

INSPECTION REPORT

WEST LEA SCHOOL

Edmonton

LEA area: Enfield

Unique reference number: 102067

Headteacher: Mrs Andrena Fox

Lead inspector: Mrs Patricia Potheary

Dates of inspection: 16 – 18 May 2005

Inspection number: 268667

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	4 to 17 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	108
School address:	Haselbury Road Edmonton London
Postcode:	N9 9TU
Telephone number:	020 8807 2656
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Jim McKean
Date of previous inspection:	07 June 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

West Lea is a community day special school for 110 boys and girls. There are 108 pupils on roll aged 6 to 17 years. Sixty pupils are of white British heritage and 48 are from a wide range of other ethnic groups. Seventeen pupils speak English at an early stage of acquisition. Pupils come from different socio-economic backgrounds, which are below average overall. All pupils have a statement of special educational need and these are for a wide range of medical and learning difficulties including 21 pupils with speech language and communication difficulties, 26 with physical difficulties, 21 with emotional, social and behavioural difficulties (ESBD) and 12 with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). There is a recent increase in the numbers of pupils with ESBD and ASD. Attainment on entry, including the sixth form, is well below the national average. Pupil mobility is low.

Eight students attend college link courses for 1 day a week and four pupils attend four different mainstream schools for between one half and 3 days a week. The school is part of an education action zone with 1 secondary and 9 primary partners. The school also takes part in the Excellence in Cities initiative. It won a Healthy Schools Award in 2005 and runs parenting classes for the community.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21765	Patricia Potheary	Lead inspector	Design and technology Modern languages
9619	Robert Miller	Lay inspector	
8056	Howard Probert	Team inspector	Art and design Music Science
22948	Mary Vallis	Team inspector	English Geography History Special educational needs
23733	Averil Anderson	Team Inspector	Religious education Citizenship Work related learning
23412	Alvin Jeffs	Team Inspector	Information and communication technology Mathematics Physical education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

West Lea is a good school where pupils, many of whom have failed to thrive in a mainstream setting, begin to learn and achieve well. Management and leadership are good, resulting in well-focused teaching and a full curriculum. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils in all age groups achieve well and gain good accreditation by the time they leave school.
- The majority of pupils develop very positive and responsible attitudes towards school.
- The quality of teaching and the way pupils learn is consistently good in almost all subjects.
- The school is fully inclusive with a strong commitment to adapt to a rapidly changing pupil population.
- Despite good assessment of pupil performance, the school is not able to use the data effectively to analyse where key areas for improvement lie.
- The governors are committed and know the school well, but their role in driving and supporting school improvement is insufficiently developed.
- The accommodation is quite unsuitable for the population of the school and this limits how well pupils can learn. The whole site is very well maintained and presented.

Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory and the school continues to be a good school in all the major aspects. Standards and provision in information and communication technology (ICT), science, accreditation, and for pupils with additional special educational needs are all improved and all the previous issues have been addressed well. The accommodation contains several improved areas such as the new base for the youngest pupils but it is still poor in meeting pupils' needs.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 11	Good	Very good
Year 12	Satisfactory	Very good

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

Achievement is good. It is good in many subjects, including English in the primary department, and mathematics, science and ICT in all age groups, which is an improvement since the last inspection. There is no discernable difference in achievement for pupils with additional special educational needs, but in some classes a few pupils struggle to keep up. In English, for secondary aged pupils, and in religious education, achievement is satisfactory overall, partly for this reason. Very good achievement in art results in high quality work displayed in the school. The number of qualifications achieved by the age of 16 is improving all the time and is now good. Sixth formers achieve well in their courses, gaining in confidence and skills for the future, but are not challenged to build on core skills from their work in Year 11, and so make satisfactory progress overall. **Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good.** Students of all ages have very positive attitudes to work and school, and generally behave well. Attendance, although below average, is improving significantly. Students are helped particularly well in their ability to learn and take responsibility after previously having had difficulties.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching is also good. Teaching and learning are good for pupils and students of all ages and in all subjects with the exception of English in the secondary department and religious education, where they are satisfactory, and art where they are very good. Good subject knowledge, high expectations and very good relationships lead pupils to want to learn well. In the sixth form, learning is satisfactory rather than good, despite pupils being taught well, because of the nature of their courses. A lack of planning, to suit work more closely to individual needs in the secondary department, slows learning for a few. The curriculum is good and now meets statutory requirements. It is enriched very well by additional activities such as clubs, visitors and trips. The accommodation is not at all suitable for the needs of the pupils despite being very well cared for. The sixth form curriculum is popular with students and helps them gain some essential skills and confidence but it lacks the breadth and flexibility to meet all their needs. The care, guidance and support, to help students make the right choices, are good. Links with parents, colleges, other schools and organisations are good, helping pupils and students take their part in the wider community.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. A strong focus on inclusion ensures that all pupils do well. The headteacher is skilled in developing the school to adapt to the changing needs of pupils, especially the increase in pupils with emotional and behaviour difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. Governance is unsatisfactory; governors are committed and informed, but are few in number and do not challenge sufficiently to support the drive for further improvement. Some statutory duties are not met. The collection of information to show how well pupils are doing is improved, but is still not sufficiently clear for parents or managers to pinpoint accurately what needs to be done.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The majority of parents think that their children makes good progress, are happy at school and become mature and independent, often after a difficult mainstream experience. Some find it difficult to judge their child's achievement with the information provided. A small minority of parents are concerned about behaviour and that the wide range of different needs are not consistently met. The inspection findings largely concur with the majority of parent views. Pupils have a very positive view of the school, many feel confident and valued for the first time and they generally feel safe and well cared for.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Measure pupil performance in a way that enables school leaders to analyse, more effectively, where key areas for improvement lie.
- Develop the governors' role in driving and supporting school improvement.
- Seek to improve the accommodation so that it better meets the needs of the pupil population.

And to meet statutory requirements the governors should:

- Comply with all requirements for the prospectus.
- Ensure that the incident book fully meets requirements.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects and courses

Achievement is good for pupils aged 6 to 16 and satisfactory for those aged 17.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievements are more consistent since the last inspection and are now good in the majority of subjects.
- Achievement is satisfactory rather than good in English for pupils aged 11 –16 and in religious education.
- Achievement in art is particularly strong and pupils' work is delightful to see.
- Pupils achieve a good number of suitable qualifications by the age of 16 and this is a significant improvement.
- Very good improvements in information and communication technology mean that pupils now achieve well in this subject.
- Pupils in the sixth form achieve to a satisfactory level overall and do well in literacy, ICT and personal development. However some of their work is not challenging enough for them and does not build well upon earlier learning.

Commentary

1. Pupils make good overall progress and achieve well regardless of ethnicity, gender or ability. Students in the sixth form achieve to a satisfactory level, doing well in their courses, but lacking significant development of core skills from the year before. Pupils with additional special educational needs, such as autistic spectrum disorders, or severe learning or behaviour difficulties achieve equally well because staff know their individually different needs very well. As a result they achieve well against the targets on their Individual Education Plans. This is a sound improvement since the last inspection because there is good achievement in more subjects.
2. The school did not set annual targets last year because data does not enable effective distinction between pupils with widely different needs. Individually the majority of pupils met or exceeded their personal targets. Targets for this year are ambitious, including improved achievement at GCSE, but the school is on track to meet them. However, too many pupils appear to make no progress from one year to the next because the overall measures are not refined enough to show what they do achieve. This is confusing for parents and subject staff who can see for themselves what the pupils are learning. For example, achievements in art are very good and the high quality of pupils' work clearly reflects some inspirational teaching and the pupils' love of the subject. In addition, the overall National Curriculum levels achieved show good progress by the time pupils reach the age of 16 and are in line with other, similarly good, schools. There is a significant increase in the number of qualifications achieved at entry level in almost every subject and several pupils achieve a GCSE in one or more subjects, especially art and mathematics.
3. Achievement in English in the primary school, and mathematics, science and ICT for all age groups is good, with no discernable difference for pupils of differing abilities. Achievements in English, for secondary aged pupils, and religious education, is satisfactory rather than good, which reflects a lack of well targeted and sharply planned lessons. However for those who have 'Reading Recovery' lessons, progress and achievement is very good. Pupils' speaking and listening skills develop well with older pupils engaging in lively debate, but they lack the increased progress that would be likely to come from a more consistent use of signing and other aids to communication. Reading progress, for the majority, and written work, develop soundly by the age of 16, but English lessons in the secondary school are more likely to

engage the more able pupils and other pupils struggle to achieve in ways which suit them best.

4. Achievement in mathematics remains good since the last inspection, for all age groups. Pupils gain increasingly good grades in GCSE and entry level qualifications and show a grasp of quite complex problems, reflecting the suitable challenge and good teaching they receive. The good progress and achievements in science are consistent throughout the school and are based upon the strong subject knowledge of teachers. This also results in very good achievement in entry level and GCSE science subjects. Improvement in ICT means that pupils are now able to use their increasing skills in several subjects and meet national expectations for the way ICT helps people learn.

Sixth form

5. Achievement for students in the sixth form is satisfactory. They gain very good marks in their courses, but these are sometimes too easy for them. In English and Mathematics the work is not co-ordinated with their earlier achievements and learning applied to life skills, such as applying for jobs, shopping and cooking, does not build sufficiently well on their evident numerical skills. Literacy skills do develop well and are very relevant to their future needs. They also grow very well in confidence, social skills and independence and build a sound base of skills, which prepare them for the next stage of their education. Work undertaken in computing for these students is more challenging and they achieve well.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are most interested in school life and the wide range of opportunities on offer. They are keen to learn.
- There are many opportunities provided for pupils to take responsibilities, which they successfully fulfil.
- Pupils' confidence and self-esteem shows very good improvement during their time at the school, enabling them to achieve well, often for the first time.
- On occasions there is difficult behaviour in lessons due to the recent influx of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. This is usually managed well.
- The school provides very good opportunities for pupils to learn about their own and other cultures.

Commentary

6. Pupils and students post-16 show very good attitudes to learning in lessons. Pupils listen attentively and undertake tasks well. This is the result of good teaching, where in most lessons teachers maintain a high level of interest and set appropriately challenging tasks. This ensures that pupils of all abilities have the opportunity to achieve well. Pupils enjoy coming to school and can be observed socialising in the breakfast club at the start of the school day. They develop good relationships with their peers and this helps to ensure that the school day gets off to a prompt start. Pupils are encouraged to take different responsibilities as they progress through the school. For example, younger pupils take the class registers to the school office and others are milk monitors. Older pupils are expected to take responsibility for their materials in lessons. In one art lesson observed, Year 10 pupils were cutting and preparing clay for their individual, three-dimensional portraits. It is particularly noticeable that older pupils, when they see a need among younger pupils, are keen to offer help, like guiding them to their transport at the end of the day. In circle times, they develop an awareness of their responsibilities in the school community and the consequences of their actions.

Relationships in the school are constructive and adults provide good role models for the pupils. The strong focus on inclusion means that pupils in the school feel valued and work well in harmony with one another.

7. There is significant evidence that, during their progress through the school, pupils make substantial gains in their confidence and self-esteem. This is evident in the contributions made during the drama club and the informal discussions at the breakfast club each day. Similarly, pupil members of the school council speak confidently about their ideas and opinions about what is good for their school. This confidence is generated in Years 1 to 6. Each class has its own system to acknowledge and recognise achievement. The school is particularly successful in helping previously vulnerable pupils to begin to learn, often for the first time.
8. Pupils are generally well behaved and co-operative in lessons, listening to adults and following instructions, because staff set high expectations for pupils' conduct. Younger pupils learn to take turns and think about other pupils. There is some difficult behaviour in a few classes where there are pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. All these pupils have individual plans for behaviour management, which help to ensure that they do not disrupt classroom procedures. Sometimes these plans are not fully implemented by staff and difficult behaviour takes longer to calm down. As the numbers of pupils with behaviour difficulties increases, the school knows that a review of the existing procedures will be necessary to ensure that all staff are fully familiar with the best ways to meet the individual needs of these pupils.
9. Fixed term exclusions are low and involved 2 pupils last year. There are no permanent exclusions.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	60	1	0
White – any other White background	5	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Any other ethnic group	37	2	0

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

10. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social education is good and as a result pupils development in these respects is good. Cultural aspects are very good. The good ethos of the school helps to promote spiritual development in subjects such as personal, social and health education, assemblies and aspects of religious education. The moral and social education is promoted in circle time. Pupils are asked to consider questions like 'What is Truth?' 'What would you do if?' Cultural development is very good and it is widely linked to work in a range of subjects. For example, in Years 1 and 2, pupils engage in role-play using costumes from different countries, in history and geography they study countries like Kenya and the background of the peoples and, in food technology, they study foods from different parts of the world. Of particular merit is the contribution of the IMPRO Music Project, when pupils listen and learn about music from different parts of the world.

11. Although attendance is below the national average for all special schools, it is satisfactory, given the size of the school and the increasingly complex range of pupils' medical and physical needs.
12. The level of authorized absences are due mainly to sickness and hospitalization and the unauthorized absence is due to pupils returning late from family holidays overseas. Since the appointment of an attendance officer at the school, there has been a significant 3.5% increase in the level of attendance.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	11.4	School data	4.1
National data	8.7	National data	1.9

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good, overall. The quality of teaching, learning, curriculum and links with parents and the community is good. Links with other schools and colleges are very good. The care, welfare, health and safety provided for students are also good.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and pupils' learning is good throughout the school. Although teaching is good, learning in the sixth form is satisfactory. Assessment is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and high expectations leading to good accreditation.
- Teachers do not always plan to meet the needs of individual pupils in enough detail and learning is more difficult for some pupils as a result.
- Teaching assistants provide skilled support, which assists pupils very well in their learning
- Homework is used very well to extend pupils' learning at home.
- Relationships between staff and pupils are generally very good so pupils are keen to work.
- In a few lessons difficult behaviour proves hard to manage and learning slows as a result.
- In the sixth form teaching is good but students' learning is slowed as they absorb a fixed body of knowledge for each module, which is not co-ordinated to their previous learning.
- Assessment is detailed and used well to set individual targets, especially in the primary department, but not for planning lessons for secondary aged pupils.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 51 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0 (0%)	16 (31%)	21 (41%)	13 (26%)	1 (2%)	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. Teaching and the quality of pupils' learning is of a consistently good quality in almost every subject, particularly in English in the primary department and mathematics, science and ICT for pupils of all ages. It is very good in art and satisfactory in English, in the secondary department, and religious education. Teaching is good in the sixth form, with a great deal of care being taken to help students become independent in their learning. However the nature of the sixth form courses means that learning is often satisfactory rather than good, as students need to go over some things they know already in a different context.
14. In the majority of lessons, teachers clearly understand their subject and impart an enthusiasm for what pupils are expected to learn. In French, for example, some high quality oral work discussing hobbies results from plenty of spoken French in the lessons. Teachers expect pupils to understand quite a lot of detail and some difficult concepts. In one history lesson, pupils showed that they had grasped how to compare secondary sources despite this being a difficult idea. The result is an increasing number of pupils gaining good entry-level qualifications and GCSEs.
15. The biggest weakness in many lessons however is lack of detailed planning for what each individual pupil is expected to learn. Teachers and teaching assistants clearly understand the pupils and adjust their teaching accordingly, but, without planning based upon prior assessment, some pupils find the work too difficult or occasionally too easy. In one design and technology lesson for example, the work was challenging and pupils responded very well, but tasks were not planned to meet the needs of the one or two pupils who found the work complicated. These pupils began their design but then had to spend time waiting for help. This could have been overcome if their difficulties had been anticipated when planning the tasks.
16. In most lessons teaching assistants make a substantial contribution to pupils' learning, giving guidance, moral support and skilled understanding of the subjects. They are of particular help with literacy in all subjects and give good support when pupils are using the computers. Homework is a strength in provision. It is appreciated by parents and is planned very well into each subject and followed through. For this reason pupils take a very responsible attitude to learning independently.
17. The very good relationships in almost all lessons mean that pupils trust the staff and want to work hard. Where classes contain several pupils with difficult behaviour, lessons are occasionally disturbed. Staff generally manage difficult behaviour in lessons very well and are particularly skilled in helping pupils with autistic spectrum disorders who might feel threatened or frustrated. However, agreed approaches to difficult behaviour are not consistently applied and in a few cases the situation takes longer to calm down as a result.
18. Assessment is clearly improved since the last inspection and details of what pupils know, understand and can do are collected in every subject. Work is carefully graded so that teachers know what stage each pupil has reached on the National Curriculum or 'P' scales, and this is used to look at how well each class and individual pupil is doing. In the primary department, lessons are based upon good target setting from the 'B squared system' and pupils are helped well to know what they must do to build upon their previous learning. However, in the secondary department, assessment is not used to plan individual lessons in enough detail and so a few pupils find the tasks are not suited to their needs, either moving them on too quickly or occasionally holding them back. This is partly as a result of the increase in the very different needs of some pupils and the widening range of ability.

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good. Opportunities for enrichment are very good. Accommodation is unsatisfactory and resources are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is fully inclusive so that every pupil is able to play their full part and make a valued contribution. .
- The curriculum is enriched with plenty of visits and some very good extra-curricular activities.
- Accommodation is used to the very best advantage but is poor for enabling the school to meet the needs of its pupils.
- Pupils benefit from the well-planned curriculum, which fully meets statutory requirements.
- Personal, social and health education is promoted well and permeates all the work of the school.
- The sixth form curriculum helps students well in gaining the skills and confidence needed for the next steps of their education and work, but it does not offer a broad enough range of courses to suit the different aptitudes of the students.

Commentary

19. The curriculum has improved very well since the last inspection and is now good. The teaching of information and communication technology, physical education at Key Stage 1 and the balance of design technology across the school are now good. Statutory requirements are now met in all subjects. The level of planning, both long term and on a day to day basis is good and if a topic is repeated, care is taken to see that it is presented at a more advanced level. The curriculum encompasses the Key Stage 3 Strategy by supporting basic skills in all subjects. The school has worked hard to accommodate the increasing number of pupil difficulties and special educational needs by increasing the number of approaches. For the younger pupils for example, a greater emphasis on experiential learning is proving successful. The length of the taught day does not meet the suggested guidelines set out by the Department of Education, particularly for pupils aged 11 years and over, which limits the time pupils have to spend learning.
20. Throughout the school there is a broad range of subjects taught, supported by very good enrichment through a varied and interesting range of visits and special events. Popular residential trips are organised. A wide range of clubs is available during the lunch period, including physical education, digital photography, drama, Makaton signing, study time and computer skills. In addition, numerous visits to places of interest are arranged; for example museum visits and field trips are regularly organised. The school has good additional provision for sport and arts, including drama, music, art and inter school sports and games. These are supported, for example, by trips to the theatre, visiting artists and sports events.
21. Pupils throughout the school are well prepared for the next stage of their education. and the work done with Years 11 and 12 to prepare them for the outside world is of a good standard.
22. Provision for pupils with additional special educational needs, such as physical or sensory difficulties, is good and fully inclusive. Staff ensure that all activities, both in and out of lessons, are available to all pupils whatever their difficulties may be, despite the inadequacy of the buildings. The skilled support of teaching assistants, nurses, and therapists help pupils access the different courses and do well. For example, those with sensory impairment are successful because the teachers act on specialist advice and ensure that resources are enlarged or radio aids are worn. Some pupils are benefiting considerably from the increasing use of technology, including laptops that can be used at home and school. The use of signing and symbols is inconsistent and is not always used where it would help pupils even more in grasping what is happening. Speech therapists and physiotherapists provide a good service and devise strategies for use in the classroom, but the school has difficulty in securing sufficient occupational therapy to help some pupils with aids that need adapting as they develop. Pupils with physical disabilities have independent access to all areas of the school, especially because of the electronic doors. However, toilet facilities for those manoeuvring

wheelchairs are inadequate and rooms enabling therapists or medical procedures to be undertaken with ease and dignity are too small.

23. Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is good. Pupils understand why and how they should live healthily and in harmony with each other; the happy atmosphere across the school is evidence of the success of this work.
24. Staffing is good and resources are at least satisfactory and often good. Accommodation is wholly unsuitable. There are too few classrooms, and so pupils are taught in larger numbers than the school would wish. Rooms are small and pupils have difficulty manoeuvring their wheelchairs around rooms. In some instances pupils have to wait until they are in specific rooms before they can use their standing frames. This problem is growing as more pupils with severe physical difficulties enter the school. Accommodation for food technology and textiles is shared and inadequate. Older physically disabled pupils in need of showering have to use the facilities in the Key Stage 1 building, which is unsuitable and demeaning. There is no access to hydrotherapy for those who need it, which is poor. The school gym is very limited for older pupils' physical education lessons. It prevents many team games and is a significant curriculum constraint at secondary level. The lack of a pool means that secondary pupils have no opportunities for swimming. The school makes the very best use of this poor accommodation and the school environment is attractive and very well cared for. The school itself has funded purpose built Year 1 and 2 accommodation, which is more suitable for their needs.

Sixth form

25. The sixth form curriculum is satisfactory. There is only one Year 12 class in the sixth form. Students who, it is felt, are not suited to the college environment at 16 are given an extra year at school to prepare them for college and the world of work. This means that the curriculum is focused on a life and work skills programme and is linked to courses at the local college. The courses are enjoyed by the students and they gain in confidence, developing several useful skills such as horticulture and computing. The students build up a body of knowledge in their chosen field that then enables them to move on to college with the right skills. However some elements are not challenging enough for those who have already gained good qualifications. The courses lack the flexibility to meet the range of students' different abilities. This is overcome to a certain extent by some choice of modules and the students' personal goals, which enable them to move on to carefully planned placements at the end of the year. The range of college courses that the school is able to link to is currently too narrow to fully meet students' interests and aptitudes. The school is aware of this and is seeking to develop some jointly planned courses. The accommodation for the sixth form is not satisfactory because it lacks a distinct identity and is not sufficiently different from the rest of the school.

Care, guidance and support

The school provides good levels of care, welfare, health and safety for the students. The provision of support, advice and guidance for students is good. There is good involvement of students through seeking, valuing and acting on their views.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The good care given to pupils ensures they feel secure and can do their best.
- Pupils have good access to well-informed support, advice and guidance and this access is very good for older pupils and the Sixth Form.
- Induction procedures are good and ensure pupils get a good start in the school.
- Pupils enjoy a very good and trusting relationship with adults in the school and their views are taken into account.

Commentary

26. The formal policies and practices relating to health and safety and child protection are well considered and properly carried out. The small number of health and safety issues, raised in the last inspection report, has been successfully addressed. However the way incidents are recorded does not fully comply with requirements or best practice and does not allow management to monitor for school improvement purposes.
27. Healthy eating is promoted well. Accidents are rare and staff receive first-aid training and refresher courses. Governors are fully involved in all of these important aspects and this ensures pupils work, eat and play in a clean and healthy environment. This is a continuing improvement since the previous inspection.
28. Teachers and support staff know the pupils very well and recognize their needs. The trusting relationships which develop lead to some very good learning, often for the first time. Staff are particularly careful to make sure new arrivals are helped to settle in. Parents consider the induction procedures into the school to be a major strength and that their child has benefited as a direct result, by having their needs well met. This is also an improvement since the last inspection.
29. Pupils feel staff treat them fairly and with respect. They say teachers show them how to make their work better and that they have to work hard. Pupils' achievements and personal development are well monitored and reported upon. This good support and guidance given to pupils represents an improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils from Year 9 receive good advice from independent people such as the Careers Officer, which helps them to make the right choices. Although staff act informally on the views of pupils, the school is intending to make seeking the views of pupils a more formal aspect of school life. This has already begun through the school council.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a good partnership with parents and the community. It has very good links with other schools and colleges.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school deals with complaints very effectively according to most parents.
- The educational links with other schools are very good.
- The mechanisms for the transfer of pupils are very good

Commentary

30. Parents are pleased with the school and what it provides. They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions, problems or complaints. The school, to the satisfaction of parents, deals with any such concerns, swiftly and very effectively. Partnership with parents is improved since the last inspection.
31. The school links very well with other schools in the area through a cluster arrangement and the opportunities provided by the Education Action Zone. A number of pupils attend mainstream secondary and primary schools for the purposes of being re-integrated in due course. The school offers work experience placements to secondary school pupils and college students. Staff visit other schools and exchange good teaching practice in two local secondary specialist schools for ICT, and mathematics and technology. Close liaison with all these schools ensures a smooth transition for all pupils to the next stage of their education. A formal Outreach Service is not currently provided by West Lea to local mainstream schools but this is being developed. Informal support is regularly given to other schools and is appreciated. These very good links with other schools is a good improvement since the

previous inspection. College placements and links continue well, although the range of opportunities is more limited and further developments are to be explored by the school.

32. The information provided for parents is good overall. The annual report from the governors meets legal requirements and this is an improvement since the last inspection. There is now a Home-School Agreement and homework is now more consistently applied. These are improvements since the previous inspection. The end-of-year reports received by parents give clear indications as to pupil progress and the targets set for improvement. This too, is an improvement since the last inspection. However some parents do not find the information easy to understand and are unclear as to how well their children are doing. The school is planning to make the small steps achieved by pupils clearer to parents. The school prospectus lacks certain detail, such as attendance rates.
33. The school makes every effort to ensure that parents can attend annual reviews of statements. They also have opportunities to put their views in writing. Information provided at this time is thorough and includes extensive reports from therapists as well as details of academic and personal progress.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. Governance is unsatisfactory. Statutory requirements are not met fully in reporting to parents or recording incidents.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The senior team and all staff have a strong commitment to inclusion which means that every pupil feels welcome and thrives as a result
- The headteacher uses good management skills to assist staff in adapting to the growing complexity of learning difficulties presented by pupils
- The governing body is committed and informed but does not yet ask the right questions to fully guide and support school improvement. They do not meet some statutory duties
- The data used to support school improvement is not clear enough to be used effectively.

Commentary

34. Despite changes in the nature and complexity of pupils' learning difficulties, and ongoing staffing issues, the headteacher has maintained her vision of a school that welcomes and supports all the pupils it receives. She has created an atmosphere where staff are allowed freedom and initiative as long as this enhances the inclusive opportunities available to pupils. As a result, all managers and subject leaders show a high level of commitment to individual support and progress. This, in turn, adds to the welcoming and celebratory ethos within the school. As a result of this all pupils, most of whom have experienced failure in the past, gain self-respect and confidence. In addition they all participate in the full curriculum and receive very high quality advice and support.
35. Senior staff have improved the systems for collecting data on pupil progress significantly. However, although the amount of data has increased, the school's ability to analyse it and identify strengths, weakness and opportunities has not developed as well. As a result the school can describe how pupils are doing, but is not in a position to use data collected to identify areas of real need or groups within the school who would benefit from changes in curricular provision. This also means that senior management tend to present governors with data that describes achievement well, but does not highlight where and how changes should be made. In some instances this does everyone a disservice. For example, some of the data collected appears to show several pupils standing still in achievement, whereas, with more detailed and better interpreted information, the real progress could be shown.

36. Despite a core group of committed and hard working governors who care deeply about the school, the pupils and the quality of education it offers, governance of the school is unsatisfactory. Governors carry out a lot of good work and get to know the staff and pupils well. Governors undertake some training and have recently begun to monitor the curriculum systematically through visits to classrooms and discussions with teachers. Governors understand the strengths of the school well and are clear about some of the areas for development. However, they have not yet developed the skills or protocol to challenge senior staff on standards and financial management. This means that they do not fully play their role in supporting the process of school improvement. This is partly because the school data is not easy to analyse and partly because governor numbers are low, with the repeated absence of some. For example, the local education authority governor does not attend meetings, which denies the school a voice at a local level and opportunities for some skilled professional input. In addition, the prospectus and the system used for reporting and monitoring incidents, do not fully meet legal requirements.
37. The rapidly increasing complexity of pupil need has required careful planning with regard to staff training, premises enhancement and curriculum development. The school plans in detail for developments across a wide front. This has ensured that ICT has developed very well since the last inspection, staff have received good training with regard to Aspergers syndrome pupils and the inadequate premises have been kept fresh and exciting. All staff have an awareness of the financial implications of developments within their own subjects and plan in a sensible, balanced way. This prudence has not prevented imaginative developments, such as the introduction of a teaching assistant manager or the introduction of reading recovery work taking place. Both of these have added to the quality of provision and the support of work that contributes well to pupil achievement.
38. Teamwork is generally good, but senior staff absence has meant that some issues relating to the professional development of teaching assistants have been put on hold. Thus, although there is a very imaginative process whereby teaching assistants have professional development interviews, the outcomes of these meetings have not been clear or acted upon. As a result, some staff are dissatisfied, although all staff feel welcome and well valued within the school. The assistant head with responsibility for training opportunities has ensured that training opportunities are made clear to all staff and much good work has been undertaken to meet the needs of pupils on the autistic spectrum.
39. Self-evaluation is developing well. The headteacher has a realistic view of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and the evaluation in subjects such as mathematics, ICT and reading recovery are good. Once again, not enough effective use is made of the growing quantity of data to make decisions about subject development and pupil groupings. There are signs that this is changing. For instance, the school has been effective in implementing the Key Stage 3 Strategy and is now beginning to consider how this age group can be better taught through a more flexible use of pupil teaching groupings.
40. The induction of all staff is good. They receive good advice and are well mentored. There is also a strong interest in staff at a personal level and this makes for a harmonious group who work the better because they like and respect each other.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,354,686	Balance from previous year	41,185
Total expenditure	1,539,900	Balance carried forward to the next	35,970

Expenditure per pupil	14,258
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41. The school's financial procedures are good. The headteacher has been very careful to ensure that, despite many demands, the budget is always balanced. The development plans for the school are well costed and have ensured that developments, such as the building of the new classroom block, have taken place on a sound footing. Grants that the school receives are used well and day-to-day procedures are followed appropriately. Every effort is made to ensure that the school gets good value for its money, with, for example, recent changes to cleaning and grounds maintenance arrangements. The role of governors in financial management is insufficient to ensure that the processes and decisions are the right ones. This leaves the headteacher and management in a vulnerable position.
42. The school has two strengths that will assist it in developing further. Staff are highly committed and work well together. This is evident in the teamwork displayed within lessons and in developments such as the drama club, sports activities and visits, where staff cooperate well to ensure the best experiences for pupils. In addition, the quality of the relationships within the school creates an environment which contributes well to the self-confidence and social maturity of pupils who previously saw themselves as vulnerable.
43. There are two main barriers to progress. The first arises from the severe limitations placed on staff and the curriculum by a building that is wholly inadequate and inappropriate for the needs of the pupils. Another major factor that places a very real pressure on the school is the increasingly wide range of quite diverse special educational needs that the school is being expected to cater for and the unpredictable nature of what type of learning difficulties will need to be accommodated at any given time. Staff have adapted well to the increase in pupils with severe behaviour difficulties and the growing number of pupils on the autistic spectrum. However, it is becoming increasingly difficult for staff to accommodate some pupils who will gain an 'A' grade at GCSE and others who struggle to reach the top 'P' levels by the time they leave school, all within an age range from 5 to 17 and only 108 pupils.

WORK RELATED LEARNING

What is the effectiveness of Work Related Learning?

44. Only one lesson of WRL, which was in Year 12, was observed. Further evidence was gained from talking with pupils and analysing their work. There are close links with personal, social and health education and much WRL takes place in these lessons. Overall achievement is good and in the lesson observed it was very good. Pupils discussed what is involved in actually getting themselves to work on a daily basis. It was clear that they had gained much from their work experiences and all contributed to the discussion in a very positive way. Teaching and learning in the lesson observed was very good and overall they are good. Teachers use their own as well as pupils' experiences to help pupils learn about the world of work, for example, morning routines to ensure punctual arrival at work. Good use is made of pupils' work experience logbooks to build on their learning. Careers education is good and there are good links with a wide range of local employers. There are links with local colleges and older pupils enjoy and benefit from the courses on offer. The other subjects do offer some links to the world of work, for example in design and technology, pupils learn how to plan to market their products. The major weakness is the limited choice of vocational courses, partly due to the small numbers of pupils in each year group and partly due to limited options provided by the colleges and other schools. This is an area the school wants to develop. Leadership and management of WRL are enthusiastic and an audit of the contribution to WRL by all subjects is taking place before the end of this academic year, to ensure full coverage across the school.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES

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

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE,

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in Years 1 to 6.
- Relationships are very strong so pupils try hard and behave well.
- Assessment systems do not show pupils' small gains in learning clearly enough.
- Language and literacy are well supported across the curriculum.
- The use of alternative means of communication is inconsistent.

Commentary

45. Achievement overall is satisfactory and is good for pupils in Years 1 to 6. It is also good for a small number of very able pupils in Years 10 and 11 who are expected to attain high level GCSE grades. Although the majority of Year 11 pupils are successful in gaining nationally recognised qualifications such as entry level certificates, results in English have been below those in mathematics and science.
46. On entry to West Lea the majority of pupils have very limited communication skills. They are encouraged through a range of activities including role-play, rhymes and singing games to enjoy language and follow instructions. Staff throughout the school are very good role models, speaking clearly and listening to pupils with respect. They are sensitive to the needs of pupils with hearing impairment, ensuring that they are fully included in discussion. Speech and language therapists advise staff and implement individual or group programmes of work to meet the needs of pupils with significant language difficulties. Augmentative means of communication such as signing reinforce the spoken word, especially in Years 1 to 6, but need to be used more consistently throughout the school. The well attended drama club provides good opportunities for boys and girls in Years 7 to 11 to build self esteem and gain sufficient confidence to perform in public. Parents and the community have been wholly supportive of initiatives and several pupils have gone on to join a drama company. Students in Year 12 take turns in conversation, they understand that language changes to suit the audience and communicate effectively at college or work placement.
47. Pupils and staff share the enjoyment of reading. Pupils are given the time to read books, poetry and plays. Books are sufficient, of good quality and chosen with care to suit the interests of boys and girls of all ages and ethnic backgrounds. However, the limited number of multi-sensory resources do not fully meet the changing needs of the school population. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 anticipate story time with pleasure. Good teaching ensures that they use a number of strategies such as phonics or picture clues to help them understand the text. The Reading Recovery programme is very well established and especially effective in meeting the needs of disaffected boys in Years 7 to 11 who are reluctant to display their limited ability within the classroom setting. Many pupils in Years 7 to 11 still struggle to understand what they read although they can de-code many of the words. Pupils, especially those of higher ability, appreciate the sharing of good literature including Shakespeare, Steinbeck and Orwell.
48. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make marks on paper with a range of writing implements. More able boys and girls trace over individual letters and understand that these represent sounds. Those in Years 3 to 6 record their work, sometimes using symbols or dictating their ideas to receptive support staff. Many pupils present work neatly and spell simple common words

correctly. However, the linking of a cursive style of handwriting with spelling is inconsistent. ICT is used increasingly to enable pupils to display their work to its best advantage and to aid inclusion. A good example of parental involvement was seen where a pupil took her laptop home. Her mother recorded some weekend activities enabling the pupil to complete the same work as her peers during the next lesson. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 write sequentially using simple vocabulary. By Years 10 and 11 more able pupils display sophisticated use of language and a clear understanding of the tasks. 'As the story gets darker, so does the description of the pearl' wrote one pupil whilst another remarked that 'Romeo avoids fighting Tybalt because he has a new-found liking for him.' Well-motivated pupils of other abilities also complete coursework assignments but a few are reluctant to record work. Tasks are sometimes not sufficiently appealing or the curriculum does not meet their individual needs. Year 12 pupils use their writing in a range of practical ways such as completing job application forms or writing formal and informal letters.

49. Overall, teaching, and learning are good in Years 1 to 6 and satisfactory in other years. Teaching and learning range from very good to a small amount of unsatisfactory teaching, which is very similar to the previous inspection. Owing to long term illness, supply teachers currently take the majority of lessons in Years 7 to 11. Pupils still have good attitudes to their work and form strong and constructive relationships with staff and each other. Teachers have good subject knowledge so they are able to challenge pupils of all abilities. Where teaching is very good, for example in a Reading Recovery lesson, the teacher used her specialist knowledge of phonics to engage pupils in well structured activities that ensured their concentration and learning. They responded positively to deserved praise. Well targeted questioning enables pupils of all abilities to answer, including those with English as an additional language. This was observed in a Year 6 lesson where support staff enabled all pupils to contribute and the use of symbols helped make instructions clear. Teachers make use of targets on Individual Education Plans when planning lessons, especially in Years 1 to 6 where targets are more clearly related to literacy. Work is marked regularly, usually with the pupil, so that they know immediately how to improve. Where teaching is satisfactory, for example in Years 10 and 11, the teacher has very good subject knowledge and engages pupils, especially those of high ability, in good discussion. However, activities are not sufficiently appealing to motivate all pupils, nor are they related directly to pupils' previous learning. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, the teacher had planned suitable activities but had not checked that all pupils could read the instructions and did not take decisive action to prevent bad behaviour impeding learning.
50. Leadership and management are good in Years 1 to 6 and satisfactory in Years 7 to 11. Well-established systems and good communication have enabled the headteacher to manage the subject satisfactorily in the absence of the secondary co-ordinator. Members of the senior management team monitor teaching and the co-ordinator monitors planning and pupils' work. Detailed assessment systems are in place. However, there are no easily understandable systems to show the small steps individuals and groups of pupils are making over time. The subject contributes well to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through drama productions, book weeks, poetry days and theatre visits. The curriculum is good for younger pupils but the school is rightly re-considering provision for older pupils because of the ever widening gulf in ability levels. Older pupils of high ability, although achieving well, have too few opportunities to work with peers of similar standard. Progress since the previous inspection is satisfactory although there has been good improvement in library provision.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

51. The provision for developing literacy across the curriculum is very good. Frequent and well-planned activities across many areas of the curriculum provide pupils with opportunities to reinforce or extend their skills of language and literacy. In geography, pupils discuss ways in which the countryside is being spoilt or the devastation caused by earthquakes, whilst in history, younger pupils look round their classroom and compare it with the ragged school they visited. They broaden their vocabulary because teachers insist on precise language such as 'prediction', 'experiment' or 'conclusion' in science. The school council provides an excellent

forum for debate and the social use of language is extended during frequent visits out of school. Pupils read worksheets and extracts from texts and follow written instructions. They use reference skills and search the Internet for information. Written work is presented in a wide range of ways. Pupils use maps, graphs, charts and extended writing to record geography whilst Year 12 pupils word-process their work experience diaries.

Modern foreign languages

52. **French** is a sampled subject. Two lessons were seen, work was scrutinized and the co-ordinator was interviewed. French is a popular subject at West Lea and the examination results are very good with 5 of the option students taking GCSE and 2 doing entry level. Tapes of the pupils' oral examinations are of a high standard and in lessons they understand common phrases and are able to talk about their activities at some length. Pupils are also able to read common phrases easily, and write their answers well. Pupils in the youngest groups soon learn to speak French to a similar standard as their mainstream peers. In class they are confident and have a very good accent, largely because the teacher speaks French most of the time. Teaching is strong, with very good inclusion of pupils with special educational needs such as visual impairment. Very good subject knowledge and high expectations result in the pupils really wanting to speak French, which they obviously enjoy. The co-ordinator has constructed an appropriate course, which is adapted from several published schemes, and builds pupils' knowledge systematically. French is included in the ASDAN course for Year 10 students. The courses are enlivened with a trip to France, shopping experiences and, in Year 10, a French café. The subject still does not make good use of ICT to increase the variety of activities further and support links with schools in France.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is good and contributes to good achievement by all pupils.
- Pupils enjoy mathematics, largely as a result of good teacher and teaching assistant knowledge of the subject and of the pupils.
- Some pupil groups are too large for teaching to be fully effective.
- There are good assessment opportunities and these assist in detailed planning.
- Mathematics for post-16 students is not planned and does not build systematically on earlier learning.
- Leadership in mathematics is of a high quality and contributes significantly to the good pupil achievement.
- Numeracy is used in many subjects, but more guidance is required if staff are to make the most of this.

Commentary

53. Achievement in mathematics is good for pupils aged 6 to 16 and satisfactory in the sixth form. Pupils' abilities and achievements range from early 'P' scales to high National Curriculum levels in mathematics. However, detailed planning and the high level of teaching skills means that all pupils are challenged appropriately. This means that lower ability pupils succeed in basic number, probability and pattern work, while the GCSE candidates easily manage problems such as adding 2^5 to 5^2 or finding the missing factor in ' $9^3 = 3^?$ '. As a result of good and often very good, teaching half of the eleven year old pupils gained the expected level in national assessment for mathematics, while two-thirds of those aged 16 gained a 'D' or above at GCSE. This represents good progress, particularly when many of the pupils have experienced low confidence and what they see as failure elsewhere.
54. The teaching of mathematics is good and often very good. Teachers plan well for pupils up to sixteen. Their plans are informed by a good knowledge and understanding of the subject and

of the pupils. They use resources imaginatively to motivate and involve pupils, while teaching assistants show a similar understanding and initiative when developing work for individuals and small groups. The youngest pupils showed great enthusiasm when taking turns to count with puppets and were very keen to develop signs for the basic numbers. In another very good lesson for seven-year-old pupils, the teacher asked them to listen to 'Hungry Harry', who whispered how many items he wanted to eat. When he was full and fell asleep they then had to wake him by counting. Cleverly, teacher and teaching assistants encouraged pupils to use numbers up to ten. They were transfixed by the 'game' and showed good progress in this particular skill as a result. Similarly, in a good lesson for Year 11 pupils, time following an examination practice was used to play card games. The adult-pupil relationships are very good and this means that pupils develop a real joy in the subject as the result of the interest and respect shown them by staff. However, there is still work to be done. The teaching groups are large and contain a wide range of abilities and learning difficulties. This means that the teacher and teaching assistants are hard pressed to deal with each pupil in as much detail as they require. In one lesson the teacher, who was working on 'mean', 'mode' and 'median', experienced difficulties in meeting the complexity of need within the large group of twelve pupils without sufficient teaching assistance.

55. Assessment is a strength in mathematics. In the primary classes good use has been made of a detailed system which allows teachers to identify small steps. This allows them to plan in great detail and also be clear about where each pupil should move next. At secondary level, the co-ordinator has developed similarly detailed assessment, which, assists the preparation of lessons, identifies where each pupil is and contributes well to the recording of progress. This is a good system, but is not always used to its maximum effect because data sometimes seemed to show pupils making no progress over a year when in fact there had been good achievement.
56. Students over sixteen use mathematics as an integral part of their accreditation course. This is particularly the case in modules that deal with time, pay and shopping. Measurement skills are used well in modules dealing with plant growth and good examples of graphing data was seen in work on local amenities. Although no lessons were seen at post-sixteen, the scrutiny of work indicated that mathematics was not dealt with as well as literacy and ICT at this level. It was also clear that coordination of the subject did not extend to the post-sixteen group. If the good progress in mathematics up to sixteen is to be sustained there needs to be more attention to work that extends mathematical skills.
57. The mathematics co-ordinator is a very skilled practitioner. She sets a very good role model for the planning, teaching and assessment of mathematics. She maintains strong links with the primary department and ensures that there are good procedures for conveying detailed information about individual pupils between classes. She has also been very effective in inducting new members of staff within her department. She ensures that all pupils are suitably challenged and there is a good range of appropriate accreditation courses available. Above all there is a very real commitment to each and every pupil which celebrates their successes and values their contributions at all levels. At present there are not enough opportunities for higher attaining pupils to work with mainstream groups.

Mathematics across the curriculum

58. Provision to develop numeracy skills across the curriculum is satisfactory. Staff use mathematics in a wide range of lessons. It is used in PE to provide pupils with self-assessment opportunities in throwing javelins or running a set distance. Similarly, it overlaps art, food technology and design where shapes and measurement are central to much of the work. There is also clear evidence of good attention to mathematics skills in ICT and science. However, the lack of guidance to staff concerning how best to use such concepts throughout the week means that many opportunities are lost.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject is well led and managed.
- The assessment of progress and achievement is good and it is used effectively to inform future planning.
- Resources for science are good.
- The use of ICT to support learning in lessons is underdeveloped.
- Overall, the quality of the accommodation impacts adversely on the quality of teaching and learning.

Commentary

59. Pupils' achievement in science is good throughout the school. By the age of eleven years pupils are developing good investigative habits. They recognise the need to observe carefully and understand what constitutes a 'fair test'. These skills are built upon in the secondary department so that, by the age of 16 years, almost all the pupils are successful in the Entry Level Certificate. Post-16 students make good progress in the Skills for Life programme.
60. Overall, teaching and learning are good. In the majority of lessons, planning is detailed and appropriate worksheets match the capabilities and needs of the pupils well. In this way they can successfully attempt progressively challenging demands. This motivates pupils and they respond by working hard and showing high levels of enjoyment. For example, in one very good lesson involving Year 6 pupils, they were learning that 'yeast' is a useful organism and they were planning, with support, a fair test before learning what conditions are best for the growth and reproduction of yeast. Pupils worked hard to complete their experiments. The teacher's very good knowledge, together with good support from the teaching assistant, ensured that pupils made very good progress. Where teaching is satisfactory, rather than good, the lessons lack pace and are not well adapted to meet the pupils' needs. For example, Year 7 pupils were completing a series of lessons on acids and alkalis. The teacher had good subject knowledge but the lack of a clear protocol in question and answer procedures meant the pupils did not always make good progress. Lessons in science generally provide good opportunities to develop pupils' communication and mathematical skills.
61. The subject co-ordinator has a good grasp of the subject's strengths and weaknesses. The main constraint to improving standards is the limited size of the accommodation and, particularly, the very small science room, which makes it difficult to carry out experiments and ensure all aspects of health and safety. The teachers do their best to overcome these constraints but they do have an adverse impact on the quality of learning overall. The preparation and resources room is well organised with good resources to support experiments in lessons. Assessment is thorough, as evidenced by the success at Entry Level, the well-planned end-of-unit assessments in Years 7, 8 and 9 and the individual assessments made in Years 1 to 6. The co-ordinator is aware of the need to increase the use of ICT in teaching and learning, although lessons in the secondary department benefit from the daily use of interactive whiteboards. The increasing complexity of pupils' learning abilities is making increasing demands upon the planning and organising of lessons in the subject.
62. The good standards achieved at the time of the last inspection have been maintained in the secondary department. There have been improvements in Years 1 to 6 with particular reference to the planning of lessons and the assessment of progress.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There has been very good improvement in ICT provision since the last inspection, as a result of very good leadership.
- Teacher confidence in this subject is developing well.
- Pupils enjoy ICT and show good achievement at all levels.
- Not enough work is carried out with regard to control and robotics.
- Equal access to the internet or interactive whiteboards is planned but is not yet in place.
- Pupil achievement benefits from a skilled and respected technician.
- There are good examples of ICT used within some, but not all, subjects.

Commentary

63. The school has improved the quality of provision and standards in ICT significantly since the last inspection and it is now a discrete subject, meeting all statutory requirements. Staff confidence has developed well and the use of ICT within most classes has increased substantially. There has been a good investment in hardware and many new programmes, which ensure that pupils have the full range of ICT experiences. In addition, pupil motivation has increased significantly as the result of developments such as computer clubs and an excellent website.
64. Achievement in ICT is good throughout the school. During the primary phase, pupils develop good keyboard skills, they learn how to word-process and are beginning to use the internet for research. Fifteen year old pupils, practised and revised skills for their GCSE mathematics examination using the computer. They showed confidence in entering, navigating and moving between programmes and also used the interactive whiteboard. Pupils aged from eleven to sixteen develop a good range of skills from the use of the Internet for personal and subject research, to using spreadsheets and desktop publishing at the local city technology college. They increasingly see ICT as another tool to be used in class and exam work and they develop skills in the use of hardware that lays a good basis for future college work and the outside world. Sixth form students undertake the ICT module within the 'Skills for Working Life' course. Apart from word processing and web search skills, students demonstrate clear knowledge of the health and safety aspects of ICT, how to use and maintain printers and download information for their folders. Data processing develops well from the youngest classes where graphs are developed and interrogated. All pupils have the opportunity to engage in some 'control' work, using floor-based robots and control software. However, this is the weakest aspect of the subject and not enough work is carried out at present that assists pupils in programming devices, using sensors or, later, setting up programmes to control sequences such as lighting and traffic control. The school recognises that this is a weakness at all levels and is seeking to supplement the equipment they have to strengthen work on robotics and control. The early stage of this development was seen within design technology during the inspection.
65. Teaching and pupils' learning is also good in all age groups. Pupils enjoy ICT as the result of good teaching and support. A wide range of interesting activities enhances all types of lessons. Thus in a very good lesson with eight-year-old pupils, the teacher introduced feely bags for pupils to identify basic two-dimensional shapes. In groups they tallied how many of each there were and moved, with a teaching assistant, to one of three of the class's computers where they entered the data into a simple graph programme. The images on the screen and the printed 'hard copies' provided pupils with a tangible reward for their work. The motivational aspect of ICT for these pupils is a significant one. Assessment is used well to chart what pupils should be doing in ICT with all subjects, ensuring that lessons are pitched at the right level to help pupils build on their learning. Teachers and teaching assistants show a confident skill, such as in the use of the Internet to support research and skilled use of interactive whiteboards to enliven lessons, and so help pupils to make the good progress seen.

66. The driving force for this very significant change has been the dedicated and informed work carried out by the very good co-ordinator. He is a skilled teacher and sets a good role model for both pupils and staff in the effective use of ICT. In addition, he has made very good connections outside the school, with the city technology college and private business, which have enriched the curriculum on offer and secured the funding for more interactive whiteboards. In particular the self-evaluation undertaken by the co-ordinator is very accurate and valuable as a basis for moving the subject on.
67. Staff training is apparent in the skills, used in lessons by teachers and teaching assistants, for example with interactive whiteboards and digital photography. The school has engaged an ICT technician who is a highly valued member of staff. Her expertise and enthusiasm allows the co-ordinator to be released from day-to-day maintenance requirements. She also carries out a valuable role in researching software, ordering and auditing resources. This means that staff have greater confidence in the hardware they use and know that they will receive prompt and expert assistance if things go wrong. This is an area where the good strategic use of funds and the commitment of staff have significantly strengthened a subject's impact on learning.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum.

68. The use of ICT across the curriculum is satisfactory. There have been good developments in the use of ICT in some other subjects since the last inspection. There is evidence of pupils learning to use the internet in many different ways, for example to research the Bayeux Tapestry in history and to programme controls in design and technology. Within mathematics, ICT is being used increasingly to provide practice and revision support and in English there is good use of word processing to support writing. The latter is not used as much as it might be and a number of parents rightly feel that difficulties with handwriting could be partially overcome with suitable computer opportunities and software. Some subject co-ordinators have been quicker than others to take up ICT as part of their programme. The ICT co-ordinator is looking to increase its use in foreign language and art work and is also seeking to enhance the wireless and laptop capacity to make ICT more accessible in physiotherapy and PE. There is still a dependency on the co-ordinator to identify potential and some subject co-ordinators do not take enough responsibility for researching and ordering software appropriate for their subject.

HUMANITIES

69. **History** was sampled. Observation of lessons, displays of work and scrutiny of records indicate that history is a very well established subject that contributes positively to pupils' learning in a number of areas. Pupils in a very good Year 3 and 4 lesson increased their knowledge of Vikings through a series of well-planned practical activities. They reinforced language and literacy skills as they selected information from reference books. They joined in discussion about what happened to smoke in a house with no chimney and showed independence as they collected the resources to build models. In another lesson, the teacher demonstrated very good subject knowledge and used ICT well as he prepared Year 11 pupils for national examinations. Pupils currently achieve very well in these examinations. However, thought should be given to developing lively activities to engage the interests of pupils with an increasing diversity of needs.
70. Good monitoring and assessment takes place. Resources are well supplemented by topic boxes from the local museum. History makes a significant contribution to SMSC. Very good co-operation between schools in the Education Action Zone (EAZ) resulted in the highly successful black history month. Visits out, for example to the Victorian Ragged School, to the seaside or the British Museum develop social skills as well as bringing topics alive.

71. Discussion with **geography** co-ordinators together with scrutiny of planning and pupils' work make it clear that sufficient time is given to the subject and that there are very good cross-curricular links.
72. In a very good Year 8 lesson pupils used subject specific language confidently as they learnt about climate change. 'The prevailing winds blow from the sea', said one pupil, whilst another remarked that 'The key symbolises what is on the ground.' Inclusion was assured for all pupils because activities had been planned to meet the needs of groups or individuals. These included the use of enlarged maps and simplified writing tasks where required, with sufficient support to ensure success. Co-ordinators monitor the subject and pupils well. Assessment is good and older pupils are successful in gaining the nationally accredited Entry Level Certificate. Very good use is made of the local area and visits further afield enrich the curriculum. These include farm visits, a canal trip and Epping Forest Field Study Centre. ICT is used increasingly both to support the subject and to enhance the presentation of work. West Lea has set up a link with a school in Finland and letters and photographs are exchanged.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The locally agreed syllabus has been adapted well to meet pupils' different needs
- Planning ensures that pupils build systematically on their learning from one year to the next.
- Teaching does not challenge all pupils sufficiently and so, for some, learning is too limited.
- School assemblies make a good contribution to learning in religious education.

Commentary

73. Achievement overall is satisfactory. By the end of Year 6 pupils know that a church is the Christian place of worship, what they will find inside a church building and what, for example, a chalice, font and lectern are for and when they are used in a service. They know that saying prayers is an important part of going to church. By the end of Year 9 pupils have a sound understanding of what faith is and what it means to people and their lives, for example, that the key events in Abraham's life were all expressions of his faith. They know that there are different faiths and understand something of the differences between them.
74. Teaching and learning is satisfactory. Where teaching is good, staff know the pupils very well, clearly supporting their different needs and their good subject knowledge helps pupils to be focussed and interested. Pupils with difficult behaviour are managed very well so that everyone continues to learn. However, in some lessons there are missed opportunities to explain things that are mentioned in passing, for example, who is a bishop and what 'Communion' means. Pupils enjoy listening to bible stories and remember what they have heard but activities such as creating a storyboard do not engage all the pupils sufficiently.
75. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The subject co-ordinator teaches all classes and is therefore able to ensure progression even when different year groups are studying the same topic. The school follows the local agreed syllabus, which meets statutory requirements, and has adapted it well to suit the needs of its pupils. Assessment is satisfactory; three key objectives are assessed at the end of each term to ensure that both attainment targets are met. Collective worship makes a good contribution to religious education as was evidenced in a very good primary assembly on the parable of the building of houses on rocky and sandy foundations. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

76. Only one lesson was observed in **music** so it is not possible to make an overall judgement about standards, teaching and learning. A scrutiny of work, discussions with pupils and the music co-ordinator, observation of singing in assemblies and a review of subject resources were undertaken.
77. It is clear that music makes an important contribution to the life of the school. In the one lesson observed, the quality of the teaching was very good. Pupils in Years 2 to 5 were singing a range of singing games and working to tempo, rhythm and beat. Two pupils in wheelchairs were fully involved in the activities and another pupil with special educational needs was offered a 'Music Ace' program on the computer. The quality of the singing was very good and there was a high level of participation and enjoyment in the lesson. Particularly strong features of the music provision are the quality of the singing in assemblies, the range of musical productions and the strong links with other schools on a variety of projects, for example, with Peoples' Symphony and English Pocket Opera Company. Music also makes a significant contribution to the pupils' understanding of other cultures, for example, when singing calypso/African style in assemblies.
78. The accommodation for music is satisfactory but the lack of display areas and limited storage is restricting. Overall, resources are adequate. Priorities for the future include an improvement in the range of musical instruments and the modification of lesson plans to meet the needs of more pupils with complex needs. The efficient co-ordinator is well aware of these needs and has already initiated steps towards meeting these developments. The arrangements for assessing pupils' progress are good.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Opportunities to gain external accreditation are good.
- The subject is well led by a teacher who is enthusiastic and committed to raising standards.
- Attractive displays around the school celebrate pupils' very good achievement in art.
- The work of other artists is used effectively to stimulate pupils' interest and ideas.
- There is limited use of ICT in lessons.

Commentary

79. The teaching of art and design is very good in the secondary stage and good in the Years 1 to 6. This results in very good achievement overall. Teaching is characterised by a high level of skill and knowledge on the part of the subject co-ordinator, the very motivational programme that has been well designed and the efficient use of resources. One very good lesson exemplifies the consistently high quality of art teaching in the school. A class of Year 10 pupils had enlarged their drawing of a face based on the work of well-known artists like Picasso and Van Gogh. Each pupil used his or her drawing as a basis for developing a 'face in relief' in clay. All the pupils worked enthusiastically on their work cutting out their own materials and clay and building up their 'faces in relief'. One pupil with little strength in his hands was provided with more malleable plasticine to complete the same task successfully. In another lesson, Year 6 pupils were working on their project 'Flowers in a Garden' based on the work

of the artist Klimt. Pupils mixed a variety of colours to create different flower shapes making random and clumps of flowers. They demonstrate good confidence and skills when working with materials.

80. As a result of well-planned and focused work, all pupils express a real interest in art and work hard in their lessons. They are keen to move on to accredited courses, within which their work

is celebrated and certificates received. For example, all the pupils in Year 10 will study for GCSE and entry level and complete three projects. Pupils with the best standards will be selected to take the full GCSE.

81. Despite the strong leadership in art, some opportunities have been missed to fully harness the power of the computer within art. The co-ordinator is aware of this and only awaits more up-to-date machines and the opportunity for training to fully develop this aspect. During the inspection there was available some notable completed work. For example Year 9 pupils' 'Bottled black and white figures' based upon the work of Picasso and Year 6 pupils' three-dimensional models of birds. The studies in art also make a significant contribution to the pupils' understanding of other cultures.
82. **Design and technology** was sampled. One Year 10 lesson was seen in resistant materials, and one in textiles and one Year 2 lesson in food technology. Pupils' work and performance data was scrutinised and the co-ordinators interviewed. The quality of work seen was of a high standard and pupils from 7 to 16 years evidently make good progress over time. Almost all pupils achieve entry-level qualifications with a few achieving a full GCSE. The quality of the teaching seen was equally good with strong subject knowledge and good classroom organisation being a key feature of the good and very good learning taking place. The main weakness in teaching is a lack of planning in some lessons to help pupils at different levels to work at their own pace; this means that sometimes pupils have tasks which are too difficult and they have to wait for help and so learning is slowed. The strong curriculum contributes very well to the range of skills pupils develop while they are at school, from designing and making clothes and simple furniture to cooking delicious meals. The co-ordinators work very well together to ensure that work is moderated effectively, monitoring standards and sharing ideas on teaching strategies. This all contributes to the high quality of the different elements of the subject. The sixth form curriculum does not build on these skills because courses in catering or construction, for example, are not currently available. This is recognised by the school and design and technology based courses are being planned for next year. The accommodation for design and technology is far too small and is unsuitable for the number of aspects that take place in the same space, such as food technology and textiles. This presents potential health and safety issues and limits the range of activities in any one lesson. The subject builds very well on pupils' literacy, numeracy and information and technology skills; for example, a jointly taught session using computer based design is a particular strength.
83. Only two lessons of **physical education** were seen during the inspection. This was enough to confirm that provision at secondary level is good, often very good, as is the teaching and achievement of pupils. PE provides a very valuable contribution to pupil self-confidence and physical development
84. A very good lesson with fourteen-year-old pupils saw them practising javelin throwing. This was a challenge for those pupils with physical difficulties. However, the range of equipment and careful thought that had gone into structuring the lesson meant that all pupils made very good progress. The ingenuity of provision was exemplified by the fact that pupils experienced the weight to be thrown by throwing a wooden bat. They then threw small flags to get the 'whip' into the throw and finally moved on to polythene and then steel javelins according to strength. This, together with high quality teaching skills and very skilled advice and support from teaching assistants, meant that every pupil, whatever the nature of their learning difficulty, made and recognised very good progress within a two-lesson period.
85. At the previous inspection it was noted that younger pupils did not have access to the full PE curriculum. A scrutiny of teachers' planning showed that this has been rectified. In particular, swimming is a strong element of PE for older junior pupils and this has proved extremely successful, especially for those who have coordination or movement difficulties. It is a weakness of PE at the school that pupils of secondary age do not have access to swimming. For non-ambulant pupils it means that they are deprived of access to an essential aspect of

physiotherapy and physical development that their peers gain through running and field events.

86. Co-ordination of this subject is good, with some very good aspects. A lot of imagination has gone into resourcing the subject and providing opportunities to play other schools, in football in particular. However, difficulties have arisen in terms of communication within the department and it is clear that the co-ordinator cannot fulfil her remit properly until she receives prompt and detailed planning from all PE staff within the school.
87. The grounds provide very good opportunities for field events, football and wider areas of recreational physical activity. A good lesson for the oldest pupils seen during inspection saw them timing themselves sprinting over a fixed distance. Not only did this assist in developing starting positions and the use of mathematics in PE, it also ensured that every pupil, whatever their agility or motivation, saw improvement in their performance within a short space of time. The hall places significant restrictions on the PE curriculum. The roof height and general measurements mean that it has limited value for secondary pupils and that activities such as basketball, trampolining and many team games are not possible for large numbers of larger pupils.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

88. **Personal social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship** were sampled. It was only possible to see one PSHE and one citizenship lesson during the inspection. Pupils' work was scrutinized and the co-ordinators were interviewed. It is therefore not possible to make overall judgements on achievement and teaching.
89. PSHE is promoted well and permeates all the work of the school. The school is very successful in using discrete lessons, circle time and registration to teach PSHE as well as consolidating knowledge and understanding during other lessons and throughout the school day. One 'Golden Time' session, which is a reward session for good work and behaviour, was used well as 'incidental PSHE'. In the Year 4 lesson observed, pupils understood the importance of washing themselves all over. Teaching was good and the lesson was made fun as pupils were first shown what their teacher packs in her overnight bag as she pretends to be their age and on a visit to her Granny. The inclusion of her Teddy meant that pupils could include their Teddy without feeling babyish or be teased by their peers. Learning was good as pupils 'packed' their own bags. Good use of time was made in the plenary session with a fun game of 'I packed a --- in my bag' played in groups with adults in each group. Leadership and management of PSHE is good. The co-ordinator has a good understanding of the needs of West Lea pupils and the scheme of work is written accordingly; it covers all aspects in an interesting way. Resources are good overall but there is a limited range of computer programmes.
90. The teaching of **citizenship** as a subject in its own right is in its early days as only Years 10 and 11 have discrete lessons. In all other year groups it is a part of PSHE. The recently appointed co-ordinator has carried out an audit of what is/is not being taught in citizenship and has rewritten the citizenship policy. This year pupils have studied local government and its workings, including the responsibilities of the Council. Good use was made of the opportunity to study how Members of Parliament are elected during the run up to the recent General Election. During the lesson observed, pupils were looking at various types of government and the characteristics of British Democracy. Teaching and learning were satisfactory, as was achievement. The School Council involves pupils from Year 7 upwards and provides a good forum for democratic decision making. Election manifestos by year group candidates showed a clear understanding of what the Council purports to achieve.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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.*