

INSPECTION REPORT

ST ELIZABETH'S SCHOOL

Much Hadham

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117665

Headteacher: Mr Philip Poulton

Lead inspector: Mike Kell

Dates of inspection: 16th – 19th May 2005

Inspection number: 268642

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:	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils:	5 – 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	46
School address:	South End Much Hadham Hertfordshire
Postcode:	SG10 6EW
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Sr Veronica Hagen
Date of previous inspection:	5 th – 9 th October 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

St Elizabeth's School is part of a much wider community. It is situated within the St Elizabeth's Centre, which also has on the campus a specialist college for students aged 19 to 25 years and residential accommodation for older people, some of whom are quite elderly. In turn, St Elizabeth's Centre is one element of an international organisation that was founded by an Order of Catholic Sisters known as The Daughters of the Cross of Liège. Although it is a Roman Catholic school, it accepts pupils from any religion, cultural or ethnic background. The school has a broad socio-economic mix, in keeping with its intake from a number of local education authorities (LEAs), currently 25, covering a wide geographical area. Just over half of all pupils have a white British background, although a quarter of parents chose not to disclose their child's ethnic background. English is the first language of all pupils. A new headteacher was appointed in February 2005.

It is a day and residential school that is approved for 80 places for pupils aged five to 19 years. Approximately equal numbers of boys and girls are on roll, and all but six are boarders. Currently, the school is significantly under subscribed and those pupils who do attend are unevenly distributed between the age groups. There are only two pupils under the age of 11 years, and none in Years 1 and 2. On the other hand, almost half the pupils are in the post-16 provision.

All pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Need. The school is classified as providing for pupils with severe learning difficulties, and a significant number of pupils fall into this category. However, pupils' main special educational need is epilepsy and the

majority of the pupils on roll have this condition. A small number of pupils are identified as having autism. Because of pupils' learning difficulties, their development, especially their attainment on entry to the school, is significantly delayed compared with others of a similar age.

There are 10 classes. Four are for post-16 students and three for pupils in Years 10 and 11. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 are put into two classes, and those in Year 7 are taught alongside the two pupils under the age of 11 years. As there are so few, provision for these two pupils is not reported upon.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
13101	Mike Kell	Lead inspector	Design and technology
9052	Helen Barter	Lay inspector	
2480	Christine Gilder	Team inspector	English Music Personal, social and health education and citizenship
10678	Margaret Paull	Team inspector	Science Art and design Geography History Special educational needs
22620	Bob Wall	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Physical education

The inspection contractor was:

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

The effectiveness of St Elizabeth's School is satisfactory. In recent years, the school has suffered from a lack of clear leadership and many management systems are unsatisfactory. The strong leadership of the new headteacher is now reversing this decline. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, but pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory because of ineffective assessment systems. The very positive ethos means that pupils achieve very well in their personal development. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The recently appointed headteacher has been very influential in a short time; there is great capacity for further improvement.
- The school is totally committed to meeting pupils' many needs through the integrated working of its residential, medical and therapeutic services.
- A number of ineffective management systems are adversely affecting the quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum.
- Excellent relationships are evident throughout the school.
- There is a very clear focus on promoting pupils' personal development.
- There are shortcomings in the structure of the curriculum and the way it is delivered.
- Very good community links, good links with other schools and good extra-curricular activities enrich pupils' experiences.
- Pupils' achievement and progress over time are unsatisfactory because teachers do not assess, record, or measure their learning against 'P' and National Curriculum levels well enough, and nor do they moderate their judgements with colleagues.

Improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory, as a result of ineffective leadership and management. This is evident in the fact that two of the three key issues identified at that time have not been addressed; there is still not a whole school approach to planning and assessment of the curriculum, and procedures for monitoring teaching and the curriculum are still erratic. Pupils are now properly disapplied from studying a modern foreign language and from taking national tests at the end of Years 6 and 9.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	Personal and social education
Year 9	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory
Year 11	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory
Year 13	Unsatisfactory	Satisfactory

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

Overall, **achievements are unsatisfactory** for pupils in Years 7 – 11 and post-16 students, although students achieve satisfactorily in their accredited courses. It is not appropriate to report on the achievements of pupils in Years 3 – 6, as there are only two pupils in this age range in the school. Pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory in all subjects that were inspected fully; English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology (ICT), art and design and personal, social and health education and citizenship (PSHE). Religious education was not inspected because inspectors from the Archdiocese of Westminster examined it separately. All pupils in Year 7 – 9 have been disapplied from

studying a modern foreign language. Pupils' achievements against individual academic and personal targets, as contained in individual education plans (IEPs) suffer from shortcomings in the quality of the targets, recording what has been achieved, sharing information and monitoring by senior managers.

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education for its pupils. Teaching and learning are **satisfactory**. Teaching is enthusiastic and lively, supported by well-chosen resources. Staff are very keen to promote pupils' and students' learning but their knowledge of the pupils and their many needs is variable. As a result, there is inconsistent practice in the nature and usefulness of teachers' planning and their use of communication systems such as the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), symbols and Makaton signing. Post-16 students are provided with relevant and challenging activities that are well suited to their ages; teachers there have high expectations of their behaviour. Notwithstanding some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching, pupils across the school work hard.

The school provides a satisfactory range of curricular opportunities, although post-16 students benefit from a good curriculum that prepares them well for further study and adult life. The curriculum is enriched well; pupils' participation in sport is very good, and very good use is made of the community to extend curricular experiences. However, the curriculum is not monitored effectively and its development has not kept up with national initiatives. There are also shortcomings in the way it is delivered, such as the length of lessons and teacher deployment.

Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is very good. The support and guidance given to them is satisfactory. The way in which the school seeks, values and acts on pupils' views is satisfactory, but good for older students.

Links with parents and other schools are good. There are very good links with the community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher and other key staff are providing good leadership. The headteacher has a very clear vision and sense of purpose, which is fully endorsed by staff. Strategic planning is now based on clearly identified shortcomings in provision. School managers are strongly committed to promoting inclusion and show great concern for the needs of individuals. Many features of management systems are unsatisfactory. The governance of the school is satisfactory, and all statutory requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have positive views about the school because they believe it meets the individual needs of their children and supports them with communication strategies and behaviour management. Pupils are very satisfied and enjoy everything the school has to offer.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Introduce routine and systematic mechanisms for monitoring and evaluating teaching, learning and the curriculum and enhance the role of subject leaders.
- Implement comprehensive staff induction and performance management procedures.
- Develop the structure and delivery of the curriculum of pupils in Years 3 – 11 and post-16 students to ensure it is balanced and meets their needs.
- Implement consistent mechanisms for assessing, recording, levelling and moderating pupils' work to respond to individual needs and ensure that this assessment information is collected, analysed by management and used to bring about whole school improvement.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Overall, the achievements of boys and girls across the school are unsatisfactory, although post-16 students achieve satisfactorily in their accredited courses. It is not appropriate to report on the achievements of pupils in Years 3 – 6, as there are only two pupils in this age range in the school. Because of the nature and severity of their special educational needs, pupils' attainment on entry to the school is significantly below the level expected of pupils of similar ages.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school does not have in place consistent systems that enable teachers to assess and record what pupils have learnt.
- Teachers do not have the input of colleagues to moderate their judgements of the 'P' and National Curriculum levels that pupils attain.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 and post-16 students have the benefit of following a range of accredited courses; teachers evaluate their achievements against the criteria of these courses.
- No one has a specific responsibility to track the progress that pupils make because subject leaders' roles are underdeveloped.
- Senior managers do not carry out their responsibility to analyse assessment data.

Commentary

1. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 and post-16 students follow a good and relevant range of nationally accredited courses. Certificate of Educational Achievement (Entry Level) courses are available in science and life skills. A range of courses provided by the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) are also provided, such as modules in information and communication technology (ICT), the environment and horticulture. Some students are better served by the award Accreditation for Living (ALL), City and Guilds examinations in numeracy and literacy, and elements of the National Skills Profile. They succeed satisfactorily on these courses.

2. Pupils' achievements in Years 7 – 11 are unsatisfactory in all subjects that were inspected fully. These are English, mathematics, science, ICT, art and design and personal, social and health education and citizenship (PSHE). Religious education was not inspected because inspectors from the Archdiocese of Westminster examined it separately. All pupils in Year 7 – 9 have been disapplied from studying a modern foreign language. Pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory because teachers do not assess, record, measure their learning against 'P' and National Curriculum levels or moderate their judgements with colleagues well enough. The day-to-day implication of this is that teachers cannot use this information in deciding what needs to be taught next, and at what level. The major cause of this is the historical inadequacies in leadership and management of the school in recent years, when there was little monitoring of classroom practice. Although an assessment and recording procedure was introduced during that time, few staff use it, and those who do use it do not do so consistently. Consequently, there is erratic recording of what pupils have learnt. The problem is further compounded by teachers' relative isolation in this respect. As a result, teachers are insecure in the way they judge pupils' attainment against the

criteria contained in 'P' level and National Curriculum scales because they do not have the benefit of liaising with colleagues to moderate their judgements. Teachers themselves are aware of this, so they generally reassess pupils who join their class because they are insecure about their colleagues' judgements. This has significant implications for the efficient use of time.

3. Pupils' achievements in relation to the personal targets in subjects of the curriculum, set in their individual education plans (IEPs), are also unsatisfactory. In part this is because the targets themselves are frequently too imprecise, but there are other factors at work too. There is no routine mechanism for ensuring that IEPs, produced by the class teacher, are circulated to other teachers who teach their pupils, and on too many occasions some pupils continue to practice skills that were achieved some time earlier. A recurring common feature is that, historically, no member of senior management has considered it their responsibility to monitor IEPs.

4. Previous school leaders and managers are also responsible for other shortcomings in the school's systems for judging and tracking pupils' achievements and progress. Some aspects of this legacy remain, although the current headteacher has recognised this and is now addressing it. These deficiencies relate to the restricted roles given to subject leaders and the ineffectiveness of senior managers in monitoring and evaluating this aspect. Subject leaders have never been given the responsibility for leading and managing their subject in a practical and meaningful way. Therefore, they have not been able to build up a picture of how pupils are progressing within their subject by tracking individual pupils' progress over time. Senior management has failed to fulfil its responsibility to collect and collate whole school data. It has not been analysed so as to compare the achievements of pupils in different subjects or the performance of different groups of pupils, such as boys and girls or looked after children and others.

5. Pupils' achievements are also adversely affected by timetabling arrangements. Senior management has not analysed the timetable sufficiently well and so there are situations where three different teachers teach some classes for English and mathematics. The lack of secure assessment and record-keeping means that each of these teachers does not necessarily know the small gains in learning that have taken place in those lessons that they do not teach.

6. Physiotherapists and speech and language therapists make a significant contribution to pupils' physical development and communication skills respectively. However, the times at which pupils and students are withdrawn for therapies has not been monitored by senior management in terms of the impact on pupils' learning. For instance, there has not been any analysis of which subjects are being disturbed or any evaluation of how this might adversely affect pupils' achievements.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' and students' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good. Attendance and punctuality are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have very positive attitudes to school and to life in the home units.
- Pupils' and students' very good behaviour contributes to the positive school atmosphere.

- The school is a strong, spiritual community in which the very high quality of relationships is a very noticeable feature.
- Moral development is very good, and social development is good, but high staffing levels restrict some opportunities for pupils to develop independence.

Commentary

7. Pupils' and students' attendance continues to be very good. Apart from when there are medical reasons, they attend school whenever they can. Unauthorised absences are negligible and only occur when parents take their children on term-time holidays. Parents value the school highly and want their pupils to attend as much as possible. Punctuality from the home units into school in the morning is very good, as is punctuality to lessons.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.0	School data	0.3
National data	N/A	National data	N/A

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

8. Pupils and students are very happy in school and participate very well in all they are offered. They try hard in lessons and are very enthusiastic about whole school activities such as sports matches and taking part in an Old Time Music Hall show with staff. Their participation in the extensive range of activities on offer in the home units is very good. Parents are pleased that their children like the school so much. They feel that the school provides a happy, creative atmosphere and recognise the impact this has on their children's personal development.

9. Behaviour is very good throughout and contributes very well to the positive environment. Incidents involving pupils and students with more challenging behaviour are well managed, and recorded incidents are reducing as a result of the school's emphasis on promoting and rewarding positive behaviour. Parents appreciate the support that they get to help them manage their children's behaviour at home. Strategies to reduce exclusions, including re-organising home units and providing extended work experience have been very successful and have resulted in full re-integration back into school for the pupils involved.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
White – other White background
Mixed – White and Asian
Black or Black British - Caribbean
Black or Black British – African

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
27	3	2
2	0	0
1	0	0
2	0	0
2	0	0

Parent / pupil preferred not to say	12	0	0
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The table gives the number of exclusions, which may be different from the number of pupils excluded.

10. The school strongly reinforces its aims of being a community of pupils, students, parents and staff that works and learns together. High levels of respect and compassion for one another and strong, supportive relationships between adults and pupils and students are outstanding aspects of the school and contribute significantly to the school's ethos. The way in which the school nurtures all pupils as individual young people has a very good impact on their personal development. Acts of collective worship and quiet times offer pupils uplifting and reflective spiritual experiences, which reinforce religious values and teach pupils to respect, value and care for others. Pupils' cultural development is promoted well through planned activities such as playing Gamalan instruments in music, and in the home units when pupils take part in themed cultural evenings. The school uses its resource of international Community Service Volunteers (CSVs) well to extend pupils' understanding of other cultures.

11. Pupils' moral and social development is promoted well in PSHE lessons, in planned activities outside school and informally through the care and praise from staff. They have a clear understanding of right and wrong and are able to make choices when offered the opportunity. They understand the principles of living together in one community and learn independent skills in the home units. While the high staffing level in lessons enables significant levels of support to be provided, it often restricts opportunities for pupils to take responsibility for their own learning, to work together in pairs and small groups and to show initiative.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, as is the curriculum. There are very good activities which enrich the curriculum. Pupils' learning is supported by good links with parents and other schools, and very good use of the community. The school looks after its pupils very well.

Teaching and learning

Overall, teaching and learning are satisfactory across the school. Procedures for assessing pupils' achievements and progress are unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers and learning support assistants encourage and support pupils very well.
- Pupils' work is not assessed routinely, so teachers cannot use this information to plan future lessons most effectively.
- Teaching methods are frequently ineffective.
- Much teaching is enthusiastic and lively and at these times pupils learn well.
- Resources are often used very well to enhance learning.
- Post-16 students are provided with relevant activities that are well matched to their ages.

Commentary

12. There has been a decline in the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection, when they were judged as good. At that time, one lesson in three had teaching

that was very good or better, and only one per cent of teaching was considered unsatisfactory. This deterioration has occurred because of the lack of routine monitoring and evaluation of classroom practice and assessment procedures and records by senior managers. In recent years senior managers have not developed a planned programme of lesson observations, supported by performance management procedures, and subject leaders have not been empowered to monitor their colleagues at work. Therefore, best practice has not been disseminated and teachers requiring advice and guidance have not been identified and supported.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 41 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (2%)	8 (20%)	14 (34%)	16 (39%)	2 (5%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

13. Staff are very keen to promote pupils' and students' learning, although teachers' knowledge of the pupils and their many needs is variable. Many teachers are extremely experienced and understand the complexities of teaching pupils with autism or profound and multiple learning difficulties. Some may have knowledge of one or the other, while others have little experience of these conditions but extensive understanding of other types of special educational need, such as emotional and behavioural learning difficulties. Consequently, too often the teaching methods employed are not fully effective. Adults are committed to wanting pupils and students to succeed.

14. Relationships are excellent; adults interact very well with pupils and students. They are enthusiastic and very willing to give them individual support. This is possible because classrooms contain many adults; a teacher, learning support assistants and many CSVs are all represented in lessons. While this arrangement enables high levels of adult support to be provided, at times it is counter-productive in other ways. On many occasions teachers miss opportunities to promote pupils' personal development; different adults work 1:1 with pupils doing exactly the same activity and so they are not given chances to work as pairs or very small groups to develop co-operative and collaborative working.

15. Some teachers' uncertain knowledge of pupils' and students' needs and capabilities is evident in other ways too. For instance, many require additional forms of communication such as the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), symbols and Makaton signing and teachers indicate this need in their lesson planning. However, in practice this is not always provided. In the best lessons adults support pupils' and students' understanding very well through the consistent use of these communication systems, but at other times their use is inconsistent. Overall, teachers' lesson planning is satisfactory, even though a minority is very good. Generally, they identify what they anticipate all the pupils will learn, the skills that most should acquire and the knowledge that some might develop. This is not effective, given the very small size of classes; over half the classes contain only four pupils. Lesson planning is at its best when teachers identify clearly what they expect individual pupils and students to learn in each session. This shortcoming in planning is linked closely to the unsatisfactory procedures for assessing and recording pupils' learning and achievements. As a result, teachers are not always in a position to craft plans with very carefully chosen activities that reflect pupils' and students' small gains in learning in previous lessons. The negative impact of this is particularly evident in classes that are taught the same subject by a number of teachers; classes in Years 7 –11 each have four

lessons of English and mathematics each week, but in some cases they are disadvantaged by being taught by three different teachers.

16. Notwithstanding some inconsistencies in the quality of teaching and the methods employed, pupils across the school work hard. This is particularly the case in the post-16 department. Teachers there have high expectations of students' behaviour and generally provide them with challenging activities. A noticeable feature in the best lessons in this department is how activities are appropriate to students' ages and relevant to their interests; they are treated as maturing young adults. Overall, teachers use learning resources well. These range from good quality touchscreen computers that pupils use efficiently, to simple materials that are equally effective. For instance, a class of Year 10 and 11 pupils in a citizenship lesson were provided with canvassing leaflets from the recent General Election, to develop the idea of voting. On another occasion, post-16 students developed their communication skills excellently in a PSHE session because the resources were simple, but used exceptionally well.

17. Assessment procedures throughout the school are unsatisfactory; the school has no agreed assessment policy. A framework for the assessment of pupils' and students' achievements against National Curriculum and 'P' level attainment criteria has not been agreed, and procedures differ between subjects. Assessment in relation to pupils' and students' IEP targets is also unsatisfactory. The lack of whole-school procedures results in some pupils and students continuing to practice skills that were mastered some time earlier. The consequence of unsatisfactory assessment is that the school does not have sufficient information from which to judge the achievement of its pupils and students.

The curriculum

The school provides a satisfactory range of curricular opportunities, although post-16 students benefit from a good curriculum. Curriculum enrichment is good. Accommodation and learning resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The post-16 curriculum prepares students well for further study and adult life.
- The school provides a wide range of stimulating activities outside lessons and opportunities for pupils' participation in sport are very good.
- The curriculum is not monitored effectively and its development has not kept up with national initiatives.
- The school makes very good use of the community to extend curricular experiences.
- There are shortcomings in the way the curriculum is executed, such as the length of lessons and the way in which teachers are deployed to teach them.

Commentary

18. The curriculum for post-16 students has been structured well. It combines a focus on developing the key skills of numeracy, literacy and ICT with creative, aesthetic and physical experiences and the availability of accredited courses. Literacy and numeracy are taught as discrete lessons and they provide good opportunities for students to rehearse their developing skills in practical situations, such as participating in discussions and estimating weights. Curriculum breadth is provided by subjects such as performing arts, Yogacise, PSHE, religious education and health and fitness. The accredited courses provided for students offer a relevant and well-considered programme of experiences and

activities; the school has chosen these courses well. They include Entry Level examinations in science and life skills, a range of courses provided by ASDAN, such as modules in ICT, the environment and horticulture, ALL, and City and Guilds examinations in numeracy and literacy, and elements of the National Skills Profile. The school complies with the various accrediting bodies' documentation and validation procedures, and documentation of students' experiences is good. There are several very good opportunities for learning and experiences that provide insight into the world of work, but these have not yet been incorporated fully into a clear programme.

19. While the current curriculum meets the capabilities of students, the management team has identified correctly that it will need to develop this as pupils with more complex needs enter the post-16 provision. The school has tended to respond to external requirements, such as those of accrediting bodies, when in the future it needs to focus more on identified student needs. This is being vigorously addressed as part of the innovative plans to develop a new Living and Learning complex for students in the age range 16 -19 years.

20. The breadth of subjects provided up to Year 11 is satisfactory, and all statutory requirements are met. However, the curriculum lacks balance. For instance, approximately 40 per cent of the timetable is allocated to English and mathematics, but only about five per cent to each of science and ICT. Such imbalances reflect inadequacies in curriculum monitoring. Other features of the way in which the curriculum is delivered, through the construction of the timetable, also have shortcomings associated with management of the school. Lessons are much too long, and this affects pupils' and students' ability to maintain concentration for long stretches of time and also diminishes managers' potential to produce a more balanced timetable. This has been recognised and will be addressed before the next school year begins. Ineffective monitoring has also failed to tease out the inefficient deployment of teachers; too many teachers teach the same subject to the same classes, and part-time staff may teach up to seven different classes.

21. The very limited role given to subject leaders has also had an adverse effect on curriculum development for pupils in Years 7 – 11. Non-specialists lead many key subjects at present, and support for them through professional training has been inadequate. The subject leaders' role has been restricted to the provision of resources for staff rather than taking a professional lead in raising standards within the subject. Consequently, important national initiatives and strategies in literacy, numeracy and ICT have passed the school by, during an extended period in which the subjects of the curriculum have not been effectively developed through professional leadership and monitoring.

22. The curriculum provision made for pupils with additional special educational needs is satisfactory overall, with significant strengths in therapy support. Speech and language therapists provide first-rate support for staff, working with individual pupils, but the effective use throughout the school of additional forms of communication like Makaton signing, symbols and PECS is patchy. Many staff have not received key elements of training to develop their understanding of the range of complex impairments pupils and students now present. This is particularly evident with regard to autism and communication difficulties. There is not yet a sufficiently coherent approach to strategies to support those whose autism brings with it difficult behaviour and very severe communication difficulties.

23. The school makes very good use of its local community and good links with other schools to create a broad range of extended learning opportunities and extra-curricular activities that benefit pupils and students. Despite its rural location, the young people are highly visible in the local community. They take part in a range of educational, social,

sporting and leisure activities, frequently alongside other pupils with special educational needs or those from mainstream schools. Visiting artists and performers enrich the cultural programme provided. Resident pupils and students also enjoy an imaginative and varied programme of activities, which is very well co-ordinated. The school places a strong emphasis on pupils' and students' physical development, and their participation in sport is very good. For instance, there are competitive matches against local special schools and participation in events such as the Special Olympics Cricket Workshop. In addition, there are many opportunities on site; pupils and students play cricket and football, cycle in the extensive school grounds and use the exceptionally well-equipped adventure playground.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety is very good. The support and guidance given to them is satisfactory. The way in which the school seeks, values and acts on pupils' views is satisfactory, but is good for older students.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils and students have excellent relationships with adults.
- The care provided for pupils in the home units is very good.
- Informal support and guidance is good, but formal monitoring of all aspects of pupils' academic and personal progress is unsatisfactory.
- Arrangements for pupils to have a say in the life of the school are underdeveloped.

Commentary

24. Pupils and students are very well looked after by all adults, who have genuine concern for their individual needs. They have excellent and trusting relationships with staff and know who to go to for help. Very good health and safety and child protection procedures, and careful reviews of those in public care, ensure that all pupils are cared for very well. Medical and therapeutic staff care exceptionally well for pupils and have a clear focus on ensuring that pupils attend school as much as possible when their health allows it. Parents are very pleased with the very good support provided for their children and the way in which they are helped to settle at school.

25. The high levels of care and concern for pupils and students continue in the home units. Inspectors agree entirely with the very positive findings of the National Care Standards report in November 2004. There is a clear focus on ensuring pupils and students are well cared for physically and emotionally. The wide range of evening and weekend activities on offer in each of the home units is very good and caters for all pupils' and students' interests. Residential care workers are very well trained and knowledgeable about the needs of young people and have excellent, caring relationships with them. Although staff hear pupils read and help them on computers, the school has identified a need to provide more formal support for their learning and study in the home units.

26. Informal support and guidance for individual pupils is good, because staff know the pupils and students exceptionally well. Care and health records are well maintained. There is good liaison between the home units, nursing staff and teachers at the beginning and end of the school day, as well as at weekly meetings. However, the current lack of coherent assessment procedures throughout the school means that staff are unable to track all aspects of pupils' academic and personal progress accurately and formally, or identify where they need to make improvement. Individual education plans are not helpful in this

respect. There is a lack of continuity between the targets set at Annual Reviews of Statements of Special Educational Need and IEPs. Too many of them are not sufficiently well written or monitored to support pupils and students effectively. The school has rightly identified the need to develop the role of keyworker, working across the school and home units to ensure that there is a comprehensive view of individual pupils' and students' progress.

27. Every pupil in the school has an individual voice, because staff treat them with the utmost respect, dignity and patience and listen carefully to what they have to say. Post-16 students use their council well to discuss ideas for improving the school, to make decisions about activities and to organise events for their group. The school recognises that this formal way of seeking young people's views and acting on their wishes now needs to be extended to younger pupils too.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents and other schools are good. There are very good links with the community.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents have positive opinions of the school because it works well with them.
- Not enough information is given to parents on pupils' progress.
- Strong links with the community make a very good contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Good links with other schools lead to many opportunities for pupils and students to develop their social awareness and communication skills.

Commentary

28. The school has a good partnership with parents and welcomes them to support their children and to be involved in its activities. Parents like the school because it meets the individual needs of their children, supports them with communication strategies and behaviour management and keeps them informed about the activities in the home units. Parents are regularly invited to see their children's work, to talk about their progress with teachers and to support activities such as concerts, sports days and fundraising events. The newly introduced parents' forum is giving parents good opportunities to air their views of the school and to contribute to its development.

29. Information for parents is satisfactory overall. They are kept well informed about school events and activities. Residential care workers try to keep parents in touch as much as possible about what their children are doing during the week and are working to achieve consistency of this information between the different home units. Regular telephone contact with teachers and residential care workers helps to keep parents in contact with their children. Although informal contact is good and Annual Reviews of Statements of Special Educational Needs and other meetings are well organised and attended by parents, the information provided to parents on their children's academic progress is inconsistent because of weaknesses in the school's assessment procedures.

30. Bearing in mind its isolated location, the school works hard to maintain established links and to develop new ones with the community. These links promote pupils' personal and social development very well as they enable them to explore the world outside school

and to mix with others. Links with local businesses and employers are good and developing further through the school's provision for work experience and extended work-related learning (WRL) opportunities for older students. The school makes very good use of community facilities such as the swimming pool, parks, shops and restaurants to bring class-based learning 'alive', to develop pupils' and students' social awareness and for enjoyment. Pupils also attend local youth clubs, and scouts and guides from their own troupes attend regional events. The school also welcomes visitors from the community, such as specialist cricket and football coaches.

31. Pupils benefit from strong links with special and mainstream schools within the area, with plenty of activities that encourage social mixing. Sport is particularly well represented, with competitive matches against local special schools and participation in events such as the Special Olympics Cricket Workshop. Pupils from one local secondary school help to run a weekly youth club on site, those from another invite St Elizabeth's pupils to its Christmas party and students at a third raise cash to help fund trips to Lourdes.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher and other key staff provide good leadership. Management systems are unsatisfactory. The governance of the school is satisfactory, and all statutory requirements are met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a very clear vision and sense of purpose for the school, which is fully endorsed by staff.
- Strategic planning is now focused on rectifying clearly identified shortcomings in provision.
- School managers are committed to promoting inclusion and show concern for the needs of individuals.
- Unsatisfactory features of management include induction procedures for staff and their performance management, mechanisms for school self-evaluation and the collection, collation and use of assessment data.

Commentary

32. There has been very little leadership in the school in recent years. The school is now suffering from the long period of complacency and uncertainty that was prevalent prior to the current headteacher's permanent appointment in February 2005. The school had lacked a clear strategic direction and so staff were working in an environment that lacked a clearly defined sense of purpose. While other elements of the school's provision, such as residential care, nursing and therapy had been maintained the educational dimension had not kept pace with developments. The absence of a sharply defined and articulated vision was further compounded by the lack of systems that could be used to move the school forward and evaluate its progress towards attaining its objectives and determining new priorities. Consequently, upon appointment, the headteacher was confronted with some major issues.

33. The headteacher has responded to this challenge extremely well. In a very short time he has displayed a quality of leadership that has developed a culture to which all staff want to subscribe. They feel that the school now has a clear sense of purpose and everyone has a much more refined understanding of what is needed to achieve it. The headteacher quickly identified areas of weaknesses in the school's provision and enumerated them in a strategic plan. This is over-optimistic in terms of trying to achieve all

the listed objectives by September of this year, but it does demonstrate an acute appreciation of priority areas based on a detailed analysis of the current status of the school. While he has been the significant driving force in moving the school forward, most senior colleagues have very ably supported him. In addition to the headteacher, the senior management team is a multi-disciplinary group comprising the deputy headteacher and the heads of care and nursing services. Each of the school's core services of education, care and nursing / therapy has its own management team; the education group is called the senior academic management team. The distinctive and relative roles of these different groups are not yet defined; it is not yet clear whether the senior management team has the major responsibility for leadership and determining strategy, with the core service teams having a more managerial responsibility. Not all members of these different teams make a sufficient contribution. Care and nursing leaders have innovative and creative ideas, but this is not replicated within the education provision. Most members do not yet have a wide breadth of experience upon which to draw, but others have, for too long, allowed things to pass them by, have not taken the initiative or fulfilled their responsibilities adequately, and even now are not active contributors to developments. If the school is to achieve its aims, all members will have to contribute creative ideas that support, extend and challenge the headteacher.

34. The headteacher's major priority has been to establish a culture of challenge and high expectation and a clear direction for the school. He has, however, not yet had sufficient time to implement management systems that will enable senior leaders and managers to maintain oversight of how well the school is doing. Historically, procedures for monitoring and evaluating different aspects of the school's work have been haphazard; there have not been any robust, consistently applied processes. Consequently, the quality of teaching and learning and the curriculum have not been led and managed sufficiently well by senior staff. Subject leaders were not able to carry out this job because they were not given the responsibility or time to do so. A particularly important omission from the school's monitoring of its performance and responding appropriately relates to pupils' achievements. Inconsistent and poorly applied procedures meant that pupils' progress could not be tracked. No one had a whole school overview of the status of any subject of the curriculum, and no one used assessment data to compare pupils' relative performance in different subjects or to compare the performances of different groups of pupils, such as boys and girls. These deficiencies still exist, but key staff have recognised these shortcomings and are working hard towards addressing them.

35. Other management systems also require attention. There is an induction procedure for new staff, but it is not yet a sufficiently well structured programme to enable staff to accustom themselves to the school's practice. Procedures for the performance management of teachers also lack robustness and consistency. As a result, teachers have not had the opportunity to identify their professional development needs. Consequently, although a great deal of staff training goes on, it is not in areas that individual staff require, such as developing their skills in teaching pupils with autism or profound and multiple learning difficulties.

36. Leaders have a strongly held commitment to individual pupils and their needs, and this is matched by the whole school community's great concern for the individual. Key staff from education, nursing, therapy and the home units liaise very closely to ensure consistent support and guidance of pupils. Careful monitoring of medication, the care provided by residential care workers and physiotherapy and speech and language therapy input combine to control and manage pupils' many and diverse needs. This enables pupils to maximise the time they spend in classrooms.

37. Many governors bring in extremely useful professional expertise to support senior school staff. Overall, they maintain satisfactory oversight of the school and its work, although there is very effective monitoring of the home units. Governors share some of the responsibility for the situation that the current headteacher inherited. While each subject has a linked governor and some governors visit the school, they do not do so in a

structured, focused way that enables them to develop a full understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The recent impetus for change was initiated to a very great extent by the recently appointed chief executive of St Elizabeth's Centre. He has recent and substantial senior management experience of schools and has been instrumental in identifying the need for rapid and significant change within the school.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	4086000	Balance from previous year	135000
Total expenditure	3977000	Balance carried forward to the next year	244000
Expenditure per pupil	68569		

38. Fees are determined by placing each pupil in one of four bands based on their educational, care, medical and therapeutic needs, and whether the pupil is to be a day pupil or boarder. The school provides satisfactory value for money; both income and expenditure are judged as reasonable. The school's financial management is partly carried in-house, and partly through the Centre's financial management services. A portion of fees is used to fund this service, and this represents good value for money, as the school does not have to employ full-time staff to carry out these functions.

39. However, there is a disadvantage to this close link with the Centre. Any surpluses that the school accumulates at the end of a financial year are transferred to the Centre's general reserves. This limits the school's ability to plan strategically, because staff and governors cannot plan to produce surpluses for specific long-term priority developments. For instance, the surplus of £244000 shown above was passed on to the Centre rather than being available to the school to fund further development. However, the reverse is also true; in years when the school has a deficit it is able to draw from the Centre's general reserves, so that it does not begin any financial year with a deficit. While this has clear advantages to the school, it cushions it in a way that mitigates against senior staff having to take total responsibility for the school's viability and the difficult decisions that may have to be taken.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

WORK-RELATED LEARNING

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Representatives from the Connexions Service and the local Education and Business Partnership (EBP) make good contributions to this area of the school's work.
- Strong community links and contacts with other schools make a valuable contribution to preparing pupils and students for leaving school.
- There are a number of good placements available for work experience.
- Post-16 students run an effective mini-enterprise scheme.

Commentary

40. Preparation for adult life, including employment, is a long-standing priority in the school, although the inspection took place during a period of transition and development of this part of the curriculum. The new Learning and Living provision planned for students aged 16 -19 years is being used as the opportunity to provide a focus for development of work-related learning (WRL) for the age group 14 – 19 years. In Years 10 and 11, much of the pupils' experience of WRL develops through their ASDAN coursework, as the PSHE curriculum for these pupils does not include the full range of themes associated with WRL. However, an imminent audit of curriculum provision for pupils in this age group is due and there are clear plans for all these themes to be incorporated into the school's curriculum proposals for 2005-6.

41. The school is well served by its strong links with key members of the local community, businesses and specialist advisers. In particular, these contacts provide pupils and students with advice and guidance, as well as opportunities for work experience placements. Colleagues from the Connexions service and EBP provide effective specialist input into activities such as advising on specialist work experience providers and the mini-enterprise scheme. This scheme is a particularly useful exercise. It helps to develop students' understanding of how businesses operate, enables them to use their knowledge and skills in practical real-life situations and promotes their personal development in areas such as making decisions and considering consequences.

42. The most capable and socially mature students undertake their work experience off-site, and placements have included a travel agent, an animal hospital and the local primary school. Those who could benefit from work experience but require a more sheltered situation are often placed in an environment on the extensive St Elizabeth's Centre site. However, the full potential of this as a resource for learning is only now being exploited; increasingly useful links are developing with small enterprise units on the site. In addition, the range of activities and services within the Centre are being recognised as having the potential to provide many new locations in which pupils and students, including those with the most complex needs, could participate in an experience of work.

43. The links to support vocational learning and career decisions are now extending to other special schools in the region. St Elizabeth's is soon to host an 'Opportunities Day' for Year 10 and 11 pupils with severe learning difficulties, which will involve up to 18 special schools. As many as 40 local employers have committed themselves to providing workshops and 'taster' experiences for the pupils and arrangements will be made for pupils to meet with many small businesses that will be represented.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 AND 4 AND POST-16

ENGLISH

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There was no effective leadership of English and literacy for several years, which affected all aspects of the school's work, although the situation is now improving.
- The school cannot demonstrate how well pupils are progressing over time, despite satisfactory teaching overall.
- Pupils work well and try their hardest in lessons in response to the support and encouragement they receive.
- The speech and language therapists make a very important contribution to speaking and listening work throughout the school.

Commentary

44. The school's position regarding English and literacy is weaker than it was at the time of the last inspection. At that time, inspectors noted the potential for improvement in English involving the input of the school's speech and language therapists. This was not realised, because a lengthy period without clear subject leadership and direction followed. This unsatisfactory situation had several consequences. Most importantly, teachers have worked in isolation from each other and from national initiatives to improve literacy; neither the National Literacy Strategy nor the National Strategy for English in Years 7 – 9 have been adopted in any meaningful way. Until last term, there was no school-wide scheme of work for English to make sure that pupils develop their reading, writing, speaking and listening skills in a systematic way. In addition, without leadership based on effective monitoring and evaluation of teachers' work and pupils' achievement and progress, procedures for assessing and recording progress became increasingly inconsistent.

45. It is not appropriate to judge the leadership and management skills of the subject leader, because the constraints placed upon the role rendered it ineffective. Her initial main targets, to find and then provide appropriate resources for staff and write long-term plans could not be achieved fully. Orders placed for vital new resources were not processed and so, for example, learning resources for work with the pupils with the most complex needs are unsatisfactory and the library needs updating. However, the recent appointment of a new headteacher has already transformed staff's day-to-day experience and confidence. Without exception, the staff are fully committed to the changes they know are needed to develop their practice to match the standards of the best already being achieved. The speech and language therapists make a first-rate contribution to the school's work, and speaking and listening is supported especially well. They and the subject leader are now seeking to make time together to link the very effective speech and language targets more closely with English teaching and IEPs across the school. The subject leader has now identified a very clear agenda for improvement and there is great capacity for her and the speech and language therapists to implement it and move the subject forward, although there remains much to be done.

46. Teaching is satisfactory overall, although in every age group there are lessons in which teaching is good or better. The key skills of speaking and listening, reading and writing are promoted satisfactorily. Their development is enhanced particularly well by the quality of the relationships, which are consistently very good, between staff and pupils and amongst the pupils and students. Good teamwork between teachers and learning support assistants provides very

good support and encouragement for individual learning and so, as a result, pupils and students consistently show good attitudes towards their work and try hard.

47. In the better lessons, pupils are given a variety of motivating activities supported by interesting resources. These tasks are well matched to pupils' capabilities and so all of them learn well. For instance, a class of less capable pupils in the age range Years 3 – 7 made good progress in showing their understanding of a poem about seashells. Their speaking and listening skills were developed well as they discussed the seaside and tried to find adjectives to describe the shells, which were passed around and handled with great care. A computer was used effectively to allow a pupil with complex needs to match seaside words, while more capable pupils worked with clear understanding on individual tasks, with answers written accurately and neatly.

48. The strongest teaching seen in the inspection was with pupils in Years 10 and 11 and post-16 students. Generally, the very long lessons add to the difficulty of maintaining pace and motivation for the pupils. However, the most skilled teaching is planned to exploit this positively, such as in a Year 10 lesson that was part of a series about adventure stories. Pupils' good learning began with the quality of the teacher's planning and the variety of activities it encompassed. Planning was creative and imaginative, starting from a story the teacher had written about Tutankhamun's treasure, in which all the pupils were characters. They listened eagerly to the next instalment and they were able to follow the story themselves as they all had their own printed version, with symbols used well throughout. Their treasure chest, containing a golden Tutankhamun's head, had disappeared from the classroom, and a box with a combination lock had been left in its place. Numeracy skills were going to be required to unlock it and find its contents, and the learning activities related to this were very well planned so that all pupils worked to their potential. The teacher worked intensively with a lower attaining pupil using the computer, while support staff focused on reading for the more competent pupils, and word matching and drawing activities for other pupils. A more orally capable pupil was able to explain his ideas well because he was fully engaged by good questioning. These activities were particularly well chosen to evaluate pupils' understanding of the story.

49. In an excellent lesson in a post-16 class, literacy and PSHE were very well linked. Students took part in a game in which each sat in turn in front of the interactive whiteboard, which showed an image of an everyday object. Students had to provide clues to help the student work out what was in the picture. They showed a sophisticated grasp of this, often offering accurate but highly cryptic clues. These more capable students used a rich range of vocabulary, showing how difficult it can be to define everyday objects, such as a minibus. The lesson continued with work on understanding and interpreting facial gestures and body language; this was a particularly worthwhile and important communication activity as many of the students had impairments within the autistic range. Very good support from the teacher and learning support assistants challenged their thinking and their follow-up writing showed that they had developed effective descriptive and factual writing.

50. Although pupils and students learn satisfactorily in lessons, and often better than this, their achievements over time are unsatisfactory. This is because the school does not have agreed systems to assign levels to pupils' work against nationally agreed scales, or to record and retain portfolios of work that indicate progress clearly from year to year. Where there are examples of work in progress files, teachers rarely date the work and annotate it to explain why it shows significant achievement for that pupil. Individual education plans are of limited value in showing pupils' achievements against personal targets. The plans do not always have targets that are effective in guiding pupils on how to improve their skills, or showing learning support staff how they can support this. In addition, the plans are not always shared with others who teach pupils and the plans are not reviewed regularly. As a result, a few pupils spend too long repeating activities when they have already achieved their targets.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

51. Pupils' and students' literacy skills are promoted well by other subjects of the curriculum. Their speaking and listening skills are developed through the many opportunities provided for them to contribute to discussions and respond to questions. Many of these discussions are mature exchanges. This was especially so in post-16 classes, where students grappled with ideas such as who makes the decisions that affect their lives, and in a Year 11 citizenship session, where pupils considered the idea of voting and elections. At these times, appropriate vocabulary is used and reinforced, and this is also the case in subjects such as science, which require pupils to understand key subject-specific vocabulary. On other occasions, activities require pupils to focus and listen very carefully, such as identifying sounds on an audio tape. Teachers are also effective at planning activities that promote pupils' reading and writing skills. For instance, a group of Year 10 and 11 pupils in an ICT lesson were fully involved in producing a record of their off-site visit to listen to Gamalan music; specific programs, such as the use of symbols, enabled them to write sentences describing photographs that they imported into their work.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The overall achievement of pupils and students is unsatisfactory, as the school lacks clear and consistent assessment procedures.
- Pupils' and students' attitudes to their learning are very good.
- The curriculum for mathematics is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

52. The assessment of pupils' and students' abilities in mathematics is unsatisfactory. This represents unsatisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Individual class teachers estimate pupils' and students' achievements against National Curriculum and 'P' scale attainment levels, but these assessments are not undertaken regularly. In addition, they are often not substantiated by examples of pupils' and students' work, and levels and judgements are not compared to ensure consistency across the school, or with pupils or students in other schools. The resulting assessments are not analysed at a whole-school level and are rarely analysed by individual teachers. As a result, the school is unable to accurately judge the attainment and progress of its pupils and students. The achievement of pupils and students in these circumstances is unsatisfactory.

53. The assessment of individual mathematics targets, set as part of pupils' and students' IEPs, is also unsatisfactory. The system is applied inconsistently and pupils' and students' targets are often vague. Different teachers use the recording system differently and assessment information is often not used to develop future teaching. For example, recording for one pupil indicated that her individual target, established and achieved in November 2004, was still being taught at the time of the inspection.

54. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, ranging from very good to unsatisfactory. The best teaching occurs when lessons have a clear structure, resources are stimulating and appropriate to pupils' and students' needs and ages. Such lessons are taught enthusiastically and continue at a brisk pace. For example, a class of post-16 students were initially fascinated by the different weight of two identical boxes before comparing the relative weights of different items of shopping they contained. The extreme length of lessons very frequently leads teachers to include additional mathematical activities

unrelated to the lesson focus. While this has a positive impact on pupils' and students' levels of attention and behaviour, it results in lessons that lack focus and sufficient pace.

55. The level of adult support in lessons is exceptionally high. The combination of learning support assistants and CSVs very often results in equal numbers of pupils or students and adults in lessons. While this provides pupils and students with very effective support, it greatly restricts opportunities for them to work in pairs and small groups. In one lesson, two Year 11 pupils compared their estimation tasks separately, one with the teacher and the other with a CSV, rather than working with each other with adult support. Such restrictions lead to mathematics making an unsatisfactory contribution to pupils' and students' social development.

56. The attitude of the pupils and students to their learning is very good, except when teaching is unsatisfactory and then their attitudes deteriorate. On occasions, pupils' attitudes are excellent. The quality of relationships between adults and pupils and with students is consistently very high. All staff know their pupils or students very well and use this detailed knowledge to set high expectations of behaviour and participation. In spite of the extremely long lessons and the complexity of their needs, pupils and students concentrate for long periods and respond very positively to the content of the lessons. On the rare occasions that pupils or students misbehave, the exceptionally high level of staffing ensures that lessons are not disrupted and pupils and students remain focused. Pupil and student behaviour in lessons is very good.

57. The curriculum for mathematics is unsatisfactory. There is confusion between class teachers and the subject leader regarding which medium term plans are in use, and some lessons do not follow the curriculum plans for the subject. In addition, some teachers plan specific lessons to teach IEP targets, while others teach these targets as a separate section of mathematics lessons. Additional confusion is created by single isolated lessons being taught by different teachers; the lack of sufficient discussion and refinement of individual pupils' and students' targets further disrupts curriculum coverage.

58. The leadership and management of mathematics are at extremely early stages of development. A lack of time to develop both roles results in it being impossible to judge the effectiveness of the subject leader, although some effective basic initial work has been undertaken to develop a range of satisfactory resources. The subject leader is also in the process of developing a clear view for the future development of the subject, although further work is still required to order these well-identified priorities.

Mathematics across the curriculum

59. There is a satisfactory range of activities for pupils and students to extend their mathematical understanding in other subjects; for example, counting cars to produce a graph on the computer as part of ASDAN module for ICT. However, these opportunities are generally linked to incidences of effective teaching, rather than being systematically planned. The subject leader does not currently monitor this aspect of provision.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is enthusiastic, and this encourages pupils to learn.

- Teachers are knowledgeable about the subject and generally provide pupils with interesting activities that motivate and engage them.
- The management of planning and recording systems is not consistent, although steps are being taken to address this.
- Unsatisfactory accommodation restricts pupils' learning.

Commentary

60. Pupils are highly motivated towards science and they enjoy their lessons. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall; when lessons contain a diverse range of innovative learning opportunities, teaching is good and pupils learn well.

61. Generally, teachers are able to do this because they have a level of subject knowledge that enables them to plan and provide activities that build up pupils' learning in a structured and measured way. Their enthusiasm for the subject means that they do this in creative and interesting ways. One such example was in a Year 9 lesson when pupils used audio tapes to develop their listening skills by identifying sounds and describing their qualities. The teacher made good use of voice to alter the mood and to reinforce pupils' language, emphasising words like 'excited' and 'calm'. Pupils were fully engaged in initiating their own responses, and listening well to each other's efforts. There was an interesting approach to sound discrimination skills when a learning support assistant went outside and spoke at different distances through the closed window, capturing the close attention of all the pupils. Another good approach to investigative science was observed when Year 11 pupils used a range of senses to explore the textures of different materials, such as when they felt different surfaces with their bare feet. The pupils learnt well from the various sensory activities they experienced, because teachers and learning support assistants provided high levels of encouragement and support, even though the activities were unfamiliar and therefore very challenging for some of the pupils, such as those with autism.

62. Teaching and learning is less effective when teachers do not plan tasks that match pupils' capabilities as well as they might. At these times, pupils become disinterested and unco-operative, such as when a class of pupils in the age range Year 3 – 7 investigated solids and mixtures and how to separate them. On these occasions, because the activities do not fully match pupils' needs, adults tend to be over-directive and this becomes counter-productive.

63. Despite the good qualifications of staff and their clear interest in the subject, this does not lead to pupils achieving as well as they could. As a result, improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory because of the inadequacies in assessing and recording their learning, and shortcomings in the leadership and management of the subject. At the present time, IEP targets are not used consistently to develop lesson planning and teaching in science, so that tasks set are too often hit and miss as far as meeting all pupils' needs is concerned. In addition, there is no continuity among the different teachers in their systems for assessment and recording. As a result, there are differences in the quality of science lessons. These problems arise because the role of subject leader has not been allowed to evolve, and so his leadership and management cannot be fairly judged. Monitoring of provision has yet to be developed fully, although the subject leader is well aware of what needs to be done in terms of planning for individual needs in lessons and adapting the curriculum further to meet those needs. The resources for science are satisfactory, but the lack of a science laboratory is an impediment to providing pupils with the full range of investigative learning opportunities.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The achievement of pupils and students is unsatisfactory, as the school lacks clear and consistent assessment procedures.
- The quality of teaching and learning in ICT are good because pupils and students are challenged and time is used very well.
- Pupils' and students' attitudes to their learning are very good and so they work productively in lessons.

- The curriculum for ICT is unsatisfactory, and this reduces the range of activities provided for pupils.

Commentary

64. The assessment of pupils' and students' capabilities in ICT is unsatisfactory. Although a very small minority of class teachers estimate pupils' and students' achievements against National Curriculum attainment levels and 'P' scales, the vast majority do not make such assessments. Assessment is satisfactory in relation to post-16 students, who follow accredited courses. However, the assessments of pupils' and students' achievements are not analysed to ensure consistency across the school, or to determine the relative progress of individual pupils or students. In these circumstances, the achievement of pupils and students is unsatisfactory.

65. Overall, teaching and learning are good, and teaching is especially strong when undertaken by the subject leader. On these occasions, lessons are very well structured, the provision of resources is excellent and activities challenge pupils and students to perform at a consistently high level. Particular care is taken to maximise the time available in very long lessons. In one lesson with Year 9 pupils, the teacher very skilfully moved the class group between their classroom, the school car park and the ICT classroom in order to create a computer graph of car colours. As a result, pupils were very easily able to relate their practical experience of counting cars to the creation of a pictorial graph in their classroom with later work on the computer. This lesson promoted strongly the development of pupils' numeracy and literacy skills.

66. Pupils' and students' attitudes to the use of ICT are very good overall. They are highly motivated by computers and other ICT equipment and greatly enjoy their ICT lessons. Teachers use careful questioning in a very age-appropriate manner in order to engage and interest pupils and students. This leads to lessons in which pupils and students are able to concentrate for extended periods, with the more competent ones working independently. Behaviour in ICT lessons is consistently very good.

67. The curriculum for ICT is at a very early stage of development. The subject leader has constructed a curriculum map that allocates areas of the curriculum to various periods of the school year. However, teachers have found it difficult to teach to the allocated timescales and lessons taught during the inspection did not match the curriculum map. Although the provision of accredited course for post-16 students is satisfactory, the overall curriculum provision is unsatisfactory.

68. There has been satisfactory improvement in provision since the last inspection, most noticeably in the quality and availability of resources. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory. The lack of time and opportunity for the subject leader to establish management systems and procedures makes it impossible to judge this aspect of his responsibility. Although newly established, the subject leader has a clear view of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject in the school; he combines a great enthusiasm for the subject with a drive to improve standards of achievement. In addition, his teaching provides an effective role model for other teachers to follow.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

69. Satisfactory opportunities are made available for pupils and students to use ICT in other subject areas. These are primarily restricted to using computers in English and mathematics lessons, although teachers do provide other opportunities, such as the task

given to Year 10 and 11 pupils in a citizenship lesson to produce canvassing leaflets to influence classmates to vote for particular treats. There are opportunities for pupils to use symbol programs, and switches enable many pupils to be full participants in lessons. However, computer use is often restricted as a reward at the end of the lesson for successful completion of other tasks, rather than as an integral part of the lesson objectives. Overall, the good practice observed in lessons for pupils in Years 7 to 11 seen at the previous inspection has not been maintained.

HUMANITIES

History and geography

70. It is not possible to make judgements about overall provision, teaching and learning and pupils' achievements in history and geography as only one history lesson was seen, and none in geography. In the Year 11 history lesson that was sampled, pupils learnt satisfactorily. The teacher tackled the difficult idea of chronology, using photographs of pupils and their families placed against a time line. This showed a number of generations and differences in styles and appearance over time. The more capable pupils were able to think about their answers to quite challenging questions, and identified differences such as 'younger' or 'older' and longer or shorter hairstyles. A helpful display reinforced the pupils' learning, and other displays around the school showed how history supports learning in other subjects, such as the history of art in the 20th century. This is the case for geography too. Topics like the weather are studied and consolidated in other lessons, such as when discussing the sensory features of different weather conditions during a story time in English.

71. In both history and geography, pupils' learning is enhanced and enriched very well by visits and trips out of school. Pupils have visited places such as a museum showing toys through the ages, Roman remains, marshlands, railways, woodlands, and shops. Many of these visits are recorded very well; older pupils produced a well-annotated book about rivers, and younger pupils made a very interesting record of their visit to Stanstead Mountfitchet Castle.

Religious education

72. A report on religious education is not included, because inspectors from the Archdiocese of Westminster inspected and reported on it separately.

TECHNOLOGY

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are impressive displays of pupils' work around the school.
- Pupils develop good skills and understanding because teachers insist on careful planning and work.
- Detailed assessment procedures are not yet established and so pupils' work is not properly evaluated.

Commentary

73. There has been a good improvement in provision since the last inspection, and this shows in the lively and interesting displays around the school. These are clearly largely the work of the pupils themselves. The displays indicate good collaboration between the pupils, and some also offer evidence of the valuable links between art and other subjects and events, such as the vibrant display made by Year 6 - 9 pupils relating to the carnival. There is impressive freedom of expression in the art relating to the carnival, supported by photographs of pupils attending, dressed in bright, gaudy colours. A variety of media were used, including collage, fabrics and paint, which provide a strong visual record of the event

for all to enjoy. A different type of display by Year 11 pupils is equally striking and effective. A very good collection of self-images and self-portraits, making good use of colour, digital photography and graphics, shows work based on the style of Andy Warhol.

74. The quality of teaching and learning responsible for the high standard of displays were evident in the lessons observed. Overall, pupils are taught well and so in lessons they make good progress in developing new skills and knowledge. Teachers' insistence on good attention to detail and careful work by the pupils, perhaps taking several weeks to develop and practice a particular skill or approach, provides a good basis for producing quality work that pupils can enjoy and understand. In the best lessons, teachers manage a good balance between encouraging pupils to think and reflect about the art work they are going to produce, and providing the practical tasks to develop the skills involved in making it. Lessons are less rewarding experiences for pupils when teachers do not adapt activities sufficiently well to meet individuals' different learning styles and capabilities. For example, a group of Year 8 and 9 pupils with very complex needs found it difficult to engage with a task involving the exploration of different shapes and containers, because their specific learning needs were not recognised in the planning.

75. Pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory because there are no effective assessment systems in place. This means that pupils' learning is not being properly evaluated and recorded in ways that enable teachers to judge their progress accurately. It is not appropriate to judge the effectiveness of the subject leader's leadership and management because of the limitations imposed by the previous senior management. However, within these constraints the subject leader has developed a good grasp of what is required to improve the subject and has made some good inroads in developing provision.

Design and technology

76. Too few lessons took place during the inspection for judgements to be made about teaching and learning, pupils' achievements and overall provision. In the two lessons that were sampled, pupils learnt well as teachers tried hard to develop the design element of the subject as well as pupils' 'making' skills. All pupils participated in the activities, because in each lesson there was the same number of adults as pupils. At times, during each lesson this was extremely helpful in managing pupils' behaviour, encouraging flagging concentration and supporting practical tasks. However, at other times the very high adult presence had a tendency to stifle creative learning, as pupils could not learn from trying things out, as adults prevented them making 'mistakes'.

77. Pupils follow a satisfactory curriculum. Planning shows curriculum breadth and a good mixture of food technology and working with resistant materials. Planning also provides well-identified ICT applications. It is not possible to judge the leadership and management skills of the subject leader, as there has not been any opportunity to develop these qualities because of the restrictions placed upon the role.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Music

78. Until this term, music was only taught in a small, unsuitable space beside the school hall. This limited greatly what could be achieved with the pupils. The new headteacher reorganised the accommodation to make a full-sized classroom available and both staff and pupils are now beginning to explore how best to use the new room to full advantage. A

number of teachers share the subject leader's enthusiasm for music, and there is now the potential to develop and extend the range of activities for pupils and students.

79. This subject is not being reported in full because too few lessons were seen. In the lessons sampled, teaching and learning were satisfactory. At times learning was good, such as when each pupil was able to work on a keyboard to make their own music, supported by a member of staff. Post-16 students with a very wide range of capability made good use of singing and signing for a 'hello' song; a student with profound and multiple learning difficulties was provided with a switch that enabled him to be fully included. Students were all able to learn in the lesson because of very close adult support, good eye contact and concentration and imaginative, practical development of rhythmical understanding. Learning is much less effective when activities do not match pupils' understanding and capabilities. For example, one session included explanations of musical terms linked to characters, like *Doctor Diminuendo* and *Miss Moderato*; this was well beyond the grasp of the pupils involved.

80. Music plays an important part in school concerts and productions, but the quality and range of learning resources is restricted. Much is outdated, although there is a reasonable range of tuned and untuned percussion instruments and several keyboards.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education

81. Too few lessons were observed to make judgements on the quality of teaching and learning, achievements and overall provision for this subject. However, the school places a strong emphasis on pupils' and students' physical development, and their participation in sport is very good. The curriculum is satisfactory, but a very wide range of after-school activities makes a highly significant contribution to the breadth of the curriculum. Opportunities are provided for pupils and students to play cricket and football, cycle in the extensive school grounds or use the exceptionally well-equipped adventure playground. Resources and accommodation for physical education are good overall.

82. Pupils and students have good opportunities to experience competitive sport. During the inspection, a football match with a neighbouring special school provided very good opportunities for pupils and students to practice their skills. The event also made a very good contribution to the development of pupils' and students' personal and social skills. Their attitudes to physical activities, both within lessons and after school, are very positive. They show very high levels of enthusiasm, are very keen to participate in activities over long periods of time and show high levels of enjoyment.

83. The leadership and management of physical education are at an extremely early stage of development. The historical absence of development of both roles results in it being impossible to judge the effectiveness of the subject leader. However, the school lacks clear and consistent assessment procedures through which teachers can determine pupils' and students' attainment and progress.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Personal development and life skills are strongly promoted throughout the week, in school and in the home units.
- Unsatisfactory leadership and oversight have restricted curriculum development in both subjects.
- Although teaching and learning are good overall, assessment is weak and so there is little formal recording of pupils' and students' achievements and progress.
- Very good use is made of the cottage for practising social skills and independent living for post-16 students.

Commentary

84. As the subjects were not reported at the last inspection, it is not possible to evaluate improvement. Personal, social and health education has been an important part of the school's formal curriculum provision for the past four years, but has been an extremely strong informal element in its work for much longer. The very positive pastoral ethos and staff commitment to supporting pupils' and students' personal development is a striking feature of the school. It is shown in many small ways. For example, careful planning made for a visit to a supermarket for a drink after swimming at a community swimming pool ensured pupils practised making choices, ordering and managing the money involved. When the school's football team played a competitive match during the inspection, *everyone* was involved in encouraging the players beforehand, supporting during the match and celebrating a convincing win.

85. The subject leader had been given little opportunity to develop the subject and so, lacking curriculum leadership and direction, historically teachers have planned individual lessons for their class. Inevitably, without proper monitoring, there was some duplication of content and gaps in other key areas. These shortcomings have now been identified and so a new framework of units of work was created last year to ensure that pupils and students could begin to develop their knowledge and understanding systematically. The formal citizenship element is satisfactory, but requires further development and greater prominence, even though features are promoted through other subjects.

86. The early benefits of the more structured programme were seen during the inspection. Lessons are mostly taught well, and some teaching is very good. For instance, a class of pupils in Years 10 and 11 focused on voting, capitalising on the recent General Election, as part of a decision-making module within their ASDAN course. In a very good lesson, canvassing leaflets were used to explore how these are designed to help voters choose their preferred candidate. Although uncertain about the leaders of political parties, several pupils had stayed up late to watch the results and good discussion ensued. This was followed by a practical exercise in creating persuasive leaflets to help pupils to choose between competing options available as school 'treats'. Proper attention was paid to selecting information, visual appeal and clear logos and the pupils' learning was clear throughout.

87. More capable post-16 students explored decision-making at a range of levels. The range was from decisions students may make themselves through to important ones made by more remote people, such as who attends their school and who decides what appears on television. Concrete links to their own experience featured strongly, including trying to work out the hierarchy for decision-making within the school. They showed themselves able to be mature, reflective, questioning and thoughtful in their responses.

88. Pupils' and students' good, and sometimes very good learning in lessons is not routinely evaluated and captured effectively in assessment records. Teachers make convincing judgements about their achievements because they know them so well, but these are not supported by systematically collected data against which progress can be evaluated.

89. A cottage on the Centre's grounds is well used to give post-16 students real experience of group living, cooking and personal organisation. Due to a redecoration programme linked with work experience, only part of the facility was in use. However, it is clear that students take responsibility for a wide range of maintenance and improvement projects. These range from building low brick walls around flower beds to redecorating, including planning, choosing and purchasing the paint and materials and completing the painting to a good standard. Inspector colleagues from the Archdiocese of Westminster observed lunch being prepared and shared the meal with students. They reported that a salad, sandwiches and fruit salad were competently prepared and well presented, and the meal was well managed by the students. They all engaged throughout in lively, often humorous discussion with their visitors, who enjoyed it greatly.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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.*