used very effectively to create a calm atmosphere. A quick-fire session at the start of each session enables the teacher to check pupils' knowledge of, for example, the symbols associated with the major world faiths. Though not subject specialists, teachers have a suitable knowledge and understanding. They make lessons interesting and relevant by using interesting objects and computers. For example, pupils in Year 9 recalled their knowledge of Christian churches through high quality computerised photographs as they identified differences and similarities between Church of England, Methodist and Baptist churches. Teachers plan well for pupils to improve their speaking and listening by, for example, explaining the difference between *religion* and *religious*. Teachers generally have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour, though in the lesson where teaching was unsatisfactory, pupils' behaviour was not managed well so learning was disrupted and the lesson was postponed until the following day.

68. Pupils increase their knowledge of the beliefs and celebrations of the major faiths. Through sensitive teaching, they speak with respect about what each faith holds sacred including festivals. Older pupils become more aware of their own values as they consider *the origins of belief*, religious changes and, for example, the impact of *Darwin's theory of evolution* on belief. Very good use is made of visits and visitors to make learning meaningful and to contribute to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural understanding. Pupils talk knowledgeably and with enthusiasm about visits to a church and a mosque and about the Sikh wedding they took part in.

69. At present there is no subject manager as the co-ordinator has taken on other responsibilities for the coming year. Nevertheless, her previous hard work and very good management has ensured the subject continues to be well taught and that good improvement has been made since the last inspection. Assessment, while satisfactory, is an area for improvement. At the end of each lesson, pupils record the topic they have discussed in their *task diary* and how they think they performed, comments are often *OK* or *I did well*. While this records the themes that have covered and identifies topics pupils have missed through absence, it does not give evidence of the knowledge and skills that have been acquired which is helpful in planning precisely to meet individual needs. As yet there is no accreditation for pupils in Years 10 and 11 as the co-ordinator has been awaiting the publication of new Locally Agreed Syllabus.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

70. Insufficient lessons were observed to make a judgement on provision. Nevertheless, pupils follow a well-thought out programmes which incorporate work in resistant materials, elements of food technology, textiles, and information and communication technology. The planned programme allows pupils to acquire skills at a good rate. By Year 9, pupils measure and cut with increasing

accuracy and have produced items in wood and plastic. Interesting projects such as constructing complicated mobiles have resulted in an increased appreciation of weight, shape and balance. Through the interest and expertise of the teacher, pupils in Year 8 are introduced to boat building and repair. Pupils enjoy their lessons and respond well. In the one lesson observed in Year 10, pupils made good progress in understanding electrical circuits as they worked on their design for a *steady hand* game.

71. In food technology, pupils learn about healthy eating, kitchen safety and meal planning, increasing their awareness of the foods of other cultures through researching and making Chinese, Indian, Spanish and Italian foods. In the one lesson observed in Year 10, pupils appreciated the difference between shop bought and home made pizza, recognising that in addition to the taste, the home made pizza was far healthier.

72. Assessment is well developed. Pupils assess their performance at the end of each unit, recording the skills and techniques they have learned and deciding how they could improve their work. Teachers keep good records of pupils' progress which helps them plan future lessons. Accommodation and resources for both aspects are good. Pupils benefit from a spacious and well-equipped workshop and the food technology facilities allow pupils full access to cookers and kitchen implements.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

73. Insufficient lessons were observed to make a judgement on provision in **art and design**. Pupils follow a well-designed programme which emphasises the use of colour and pattern and which introduces them to a variety of drawing skills using different materials. Work is displayed effectively around the school creating a pleasant environment. Pupils in Year 9 have produced good quality still life drawings using pastels, and pupils in Year 11 have created impressive paintings in black and white and in colour which show a waterfront scene. An attractive mural of brightly coloured ceramic tiles in the entrance to the school composed by Years 10 and 11 confirms the progress pupils make in their appreciation of contrasting colour and patterns. Two lessons were observed. In one lesson, pupils in Year 8 made good progress in learning to draw a face. The teacher, who is a specialist, gave very clear instructions and demonstrated the techniques very effectively. Pupils worked with concentration and obvious enjoyment. Pupils equally enjoyed a Year 7 lesson where they gained an understanding of warm and cold colours. Although there is no regular assessment in the subject, pupils build up a portfolio of finished work and their work is carefully marked and annotated so they know how they can improve.

74. Pupils enjoy their **music** lessons and are animated when discussing their performance in, for example, the Christmas concert. Pupils sing with enthusiasm in assemblies with a few having the confidence to perform in church in front of a congregation, singing solo or as part of a group. An awareness of the music of other countries such as Brazil extends pupils' appreciation of other cultures. In the one lesson observed, teaching and learning were unsatisfactory. Despite his subject knowledge and musical ability, the teacher deviated from his plan, did not include all pupils in the activities and the lesson did not provide for pupils to improve their singing. Furthermore there was no composition element in the lesson. However, video evidence suggests this is not always so and that pupils experience all elements of the subject.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The provision for physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons at the nearby secondary school contribute significantly to pupils' achievements
- Teaching and learning are good
- Pupils have experience of a wide range of sports
- The subject is well led and managed

Commentary

75. Achievement in physical education is good supported by the extensive opportunities which pupils have in Years 7 to 9 to share in the teaching and facilities of the neighbouring secondary school which has specialist sports status. Unfortunately, because of the complexities of the timetable, these sessions now take place on alternate weeks. Nevertheless, the long-serving co-ordinator has developed very good links with mainstream colleagues which are used effectively to enrich pupils' learning and contribute to achievement. The project has attracted attention throughout the region. Pupils take a full part in all lessons. In the lesson observed at the mainstream school, pupils learned the basic skills of hockey and girls were introduced to trampolining, making full use of the very good facilities. The curriculum is well planned and each unit of work is appropriately broken down to illustrate the full range of skills to be acquired.

76. Older pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow an equally wide range of activities. They are able to sample orienteering, trampolining and dance amongst others. Teachers make good use of local leisure facilities to encourage pupils to develop the habit of exercise when they leave the school. In a well taught orienteering lesson pupils learned how to find their way using a simple map and they were shown the technique of *thumbing maps* by an enthusiastic and very knowledgeable teacher. The girls who had chosen the dance option made good progress in understanding and responding to rock and roll rhythms as they worked in small groups to create choreographed sequences of movements.

77. Teaching and learning are, overall, good. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 benefit from teaching by well qualified specialists at the nearby secondary school and make very good progress. In the lesson observed, teachers maintained a very good pace and clearly explained and illustrated the relevant techniques of hockey and trampolining. Very good use of questions ensured all pupils were included in the demonstrations and practise. The co-ordinator for the subject who accompanied the pupils took a full part in the teaching and the resulting high quality support enabled the pupils to work with confidence and enthusiasm. In the lessons observed in Years 10 and 11, teachers were very well prepared and displayed enthusiasm for the subject. Lessons were characterised by very good relationships and high levels of support from teachers and support staff. Pupils responded well to the challenging activities and made good progress. Where practical, pupils complete homework to reinforce their understanding of the lesson. Pupils in Year 7, for instance, completed a worksheet on the benefits of exercise after a lesson on basic fitness.

78. There is a very good range of sporting opportunities which enhance the curriculum. Pupils of all ages and capabilities are encouraged to take part in competitions and the school has developed a strong reputation for its sporting achievements. These are recorded in photographs and written accounts and success is readily celebrated. The pupils display a high level of interest in physical education and sport and are motivated by the enthusiasm and expertise of teachers at both schools to give of their best and so to achieve well. Talented pupils are identified and supported. Some with higher ability play in teams representing the mainstream school.

79. Management of the subject is good. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, especially in links with mainstream schools. The co-ordinator has developed comprehensive schemes of work in collaboration with mainstream colleagues. Activities are well prepared and resourced and the co-ordinator keeps very good records of pupils' attainment and progress. The level of skill and competence which each pupil displays is carefully recorded and pupils become further motivated by the award of certificates for their achievement. Higher attaining pupils attend the nearby secondary school for GCSE. In the recent past, this has enabled pupils access to vocational courses such as sports leadership.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well
- Teaching and learning are very good
- A very broad and relevant range of learning experiences is provided
- Leadership is very good and secures most effective teamwork

Commentary

80. The subject is allocated a significant amount of teaching time; it is made up of three strands, citizenship, health education and personal and social education, each separately taught up to Year 10. This enables teachers to provide a very broad range of learning experiences, which are well planned to provide a coherent programme that is highly relevant to pupils' needs. Though only two lessons were observed during the inspection, a wealth of evidence was acquired from teachers' planning, displays and pupils' work.

81. In Years 7 to 9, pupils follow a well-planned curriculum that leads to the Key Steps Award, accredited by ASDAN. In Year 7, pupils are introduced to the school's house system and they learn that they can earn house points for good work and behaviour, particularly through the personal target setting process. A parallel is drawn between house groups and political parties, and pupils learn to identify the leaders of the country's four main parties. There is a strong emphasis on classroom codes and behaviour that supports learning, such as listening carefully and taking care of school equipment. Socially acceptable behaviour is encouraged, as well as respect for others and their beliefs. By Year 9, pupils have explored themes such as racism, conflict, personal ambitions, growing up, facts about other European countries, feelings and emotions, friendships, and the value of education. They also follow current affairs. Through the School Council, pupils learn how to participate in the democratic process and make use of representatives to express their wishes and opinions.

82. In Years 10 and 11, pupils select challenges that enable them to earn credits. In completing these challenges, they demonstrate the use of key skills, such as problem solving or working with others. Challenges come from a wide variety of areas, including household skills, health and survival, the world of work and enterprise. By Year 11, pupils have accumulated sufficient credits to achieve the Bronze/Silver Award on the Youth Award Scheme, also accredited by ASDAN.

83. A strong feature of the school's programme is personal target setting. Each Monday morning, a tutorial session sees pupils reviewing the targets that they set themselves in the previous week and setting fresh ones for the week ahead. As pupils progress through the school they improve in their ability to set and review targets. Year 11 pupils are able to identify ways in which they have improved as a result of setting personal targets, such as resisting distractions.

84. Teaching and learning were very good in the lessons observed. In a Year 8 lesson, pupils were busy examining the school grounds for areas where litter was a problem. An effective start ensured that pupils were aware of the issues and knew that they must take care with certain types of litter, such as wearing rubber gloves and not picking up broken glass. Pupils worked in two groups to collect litter and record, using a digital camera, where the problem areas were. A follow-up worksheet was well designed so that pupils had the key vocabulary that they needed to complete a written account of what they had found. Pupils were well behaved and carried out their task sensibly; they achieved a great deal in the time available. In a Year 10 lesson of similar quality, pupils were planning a leisure activity as a group. Having identified a range of possible leisure activities, such as ice-skating, horse riding and trampolining, groups researched each one. For example, they found out how long it would take to get to a venue, what the cost would be, and whether there were group concessions. Each group presented their findings to the others, building

up a grid, and the class then decided that they would prefer to have a secret ballot to decide on an activity. All agreed to abide by the majority decision. The lesson's objectives of finding information, making a fair decision and working well with others were most successfully achieved. In addition, the activities gave pupils an opportunity to progress towards their individual targets, such as speaking politely to others.

85. PSHCE is very well led and managed. The subject has a high priority in the life of the school and is well supplemented by assemblies, residentials and the work of the School Council. The citizenship element has been strengthened since the last inspection and is taught through many subjects. The three co-ordinators of the strands of PSHCE work well as a team, and evaluations completed by staff have been helpful in identifying the strengths of the subject as well as areas for future development. Staff are confident in teaching the subject and support staff make a substantial contribution to pupils' learning and achievement. For instance, pupils that have lessons in EPICC are frequently taught by support staff. They follow the same lesson plans as teachers and teach pupils in an informed and supportive way; they manage pupils well too. As a result, these pupils make the same progress as others in the class.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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