

INSPECTION REPORT

WOODFIELD SCHOOL

Kingsbury, London

LEA area: Brent

Unique reference number: 101579

Headteacher: Miss Desi Collins

Lead inspector: Mr George Derby

Dates of inspection: 23 - 26 May 2005

Inspection number: 268673

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	11–19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	103
School address:	Glenwood Avenue Kingsbury London
Postcode:	NW97LY
Telephone number:	0208 205 1977
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Penny Witham
Date of previous inspection:	June 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Woodfield is a day special school for up to 120 pupils (boys and girls). It recently extended the number of pupils and students it admits to this number. In September 2004 it started a Post -16 provision and, because of this, numbers in the school are planned to increase over the next few years to 120 pupils in total. Currently, there are six Year 12 students.

It is a highly popular school with parents. The pupils all have moderate learning difficulties but many also have additional needs such as speech and language problems, sensory needs or emotional and behavioural difficulties. A small number of pupils have autism and the numbers of these pupils is increasing. Most pupils come from Brent, although a few come from neighbouring boroughs.

Pupils are admitted all year round. They come from a wide range of ethnic backgrounds and the main groups are white-British (25 per cent), Indian (16 per cent) and African (13 per cent). Few pupils are at an early stage of learning English as an additional language. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is well below what it should be for the pupils' ages because of the pupils' learning difficulties.

The school is part of an Education Action Zone (EAZ) and is considering applying for specialist school status. It received an Investor in People Award in 2004 and is to be accredited for a Health Schools Award in July 2005.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
25349	George Derby	Lead inspector	Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology English as an additional language
9092	Ron Elam	Lay inspector	
10099	Sue Lewis	Team inspector	English Music French Special educational needs Foundation stage
18250	John Novak	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography History Physical education
19386	Trevor Watts	Team inspector	Science Religious education Personal, social and health education /citizenship Post-16

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school with some very good and excellent features. The pupils achieve well because of good teaching and an interesting, well constructed curriculum. The school is well led and managed and the headteacher has a clear view of where the school needs to improve. The value for money is good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses:

- The provision in design and technology (resistant materials) and art and design is excellent.
- Provision is very good in design and technology (food), information and communication technology (ICT), personal, social and health education (PSHE) and work-related learning (WRL).
- The support for pupils' self-expression across all subjects is very good; as a result, they achieve very well in their speaking and listening skills.
- There is very good support for pupils with autism.
- Teachers thoroughly plan their lessons and planning is very effective overall.
- The opportunities to enrich pupils' learning are very good.
- The headteacher has very high aspirations for the school and the staff are very effective in the way they inspire, motivate and influence staff and pupils.
- Too many pupils are absent from school; this is due to high absence rates and high numbers of exclusions and is unsatisfactory.
- There are few ways in which pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own behaviour and actions.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to be educated alongside their mainstream peers.
- Pupils have few opportunities to work together or collaborate in lessons.

Improvement since the school was inspected in 1999 has been satisfactory overall. Staff now consistently apply the school's behaviour policy but the picture regarding the high number of exclusions seen in the last inspection has changed little. The dining arrangement provides more social opportunities. There is better communication with parents and greater opportunities for them to be involved in the life of the school. All documentation meets statutory requirements. Although achievement overall is similar to that seen previously, it is considerably improved in art and design and technology subjects.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 9	good	good
Year 11	good	good
Year 12*	good	very good

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

**There is no judgement for Year 13 students as there are none currently.*

The standards pupils achieve are good. The good personal support that staff have for pupils, the determination to meet their special educational needs through very careful planning, and the good teaching are the main reasons why **pupils' academic achievements are good** for all groups across the school. The pupils' achievement in English, mathematics and science is good. It is very good in food technology and ICT. It is excellent in art and design and the resistant materials part of design and technology. This is because of the teachers' expert knowledge and the excellent way the curriculum has been modified to meet the pupils' needs. Achievement in physical education, religious education and PHSE is good.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are good. Pupils have a keen interest in their lessons. In the lessons seen during the inspection, behaviour was good overall, although it is judged to be only satisfactory overall because of the high numbers of exclusions. Attendance is unsatisfactory; it is significantly below that of similar schools. However, the school is trying hard to improve the situation and is doing all it can. Punctuality is satisfactory; pupils arrive to school and their lessons on time.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. The quality of teaching is good with some very good features. Lessons are planned very well, mostly taking full account of the pupils' special educational needs. Work provided is well matched to these. Staff manage pupils well, give them good encouragement and expect them to work hard. Pupils, in return, try hard and work productively. Learning support assistants know the pupils well and provide good support. Other aspects, such as the good curriculum with its very good opportunities to enrich pupils' learning, the good quality of care for pupils, the good contribution of the community and the sound links with parents, strongly contribute to the pupils' opportunities and progress.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good as is the work of the governing body. This is a well organised school which is managed well. The leadership by the headteacher is good and she has a good sense of purpose for what needs to be done. A particular strength is the way ideas are taken and adapted to support the school's practice. However, strategic planning needs better identify what it considers to be the specific outcomes of its actions. The headteacher's and governors' determination for high standards is successful. The school keeps a watchful eye on pupils' achievements and analyses the data it collects well to make any adjustments in the programme. Senior staff are very good role models and these and other managers create effective teams within the school. Governors are supportive and challenge the work of the school well. They meet their statutory requirements.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and pupils have positive views of the school. Parents are quick to praise the school's work and pupils like their lessons and activities, although some identified pupils' behaviour and bullying to be an issue. Inspectors found relationships between pupils to be good, although incidents are recorded by the school and pupils are excluded. Any actual bullying or harassment is dealt with adequately by the school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

The most important things the school should do are:

- Improve attendance and eliminate exclusion, enlisting parents' support so that they do as much as possible to support their children's attendance, behaviour and progress.
- Institute systems for pupils to take more responsibility for their own behaviour and have an increased range of ways for supporting the most difficult pupils.
- Increase the opportunities pupils have to work alongside mainstream peers.
- Provide opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively in lessons.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils' academic achievements are good throughout the age range. Standards in all subjects are below what they should be for the pupils' ages, although for some individual pupils across the school these are nearer to those expected for the pupils' ages.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's positive climate for learning strongly promotes pupils' achievements; staff considerably value pupils' efforts and this spurs most of them on to work hard.
- All groups achieve equally well; lower-attaining pupils and those with additional needs get good support, which aids their achievement.
- Achievement is at least good in most subjects; in art and design and design and technology it is excellent; in ICT and food studies it is very good.

Commentary

1. The school's climate for learning is good and fully supports pupils' achievement. Good teaching (and in some subjects very good and excellent teaching) leads to good learning, and the broad range of learning opportunities means a positive effect on pupils' achievements. The good curriculum provides a wide range of challenging, stimulating activities that are underpinned by a good knowledge of the pupils' needs. These are also enhanced by a very good range of additional activities which adds to pupils' personal and academic achievement. Although teaching is very good in the Post-16 department, the curriculum is very new and much is being trialled. It does not yet fully build on students' previous learning and this means achievement is only good rather than very good.
2. The headteacher has worked hard to improve the school's work and strives for excellence; high achievement is central to all her work. As a result, for those pupils who took GCSE in 2004, the value the school added to pupils' achievement was very high. This was measured from when they transferred to the school at the beginning of Year 7 (using data from the Year 6 national tests) and also from when they were assessed in the national tests at the end of Year 9. In fact, the school was in the top five per cent of all special schools for this nationally. Some individual pupils do very well and one attained a grade C pass in science. In addition, pupils took Entry Level qualifications in a wide range of subjects. Although there is no national data for comparison, the grades achieved also represented good achievement overall.
3. Teachers have a good level of awareness of the needs of pupils and the ways in which they learn and can be encouraged. This results in programmes that are well tailored and support pupils well. Support for pupils with additional special educational needs is strong and also the support for learners who are new to English. In addition, the way in which key vocabulary and ideas are supported through lessons is particularly effective and helps pupils gain at least a good grasp of what they are learning. This is because the impact of the introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategy has been positive. The school has embraced the principles well and this has resulted in good achievement by pupils.
4. Pupils' achievements are good in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science (as well as physical education, PSHE and religious education) but in art and design and design and technology, these are excellent. This is because of the high level of expertise of the teacher and the way the work has been planned to interest and excite pupils, ensuring there are small steps to success. It spurs them on to work exceptionally hard and produce work which for them shows exceptional progress and achievement. There are similar features in

ICT and food studies. The very good knowledge of staff gives pupils the confidence to 'have-a-go' which they do readily. Pupils say that these two subjects are among their favourites. In all these subjects there are few behavioural difficulties; the way the subjects motivate the pupils keeps them highly focused and interested. This is also at the heart of the very good and excellent achievement. Achievement is also very good for pupils' self-expression and listening skills. The school has focused strongly on these in English and across the curriculum with the support of the speech and language therapist. This initiative is also having a positive impact on pupils' understanding of key vocabulary, and on their listening and achievement in other subjects

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to school are good and their behaviour is satisfactory overall. Pupils' attendance is unsatisfactory and their punctuality is satisfactory. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- As at the time of the last inspection, the majority of pupils behave well, have positive attitudes to work and enjoy being at school.
- The school's good provision for personal development leads to good relationships around the school.
- The school does not have a sufficient range of strategies to manage pupils' behaviour and avoid exclusion.
- The level of attendance is below that of similar special schools around the country.

Commentary

5. The table below shows the absence figures for the school. The level of attendance has fallen in recent years and has been as low as 85 per cent in the first two terms of the current year. In part, this reflects the exceptionally poor attendance of a few pupils. In line with local education authority guidelines, the school keeps these pupils on roll even when they are not coming to school for extended periods that can run into several months. In addition, the intermittent attendance of some pupils disrupts the learning of other pupils. In a few lessons seen, the teacher had to repeat work to enable an absentee to catch up. The school monitors attendance very closely and the parent liaison officer telephones home on the first day of any unexplained absence. She then follows up quickly with letters home. The school refers families to the education welfare service and other agencies. Nevertheless, the school's actions and those of the other agencies have not resulted in attendance being at a more acceptable level. However, it is trying hard to improve the situation and is doing all it can.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2004 (%)*

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	10.0	School data	1.0

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

**No comparative data is available for the latest complete reporting year in special schools*

6. Pupils are interested in what happens in school and they enjoy their work. In many of the lessons seen, they follow instructions and usually settle quickly to the tasks given. These positive attitudes reflect the good quality of teaching and the variety of interesting activities built into the lessons.
7. Pupils' social development is good overall. For instance, the school provides opportunities for pupils to interact with classmates in physical education lessons and when working with sports coaches. The informal cricket played at lunchtime shows how pupils are able to work together

without arguing, are willing to wait their turn and respect the efforts of pupils with lesser abilities. The school council enables pupils of all ages to work together. The visitors and sports fixtures with other schools extend pupils' understanding of the wider world. Overall, pupils' relationships with their peers and with adults have maintained the good level at the time of the last inspection and contribute to the quality of work in lessons and to the progress they make. Nevertheless, lessons provide few effective opportunities for collaborative working. The pupils sit at their own desks, apart from their classmates, and there are few opportunities for partner or group work.

8. The pupils have good opportunities to gain insight into values and beliefs in order to develop their spiritual awareness. As well as providing time for reflection, school assemblies help pupils to a sense of belonging to a whole school community and, each week, to celebrate the contributions and achievements of others. The use of praise in the classroom helps pupils to appreciate their own worth and to raise their self-esteem. Discussions about feelings enable them to relate to and understand the views of other people.
9. The pupils' cultural development is very good. Various subjects provide them with a fuller understanding of the world around them with, for example, art and music developing aesthetic awareness. Pupils appreciate the western cultural background from work on, for example, the history of the local area and European artists and composers. Non -Western culture is introduced by, for example, Reggae in music, symmetry in tribal masks in mathematics, and a Chinese dragon dance in physical education as well as opportunities for pupils to talk about their own background. Pupils from a varied range of different cultures mix well with each other and it is very apparent that racial harmony is one of the strengths of the school.
10. Many pupils respond well to the moral guidance from the school. They are aware of how their behaviour can affect others and the majority show good self-discipline resulting in an orderly school. They behave well at lunchtimes, queuing patiently for the food, chatting quietly in friendship groups and tidying away without any direct supervision. They are polite to adults and welcoming to visitors. However, a significant minority of pupils do not always respond well to the guidance of the staff and show unsatisfactory behaviour. This includes not wanting to take part in class work or ignoring the teacher's instructions. The staff consistently implement the school's behaviour policy which leads to a high level of withdrawal from the class or ultimately, as shown below, a very high number of exclusions. The staff use a variety of disciplinary actions and these are generally understood by the pupils. Nevertheless, there are insufficient ways to respond to the wide-ranging needs of the pupils to enable them to take responsibility for their own actions and behaviour. In addition, there are not enough steps in the school's policy before formal exclusion occurs. There are occasional instances of threatening or bullying of other pupils which the school responds too quickly.

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	25	21	0
White – Irish	6	0	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	5	10	0
Mixed – White and Black African	2	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	2	0

Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Indian	16	4	0
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	8	3	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	6	1	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	9	14	0
Black or Black British – African	13	6	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	7	1	0
Any other ethnic group	3	0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. The quality of care provided is good and there are good links with the community. These contribute well to pupils' personal well-being and health. Links with parents and other schools are satisfactory. The quality of the teaching and learning is good with some very good features. Its positive effects are enhanced by the good curriculum provided.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good. Assessment is also good. All these aspects have very good features.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teaching in the one class in the Post-16 department is very good.
- Teachers' planning is very thorough but there are missed opportunities to use ICT in lessons.
- Although overall homework is satisfactory it is not always used to extend pupils' work in lessons.
- Teaching assistants support lessons well but are not sufficiently used in whole class parts of lessons.
- Teaching and learning in art and design and design and technology are excellent.

Commentary

11. The good quality of teaching contributes well to pupils' learning and achievement. It is good in most respects and, in particular, is very well planned. It is satisfactory in relation to the challenge of homework provided. The quality of teaching has improved well since the last inspection. The proportion of good and very good teaching has increased and this improvement is due to the tenacity of the headteacher in monitoring and supporting teaching and in demanding high quality.
12. Lessons are planned very well and are highly organised. They are based on teachers' thorough understanding of pupils' needs and the next steps they require in their learning. The planning is detailed and clear objectives are stated. Plans often identify what the different groups or individuals in the class will do and learn. Staff have thought carefully about the resources and organisation for the lesson so these are readily at hand.
13. In the small number of lessons seen in the Post-16 department all were good or better and a half were very good. Despite Post-16 being a new venture, like the rest of the school, the planning is thorough with very careful attention to detail and to students' needs. Because the

students tend to learn at a slightly slower rate than the rest of school, the steps are very carefully gauged so that they can gain maximum success and enjoyment. Resources are well used to support learning and the good use of the interactive whiteboard in an ICT lesson, using a carefully prepared multi-media presentation, considerably enhanced pupils' learning. Teamwork is strong and all staff expect a great deal from their students.

14. In the rest of the school, teaching assistants are very well used in the practical part of the lesson. They help pupils carefully and know when to stand back so that pupils try things for themselves. However, they are not always sufficiently used during the whole class parts of lessons, often sitting and listening to the teacher with the pupils. The contribution of the technician in ICT and design and technology is a significant strength of the school.
15. The pace of lessons is swift and most activities interest pupils well. Occasionally in science the pace is too fast. It does not always take account of the different rates of pupils' learning or the fact the pupils may want to ask questions or need to spend more time on one part than another. Challenging questioning and work across the school keep pupils on their toes. In addition, questioning is used well to help teachers keep abreast of what the pupils are learning, what they are having success with, or where they need extra help. Pupils are generally managed well and any difficult behaviour generally tackled effectively so that pupils are clear on where they stand. The school's procedures are generally followed well, although occasionally some staff allow low level disruption to continue, such as off-task chatter, when it should be stopped.
16. A strong feature of most teaching is the links made with other subjects and the way that staff take every opportunity to reinforce subject vocabulary and build in activities which use pupils' numeracy skills. However, they miss opportunities to use ICT, especially for less able pupils who have difficulties with writing. Some staff are beginning to use the school's interactive whiteboards but some just use these as an ordinary whiteboard to display writing rather than making use of the interactive features. Asking pupils to solve problems and think for themselves is also another strong feature. However, there are many missed opportunities for pupils to work together collaboratively.
17. Teaching in art and design and in design and technology is excellent. This is because of the expert knowledge of the teacher who plans activities which get the best out of pupils. In lessons, pupils display exceptionally high levels of interest and enthusiasm, concentrate remarkably well and there is no misbehaviour. Rather the opposite; there is a congenial and relaxed atmosphere. This is built on excellent relationships but also on an understanding that the teacher expects a great deal. As a result, he gets a great deal back from pupils.
18. Homework is often not set by the subject teacher. At the beginning of each term, the school posts home a pack of homework designed to extend and develop pupil's basic skills in literacy and numeracy. This work is helpful to pupils but is not directly related to the work in lessons.
19. The school has made a good improvement in the way in which it monitors pupils' progress. This is particularly the case in the core subjects of English and mathematics and in other aspects of their personal development. This is helping to raise standards in pupils' achievement even further. In English, mathematics and science, progress and achievement are very carefully tracked and teachers generally use the information gained from assessments very well, both to set targets for groups and individuals and to inform their own teaching plans. In English and mathematics they influence the 'sets' into which pupils are placed and support teachers' very good matching of work to needs in these groups. In addition, very careful assessment of pupils' speech and language needs is supported by the speech and language therapist, who provides very good support to the pupils and to teachers.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 54 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
4 (7%)	14 (26%)	29 (54%)	7 (13%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

20. Assessment in other subjects is less developed. However, the school has recently introduced portfolios of work for pupils in each subject and this is helping teachers to be more specific as to individual pupils' progress overall. Subject teachers do generally know their pupils well, however. Informal knowledge is very strong in art and design and design and technology, for instance. In the Post -16 department, assessment is good, because the teacher knows the students very well and because the courses students follow have clear assessment practices linked to them. The school has identified where it could strengthen assessment practice even more. It has already begun to train staff in the use of a commercial scheme, 'B Squared', to this end and also to support whole school target setting for pupils and groups.
21. Targets are set for pupils in all subjects that they study, although this sometimes means that the main learning targets in relation to their special educational needs are not always clear and IEPs have too many targets overall. Parents and pupils have only limited involvement in setting these targets and not all pupils know what their learning targets are. The school is exploring further how to make target setting in IEPs more linked to pupils' main learning needs. Although teachers are well aware of which pupils have additional special educational needs, not all use this knowledge to adapt their teaching style and pupil tasks in lessons.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good and is particularly strengthened by the very good range of activities and visits provided outside of the classroom.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school carefully links subjects and topics together, which supports pupils' understanding and achievement well.
- Provision for PSHE is very strong.
- Pupils are very well prepared for when they move on from the Post-16 department.
- Very good use is made of sport, arts and other links and this enriches pupils' learning and progress.
- There are many good features to the school's accommodation, although there are a few significant weaknesses.

Commentary

22. All subjects are taught, and statutory requirements are met. Religious education is taught throughout the school, and the assemblies include acts of worship. Each of the core subjects, English, mathematics and science, is fully taught, and these take up a good proportion of the timetable each week. The balance within each subject is also good, with appropriate emphasis on, for instance, speaking and listening skills in English, and investigations in science. Mathematics and English are taught in well-organised ability groups ('sets') to help their learning. In addition, a subject which the school rightly gives a high level of prominence to is personal, social and health education. The main strength of the curriculum is the way in which English and personal and social education is woven into all other lessons, greatly helping to extend pupils' experiences in these subjects. Teachers also plan many of their lessons to include elements of mathematics and ICT, thus strengthening pupils' learning experiences in these areas as well.
23. Senior staff carefully monitor the whole range and emphasis of the curriculum, and are working on ways to change and enrich some aspects, whilst still keeping the overall balance

and relevance to the particular needs of the pupils. This is also being carried out in the Post-16 department, which has a good, new curriculum, but which can be improved with more choices when a second new class begins soon. Several pupils have personalised planning for what they will be taught, such as attending a social services 'personal challenge' course, or work and college placements each week.

24. The curriculum for pupils in Years 9 to 12 includes a good range of work-related subjects. Pupils have regular advice and guidance from an outside agency, meetings and discussions. All pupils have several opportunities to do a work experience placement. There are many links with local businesses and agencies that help pupils, with visits to factories, leisure centres, clubs and training facilities where they can see how other people work, and perhaps try it for themselves. Much of this careers-oriented learning is built into the effective 'life skills' courses. Students in Post-16 attend the local college for a full day each week, doing a project to run their own business. Younger pupils go for an afternoon, undertaking a short ICT course and also benefit from the social aspects of the café and canteen and the independent travel opportunities. All of the courses lead to qualifications that are awarded by nationally recognised bodies, such as ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network), Entry Level and GCSE.
25. Personal, social and health education is taught very effectively across a very good spread of topics and in a variety of ways. Some of the lessons are timetabled as 'citizenship' and there are daily lessons which include 'circle time'. Pupils discuss pre-planned matters such as bullying, famine relief, not polluting the environment, or helping the victims of the Asian Tsunami. Lessons also teach pupils about sex and relationships, partly taught by the school nurse, who also talks with pupils about her own role. The subject also includes good aspects of learning about the dangers of some drugs such as nicotine and alcohol, as well as the benefits of other drugs to help diabetes or cancer, for instance.
26. All pupils have a good and equal opportunity to take part in all lessons and activities. Pupils who need to be withdrawn from some lessons each week for speech and language sessions do not always miss the same subject, as the therapist has a rota of different pupils and times each term. The less able pupils are helped to join in lessons by teachers and support staff organising lessons and activities at their own level. Pupils who do not speak English at home are also helped with well-focused support so that they can take advantage of all that is on offer.
27. The curriculum has changed and developed well during the past two years, and there are well developed plans to change other aspects. The 'Golden Time' each Friday afternoon, for instance, gives pupils a wide range of options for activities such as chess, kite flying, duck feeding, table tennis, shed building, knitting and crochet. Other recent developments include the expressive arts activities, such as drama at a nearby school. There are plans to extend this to include dance and more music opportunities. There are many new clubs which pupils can join, especially at lunchtimes, as there are difficulties with transport from after-school activities. As more pupils with autism are admitted, so the school is having to devise a curriculum and teaching approach that is best suited to their needs. The whole curriculum is being 'audited' to find best practice in each subject, which parts are most relevant to the pupils' needs and how different aspects can be fully woven into an integrated pattern of teaching.
28. The curriculum is very well enriched by opportunities for pupils to learn both outside the school premises, and outside the school day. The college courses and work-related placements give all pupils much-enriched experiences. Pupils go to a leisure centre for swimming, games and fitness clubs and have visits out to the cinema and pizza shop. Each subject organises its own visits to bring their topics to life. There are also many additional sporting and physical activities, such as football matches against other schools, cricket matches and athletics events. These are always open to girls as well as boys, and there are clubs that especially encourage girls to take part in such activities at lunchtimes. Other opportunities include the library and homework clubs. All pupils have excellent opportunities to

go on a residential activity each year. The school runs three trips away, staying for a week at one of three different places for exciting and adventurous activities such as rock and pole climbing, abseiling, canoeing and orienteering. The social, confidence building and independence value of these occasions is very good.

29. The accommodation overall is satisfactory and meets the needs of pupils and the curriculum. The school has extensive grounds which with an appropriate mixture of hard and grassed surfaces. Two hard surface courts with very good perimeter fencing provide excellent facilities and are well used. The specialist rooms for science and food technology have been refurbished and now provide good support for subject teaching. The art classroom has been remodelled to include a darkroom area. This has significantly reduced, to an unsatisfactory level, the amount of room available for general class teaching. The classroom area for Post-16 provision is inadequate, it does not provide for the range of activities required. This has been recognised by the school and an agreed building programme should address this issue. Disability access in the school is poor. The school is on two floors, both of which are split level. The school is addressing this in their accessibility plan which identifies the provision of lifts. General teaching resources are good and very good in art and design and ICT. The resources for design and technology resistant materials are excellent and are fully utilised by the teacher.

Care, guidance and support

The arrangements for pupils' care, welfare and health and safety are good overall and support pupils' learning and well-being appropriately. The provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring is good. The involvement of pupils in the school's work through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is also good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The pupils trust the teachers and other staff implicitly and know there is always someone to whom they can turn.
- The school provides a variety of opportunities for pupils to express opinions about life in the school.
- The school effectively keeps a track of pupils' progress through the school.
- There are effective procedures for ensuring a healthy and safe environment.

Commentary

30. As at the time of the previous inspection, staff show good levels of concern for the needs of the pupils and provide good role models to encourage development. Parents are pleased with the level of support given to their children, seeing the school as a caring community where staff are approachable if there are any problems. In particular, parents agree that their children are well provided for when they first come into the school. The school has good links with the main primary special school from which pupils mostly come. Pupils are able to spend three 'taster' days in Woodfield before they start. The school adapts the visits well according to the pupils' needs; for instance, those with autism break their visits into several half and full days in the summer term to become used to the school. Pupils have the opportunity to express their views about school life in 'circle' time' and at the regular meetings of the school council.
31. The school has carried out risk assessments for different areas of the school and a variety of activities that take place both within the school and for visits; these are reviewed regularly. Both the welfare officer and the caretaker check for any hazards as they go round the school, though there is no formal system for checking and recording any problems that are identified. Teachers ensure that pupils are made aware of health and safety issues during lessons such as science and design and technology. The governors do not regularly formally review health and safety procedures, however. The local authority has recently visited to audit procedures,

though at the time of the inspection their written report was not yet available. The school has good procedures for child protection. The school follows the local procedures and staff have received guidance on how to deal with any concerns that may arise. The arrangements for first aid are good with many trained staff, records kept of treatment and letters for parents if pupils bump their heads.

32. The school has improved its monitoring procedures well since the last inspection. This has resulted in the school having a better view of the progress pupils make and what they need to do to improve. Every term the form tutor reviews the progress of the pupils to develop targets in the individual learning plans relating to their social skills and attitudes to work. Parents are invited to these reviews. The school provides a good variety of ways to support pupils' personal development and monitor progress. As well as the tutor and the speech and language therapist, pupils can receive help from the welfare officer and pupils who act as mentors. A teaching assistant is currently being trained as a mentor. Visiting support is also provided by a drama therapist, physiotherapist and other specialists. The self-esteem of the pupils is raised by the celebration of achievement in assembly. Good guidance about the world of work is provided by the Connexions adviser and by the links with business organisations to enable all Year 10, 11 and 12 pupils to undertake a variety of work experience placements.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents are satisfactory overall. Links with the local community are good and with other schools are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents hold the school in high regard.
- The school provides a good range of information about what is happening in the school.
- Some parents provide only limited support to their children's learning.
- The involvement of organisations and people in the community extends opportunities for pupils' personal, social and academic development.

Commentary

33. In their response to the pre-inspection questionnaire and at the meeting with the inspectors, parents showed that they are pleased with what the school provides. Their children like school, the staff expect their children to work hard and they make good progress. A few expressed some concerns about behaviour which the inspectors agree could be better supported for some pupils. Parents at the meeting commented that the homework is not linked to the class work, a concern echoed by the inspectors.
34. The school sends home attractive newsletters every term about activities in the school and a diary of future events. These are supplemented by letters on particular matters such as healthy snacks, a review of the anti-bullying code and invitations to reviews of the individual learning plans and other meetings. At the beginning of each term, the school sends home the targets and an outline of what the pupils will be learning together with a homework pack. The termly consultation meetings with the teachers are supplemented by written reports at Christmas and in the summer. These provide a good summary of progress in each subject identifying how well the pupil has worked towards the learning objectives.
35. The school welcomes parents into the school for the termly reviews and to headteacher question times but a significant proportion do not come. The school telephones parents not only if there are concerns but also to highlight good progress in improving their behaviour. Parents do support by ensuring pupils wear school uniform and ensuring that pupils bring only healthy food for snacks to school. Nevertheless, they often do not ensure that their children tackle the homework with only about a third of the work being returned to the school. Some parents do not ensure that their children attend regularly

36. The school has especially strong links with businesses and business related organisations. These enable all pupils in Years 10, 11 and 12 to undertake work experience for two weeks. Individual firms provide placements for teachers to provide them with the skills (and sometimes the resources) to organise workshops for the pupils in areas such as horticulture and information technology. Companies have also sent in their staff to improve the environment in the school. The good variety of visits and visitors enhance the curriculum well. The good links with the feeder primary schools enable pupils to settle in quickly when they come into Year 7. The further education college provides an ICT course for Year 11 pupils. The links with secondary schools are good in helping pupils who are suitable for mainstream education to make the transition. Nevertheless, there are very few opportunities for pupils generally to undertake lessons in a mainstream school to broaden the curriculum on offer and to provide them with experience of a larger school and working with mainstream peers.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school and the work of the governing body are good. The headteacher's leadership is good. The leadership and management of key staff are also good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The induction of new staff and the support for staff training are all very good.
- The school is becoming increasingly effective at evaluating its own performance.
- The senior members of staff are good role models for the rest of the staff and pupils.
- The governing body supports and challenges the senior managers well; there is a good level of expertise but committees meet too infrequently to evaluate areas of the curriculum effectively.
- Data collected on pupils is now being analysed to set individual targets across the school.
- Strategic planning is satisfactory overall, although some aspects are insufficiently detailed to ensure effective pupil outcomes.

Commentary

37. There has been a significant change at senior management level since the last inspection. The headteacher, previously the deputy headteacher, has been in post for two years and has strengthened and developed the school well. The headteacher, staff and governors have worked well together as a very effective team to move the school forward and address areas of concern.
38. The headteacher is ably supported by a highly committed senior management team. The newly restructured team works very effectively together. It works well with other staff to ensure everyone has an opportunity to contribute to school priorities, understands them fully and feels involved in working towards them. Clarification of roles and line management, clear guidelines for co-ordinators and an allocation of a good amount of time for their posts mean that almost all leadership and management of the curriculum is good.
39. Management is effective. The successful review of the Investor in People Award, underlines the effective management of the school and commitment to staff performance. Pupil targets have been set and these are monitored at whole school and individual subject level to ensure they are appropriate and challenging for the pupils. Although there are strengths in the way in which information about pupils is shared with staff, some aspects of the school's approach to the management of pupils' additional special educational needs, such as the purpose and use of individual education plans, are less effective. Staff performance management is effective. Through lesson observations and constructive feedback, individual objectives have been identified which support improvements in teaching and learning well. The teaching assistants are fully involved in a professional review process of their work. This ensures that they are an essential part of the staff team and share the ambition and motivation to do their best for the pupils. Teachers and support staff form very effective teams across the school and this has a

beneficial effect on the progress that pupils and students make. They have very good opportunities to take part in a wide range of appropriate training opportunities. In a very good example of staff development, a staff member who began work as a teaching assistant is now completing a teaching qualification. This has been achieved through her hard work and excellent support from the school. Staff induction is good. It is well structured and it ensures that new staff get to know about the school and pupils as quickly as possible. Staff value the assistance that has been provided and are clear about the ways in which it is improving both the school and their own teaching.

40. The governing body is fully committed and highly supportive. The school is fortunate to have experienced governors who have good levels of expertise in areas which are useful to the school. It is also well supported by parent governors. All statutory requirements are met. Governors make an effective contribution to the development of the school and show a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. They have worked very well with the local education authority and the headteacher in driving change forward and supporting the school. They support the management well, and are sufficiently confident to challenge where necessary. Governors individually use their experience and expertise to help the headteacher in aspects of her work. Governors visit the school regularly to assess aspects of the 'ethos' of the school; for instance, in respect of pupils' interest and involvement in lessons and their behaviour. These provide the school with useful, objective feedback. The full governing body meet termly and meetings are well recorded. A committee structure is established, although apart from the finance committee, the committees meet too infrequently to be able to reflect on significant aspects of the school's development and inform the full governing body.
41. The leadership of the headteacher is good. She understands the need to continue to move the school forward to achieve higher standards for all pupils. There is a clear vision for development and she works hard to improve the school with a strong sense of purpose. She inspires confidence and loyalty in both staff and parents. Her tenacity for improvement and the insistence on high standards is the reason why the school is doing well. The school is an active member of the local EAZ and plays a full part in the sharing and gaining of teaching expertise. The school responds effectively to issues of inclusion within the school, pupils with additional educational needs work extensively within the body of the school. However, inclusion opportunities within mainstream schools are underdeveloped.
42. The school has a two year development plan and a 10 year 'vision plan'. The priorities are appropriate. The links between the activities within the plans are insufficiently strong and there is little cohesion between the short, medium and long term objectives. This, therefore, limits the possible strategic impact. While the school development plan identifies the priorities the school has elected to address and these are the right ones, the rationale and success criteria relate to the completion of tasks rather than the impact on pupil learning or on improving quality.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1,268,122	Balance from previous year	67,318
Total expenditure	1,227,714	Balance carried forward to the next	107,726
Expenditure per pupil	11,920		

43. Planning and management of finances are satisfactory. The school is well placed to support capital building projects, such as the Post-16 development; the large surplus accrued is for

such a purpose. The school development plan is reasonably costed, although there are parts which are not fully costed.

Work related learning

The provision in work-related learning is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good careers advice begins in Year 9.
- Good work experience placements begin in Year 10.
- Visits to work situations and training facilities are widespread and very valuable.
- There are very good links with the personal, social and citizenship courses.
- College placements give additional very good support.
- WRL is very well organised and managed.

Commentary

44. Only one lesson was seen during the inspection (a good careers discussion with a Connexions advisor), so it is not possible to judge the quality of the teaching. However, staff within the school work alongside visiting advisers to discuss the future with pupils. They consider many options for possible careers, and have sessions on completing forms, learning about taking part in an interview and thinking what skills they need to do particular jobs. Pupils make very good progress in their awareness of work-related opportunities and possibilities, and what the future might realistically hold for them.
45. The work experience placements are very valuable. They prepare pupils very well for life ahead. The Post-16 students have already completed two experiences in Years 10 and 11, and are now preparing for their third opportunity. Some pupils have had work experience for one day a week for an extended period, and the school plans to organise more placements in this way. Pupils have worked as mechanics in a cycle repair shop and a garage, warehousemen, hairdressing assistants, and looking after ponies. Pupils keep well organised diaries of their experiences, and these count towards a nationally recognised qualification.
46. An extremely good aspect of work-related learning is the great variety of visits to places where people work, seeing jobs that they might be able to do themselves. This is often linked with visits to places that train young people in particular skills, such as a series of 'Can-Do' workshops in west London. There is also an Education Business Partnership that has very effectively organised many of these visits.
47. Lessons in other subjects, particularly personal, social and citizenship education, give added support to all these direct activities, especially for the most able pupils. The life skills and food studies lessons, for instance, help to give pupils skills such as using money, travelling independently, using computers, knowing how to pay bills and open a bank account. Pupils learn about the jobs that people do around the school, in the local community, and in other more distant parts of the region, and the world.
48. Students in Post -16 all go to a local college each week to take part in a 'Young Enterprise' project. This benefits them greatly. In the mornings they do all the detailed planning for their commercial 'business'— design, costing, materials, production and sales; and in the afternoons they make the real things. Currently, they are making silk-screen printed T shirts, and have previously made candle holders and decorated glass jars. The value to the students is immense.

49. This area of learning is very well organised and managed. Senior staff have given it a high priority in terms of timetable time and organisational effort of forging strong links with many businesses and agencies. These can, and do, help the pupils to maximise their possibilities for being employed in the future.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3, 4 and Post-16

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

Modern foreign languages

50. Very little **French** teaching and work was seen during the inspection and this subject is not reported on fully as a consequence. The school teaches French to all pupils and at Post-16, but at the time of the inspection the specialist French teacher had left. Other teachers were 'holding the fort', with varying degrees of success. At Post-16 a good French lesson was observed which demonstrated that pupils had made good gains in French over their time in the school. A less successful lesson was delivered with enthusiasm, but with limited resources and subject knowledge it meant that some of the enthusiastic delivery misfired. However, once again, pupils respond with enthusiasm and clearly enjoy their French lessons. The subject makes a strong contribution to their listening skills and self-esteem, as well as their understanding of other cultures. The school has clear plans for developing provision further.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Mains strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make very good progress in relation to their starting points in speaking and listening and in their attitudes to reading and writing.
- Teaching of, and support for, speaking and listening are generally very good in English lessons and in other subjects and is strengthened by the work of the speech and language therapist.
- Progress in writing is sound but would be improved if more varied ways of teaching were used, including more use of ICT with less able pupils.
- Assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress are good.

Commentary

51. Achievement in English is good overall. Although most pupils' attainments are considerably below those of others of their age, there are individual pupils in each part of the school who have reading and speaking skills closer to their age. Achievement in speaking and listening is very good throughout the school. In reading it is good, although some individual pupils also make very good progress. Progress in writing is less strong, although still satisfactory.
52. A range of sequencing and other activities are used to help pupils understand how texts are structured and organise their own writing. More able pupils' writing increases in length and complexity over the time they are in school. However, writing opportunities are insufficiently varied. A few less able pupils could make even more progress in writing if ICT were used more and, overall, there need to be more opportunities for writing in other subjects. However, pupils do make good progress in their attitudes to writing and almost all pupils who were reluctant writers on entering the school are prepared to 'have-a-go' at writing and settle down to it well by the end of Year 7. Some pupils, however, complete too little written work and for some able pupils the work is not challenging enough. Spelling is systematically supported in English and other lessons and handwriting generally improves well.
53. Pupils make very good gains in their self-expression and in their listening skills by the end of their time in school. They listen to their teachers and each other more readily, have extended the length and complexity of what they say and use English terminology effectively. The most able pupils make effective logical contributions to discussions and justify their points well. Pupils with autism also make good progress overall and very good progress in their self-

expression. They make very good gains in how they listen to others because their teachers are very skilled in directing their attention and in supporting their involvement in lessons. The school employs its own speech and language therapist and her support in promoting listening skills, as well as in working with individual pupils and groups, is valued considerably by staff and pupils and contributes considerably to their success. The numbers of pupils with speech and language needs mean that this service is much stretched.

54. Consistently strong support for reading skills and attitudes enables pupils to make good and sometimes very good gains in their letter and word recognition, reading for meaning and appreciation of literature. Drama and role-play also support this very well. On entry, many pupils have very limited reading skills and little confidence. By Year 9 most are prepared to read out loud and some read fluently, accurately and with expression. The most able pupils by Year 11 read classic and modern books accurately. Almost all use simple dictionaries and a thesaurus to support their reading and writing. The less able pupils have more ways in which they try to work out what individual words or sentences mean.
55. Teaching in English is good overall. It is often very good. The teaching of reading is good throughout the school. Teachers have very high levels of expertise in supporting language, use skilful questioning and modelling of answers and have very expressive reading and storytelling. There is systematic support for word attack skills and very good use of praise and encouragement in their lesson. Teachers know pupils' levels in English very well and plan very carefully to meet pupils' needs. Some try to ensure that they have taken pupils' learning styles into account. This means there is a good range of challenge and pupils know that their lessons will be interesting and motivating. There are now strong assessment procedures in place and targets are set for all pupils and for year groups to ensure that standards move progressively on. The school's very good response to the 'Key Skills initiative' has strengthened provision in English and ensured that all elements are systematically covered.
56. The subject is strongly led by an enthusiastic co-ordinator who has a clear overview of the subject's strengths and weaknesses, including standards.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

57. This is good overall. There is strong support for reading and for speaking and listening in other subjects, but less systematic support for writing. However, spelling and key vocabulary are generally supported well. The quality of questioning by teachers as they elicit responses from pupils significantly supports and extends their speaking and listening skills. Writing could be better supported by increased use of ICT, particularly for lower attainers.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good planning results in lessons that meet the needs of the pupils well.
- The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has had a positive effect on the way that lessons are taught.
- Procedures for assessing pupils' and students' progress are developing well.
- Classroom organisation limits pupil-to-pupil discussion and collaboration.
- ICT is used very well to support pupils' learning.

Commentary

58. Improvement in provision in mathematics since the previous inspection is good.
59. Teaching and learning are good overall. The good achievement and progress that pupils make are a direct result of well planned and organised teaching. As a result, pupils make good progress in their knowledge and skills in lessons and over time. There has been an increase in the number of able pupils successfully obtaining nationally recognised qualifications such as Entry Level and GCSE. However, there is an over-reliance on the use of worksheets and small group practical activities are insufficiently used to enable pupils to learn from each other and to work collaboratively on problems.
60. Teachers successfully use the guidance and structure of the National Numeracy Strategy to plan and teach their lessons. They plan well to meet the different needs of pupils in the various units of work and in individual lessons. Teachers regularly check pupils' understanding of tasks, although the organisation of the classroom, with pupils sitting at individual desks makes monitoring of pupils' work throughout the lesson difficult. It also limits vocabulary development, pupil discussion, collaboration and does not promote confidence in the less able learner. Teachers are developing very good ICT resources to support their teaching. For example, they use multi-media software to present the key concepts of lines of symmetry, using a wide range of examples and effective animation. This clearly promotes pupils' conceptual development. Such presentations are available to all teachers in the department and are used effectively for revision and consolidation of learning. If pupils do not understand, they feel confident enough to ask the teacher or support assistant to explain. Support staff are making an important contribution to pupils' learning. All adults have a calm manner that helps to set the tone within the classroom and ensures that any inappropriate or off-task behaviour is immediately addressed. Staff have high expectations of the pupils.
61. Procedures for assessing pupils' achievement and for record keeping provide useful information for monitoring pupil progress. The co-ordinator has established a database of pupils' achievement within a banding structure. From this baseline the department is able to measure individual pupil progress and set targets for all pupils for the following term and year
62. The knowledgeable and enthusiastic subject leader uses planning and assessment information effectively to determine future development priorities. Her management of the subject is good. She has developed an effective team that meets regularly and works together. Clear lines of responsibility ensure that work loads are equitably managed and that the action plan for the department is effectively implemented. The leadership of the subject is satisfactory. Although areas for development have been identified, planning does not sufficiently address how these are to be achieved. The strategic development of the mathematical provision is not sufficiently addressed.

Mathematics across the curriculum

63. This is satisfactory overall. Pupils use their numeracy skills in other subjects, for example when using spreadsheets and databases in ICT and measuring and weighing in design and technology. Although numeracy appears in teachers' medium term planning, it is often not extended into their short term plans. Therefore opportunities to consolidate numeracy skills and concepts are not systematically taken up and planned for across the curriculum.

SCIENCE

The provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make good progress, enabling them to gain nationally recognised qualifications.
- The good teaching is rooted in thorough preparation of lessons.
- Sometimes the planning is too detailed and inflexible to let lessons run smoothly.
- The good provision has been maintained well since the previous inspection.

Commentary

64. Pupils make good progress in science in all parts of the school, and achieve well by the time they leave. They learn good, safe laboratory routines in the first year, and develop their knowledge of how to conduct experiments well. Pupils use their skills in ICT to do research and display their work. They make good progress about each topic, with some especially good work in aspects of chemistry. They achieve well in environmental science, often through strong practical work in school and on visits outside. Almost all pupils gain Entry Level qualifications in courses that are organised by national educational bodies. Pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy are satisfactorily reinforced and extended in lessons. However, there are insufficient opportunities for the more able pupils to write their own accounts of what they have been learning, with too much reliance on worksheets.
65. Lessons are planned and prepared very thoroughly. Activities are well matched to the aims of the lessons and generally to pupils' individual needs. Support staff are well briefed in what the lesson is about and what their role in it will be. However, there are times when every activity in a lesson is planned to the smallest detail and the last minute. This prevents there being any flexibility in the teaching if pupils have questions, if one activity is particularly interesting, or if an experiment goes wrong the first time. When too much has been planned to fit into a single lesson some activities are too rushed and the teaching moves too quickly from one planned activity to the next. The less able pupils do not have enough time to absorb what the lesson has been about.
66. Some very good resources and equipment are used in pupils' investigations, or by staff in demonstrations. Teachers are very good at using computer technology to make their lessons interesting and enjoyable, such as showing a series of film extracts about light on the interactive whiteboard. However, at other times the use of ICT does not add anything valuable to the way a lesson is being taught, despite the great efforts that have gone into its preparation. Teachers make good use of question and answer sessions to get pupils thinking about what is happening in an experiment, and trying to explain this for themselves. This generally goes well, especially when support staff are available to help the pupils with additional needs or for those whose home language is not English. Sometimes, however, the more able pupils are allowed to give all the answers, and the less able pupils are not given enough encouragement or time to think of their answers and to make suggestions. Staff have positive relationships with pupils, and they are able to motivate pupils well. As a result pupils enjoy this subject and mainly try hard to do well.
67. The subject has satisfactory leadership and is well managed. Standards have been satisfactorily maintained since the previous inspection. There is now a technician who gives valuable and effective assistance in lesson preparation. This is in addition to some very good equipment and a very good laboratory in which to conduct lessons. A good and wide-ranging scheme of what topics are to be taught in the long term supports lesson planning well. Good use is made of visits, such as to the science and natural history museums, to enhance pupils' learning. Teachers assess pupils' learning frequently, and keep detailed records of the results. However, although much information is being gathered, it is not always analysed to identify what might be done to improve standards and provision further.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The teachers' expertise and enthusiasm rub off on the pupils.
- Teaching is highly expert and pupils are supported very well.
- Introductions are very strong; very clear explanations coupled with very good use of interactive whiteboards mean that pupils are very clear as to what they are learning.
- Planning is very thorough and takes pupils' needs and level of understanding into account very well.
- Occasionally, more interesting ways of presenting 'duller' topics could be found.

Commentary

68. Pupils have a very high level of enthusiasm for ICT. This is clearly evident in the speed with which they want to log on and get down to work. This is because most classes are taught by a specialist teacher who has exceptional expertise in the subject. He skilfully adapts the work in small successful steps, so that pupils learn very effectively. Teaching overall is consistently very good. Explanations are carefully thought out and supported by the very good use of the interactive whiteboard, which increases pupils' understanding of what they are learning significantly.
69. The quality of the support during ICT lessons is a significant strength of the teaching. This support is expert and sensitive. Questioning is very probing, helps pupils to think about what they are doing and to do things even better. There is always an emphasis on praise to raise self-esteem, but also a critical eye on helping pupils to do things better. The knowledge of the pupils' needs and of the next steps to be planned are based on very good formal and informal information gained about pupils' skills.
70. Pupils concentrate exceptionally well. They want to do their very best and achieve in line with their teacher's demands and expectations. The curriculum is well planned, with a good balance of all elements. The pupils find the work interesting, although at times some of the 'duller' topics, such as databases, could be made even more interesting by the use of software scenarios which challenge the pupils even more and relate the work more to real life. Simulations for problem solving, however, are used very well in Year 7 and support pupils' logical thinking skills very well. For instance, pupils were spellbound, during the teachers' introduction, to see how cartoon characters could be made to do certain things according to their particular attributes. This helped them to think about the features which would aid the characters' success or failure to cross a bridge.
71. The pupils' achievements are very good and on entry to the school they quickly become very confident in using ICT. Although pupils' levels of attainment are lower than those expected for their age, progress from their starting points is very good. There is a good range of award bearing courses undertaken in Years 10 and 11 (in which the pupils achieve very good grades) and in the new Post-16 course for the less able students. However, there is no opportunity for the small number of more able pupils to undertake a full GCSE course at present. The co-ordinator is looking into how this can be organised.
72. Leadership and management are good. The co-ordinator has worked hard to develop the school's ICT infrastructure and to support colleagues. His work in this respect has been exceptional. He has a clear view of where the subject needs to develop but written planning for development is not always sufficiently sharp. There are few opportunities for the ICT co-ordinator formally to monitor the use of computers across the curriculum; an area that is recognised for future development.

The use of ICT across the curriculum

73. This is good overall. It is excellent in resistant materials technology work and in art and design. In other subjects, there are varying degrees of use. There are times when ICT is not used sufficiently or does not add to the lesson, such as in teaching and learning a modern foreign language and in science. Not all staff (and pupils) use the interactive whiteboards to best effect. Some just use it as a 'whiteboard' and there is little 'interactive' use. There is some use of ICT to support pupils with greater learning difficulties than the rest, although there were some missed opportunities during English and other lessons to support writing, particularly for less able pupils.

HUMANITIES

74. No lessons were observed in either **geography or history** therefore an overall judgment on provision can not be made.
75. History and geography are taught to all year groups in the school up to Year 11. They are each taught in a block across one term for each year group, the other term being used for the teaching of religious education. Both subjects are very well planned and the National Curriculum programmes of study have been appropriately modified to meet the needs of the pupils. The schemes of work provide breadth and balance in both subjects. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 pursue an appropriate course which leads to accreditation.
76. The scheme of work for history ensures that the pupils are able to achieve a sense of sequence, and gain an awareness of the events and people that have contributed towards shaping the present. Through comparative studies pupils develop a sense of chronology. Their work demonstrates that the pupils are able to work from the familiar to the unfamiliar, have an understanding of why things happened and why people acted as they did. This was particularly evident in a topic relating to trade and industry. Pupils' learning is supported through visits to a local Victorian mansion, the Tower of London, the Imperial War Museum and the London Dungeon.
77. The scheme of work for geography facilitates the development of enquiry. Pupils develop an appreciation of physical geographical features and environmental change. In Years 8 and 9 pupils develop an appreciation of people and places beyond their immediate experiences through topics on France and India. They undertake comparative fieldwork studies to develop geographical understanding. They also visit Kew Gardens and a local reservoir to contextualise their learning.
78. The post holder for these subjects was on maternity leave at the time of the inspection. The acting subject leader's management of the subjects is effective. He has monitored provision appropriately and has a clear understanding of the development needs of both subject areas. The resources for teaching both subjects have been significantly enhanced through the development of ICT.
79. It was possible to observe only two lessons of **religious education** during the inspection, both with the same teacher, with pupils in the younger two years. It is not, therefore, possible to judge the quality of teaching throughout the school or the provision in the subject overall. However, it was possible to speak with teachers and pupils, and to look at a range of work. Records of pupils' progress were also looked at.
80. Religious education shares time on the timetable with history and geography, each being taught for a term. Pupils' work shows good progress and reasonable coverage of topics for these terms, but it is not possible to judge the amount of help that they receive during lessons. Some of the records are also not really helpful in giving a clear picture of pupils' gains in knowledge and understanding about different religions, and the moral and social issues that arise from religion.

81. The teaching is based on clear lesson planning that matches well-focused activities to the aims of the lessons. Teachers have a good relationship with pupils, and this helps pupils to be interested and to pay attention and join in the discussions. Often, teachers involve pupils who are known to be from a particular religious group; they get them to talk about their beliefs, customs and any special clothing they wear at their place of worship. This brings the religions 'alive' for the other pupils, and builds up the self-esteem and speaking skills of the pupils who are involved most closely. Generally, teachers also make good efforts to involve pupils whose home language is not English. Clear speech, good explanations of new words, and specially prepared worksheets, diagrams to add words to, or free written work for the most able pupils all support individual pupils' achievements.
82. In the lessons observed, the teaching was good overall, and pupils were learning well. However, in the long term, pupils' achievements are satisfactory. During each term they are learning about religious education they make good progress, but this is not sustained as the rest of the year goes by without any reinforcement of what they have learned.
83. This subject is being 'looked after' by a very capable temporary co-ordinator who has a very good awareness of pupils' abilities and learning through much of the school. Resources and religious artefacts are good, and are used well in lessons to illustrate, for example, how ceremonies are carried out or which clothes are worn. The plan of what is to be taught in the long term is clear, including in the Post- 16 unit. It is well based on the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. In much of the planning there are clear guidelines to encourage the use of computers and other high technology equipment. For example, the school has subscribed to a particularly good Internet site, giving, for instance, video clips of different ceremonies such as Baptisms, stories from different religions, and weddings in different religions.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

The provision in design and technology is **excellent**. It is excellent for resistant materials technology (RM) and very good in food studies.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Design and technology is one of the school's 'flagship' subjects.
- Pupils excel in their use of ICT in RM.
- The way the subject links with other aspects of the curriculum means that pupils gain an excellent understanding of the skills they need to learn and why they are learning them.
- Teachers have a passion for their subject and for pupils' learning.
- Staff know the pupils and their skills thoroughly.
- The food studies room does not have furniture which can adjust to meet the needs of disabled people.

Commentary

84. Provision in the technology subjects in this school is remarkable, because of the school's commitment to their promotion. All aspects are very well resourced, have highly competent staff leading them that can 'fly the flag' and demonstrate a passion for their subject and for pupils' learning.
85. The work produced by pupils in resistant materials technology is of an exceptionally high quality and represents a remarkable achievement from the pupils' starting points. The curriculum has been thought out and planned extremely well. It encompasses an excellent balance of hand crafted work, computer aided design and computer aided manufacture. Pupils' skills develop excellently, because of the exceptional skill and knowledge of the

teacher, the way the work is carefully planned to build on pupils' previous skills and the way it is skilfully adapted where pupils have difficulties. Pupils from Year 7 onwards show very high levels of capability in using ICT for design purposes. Teaching is consistently excellent and the support from the technician is very good. Very strong teamwork is evident and pupils' needs in lessons are exceptionally well met. Key skills, especially ICT, vocabulary / concept work and much numerical work, are always built in to lessons. It is the teachers' insistence on checking what the pupils have learned and guiding pupils to success that results in pupils' high levels of confidence and enjoyment of the subject. Pupils are constantly challenged to solve problems and to think for themselves. Their involvement and interest in lessons are excellent, as a result.

86. The layout of the workshop has been very well planned, especially as space is so limited. The use of the interactive whiteboard has made a big difference to pupils' learning and to teachers' demonstrations. Because of the way it is used, pupils learn some very difficult ideas and the teacher is able to challenge them further.
87. The subject is led and managed exceptionally well by a teacher who has a borough-wide role for supporting schools as an advanced skills teacher. He has a very clear view of how the subject should develop and how to achieve the goals set.
88. There are many similar features found in the food studies work, which is considered a separate subject and has its own leader. She has developed the subject very well and all aspects of product design, making and evaluation are well established, as part of the curriculum and in lessons. Less weight is given to the design element, although pupils, nevertheless, do have reasonable opportunities. They, too, have excellent enthusiasm for this subject. They know if they watch, listen and follow instructions they will achieve a great deal.... and get to eat the product afterwards! Moreover, they achieve a very good knowledge of the 'making' processes; the excellent emphasis on healthy eating and scientific aspects of the work means they gain a very well rounded and thorough knowledge of the subject. Pupils take a great pride in what they have made (as with resistant materials) and are eager to show it to their friends. The school's enterprise work is of very good quality with pupils undertaking different roles in the production of the food. Here however, they could be stretched even more and asked to use higher level ICT design and mathematical skills in a more integrated way than they do. Assessment is very good and the teacher knows her pupils very well indeed. Teaching is very good. Lessons are thoroughly planned with pupils' needs carefully considered. Pupils build on their skills with great success and develop tool skills and a very good critical eye for the evaluation of products as a result. The relatively recently refurbished food technology room is excellently laid-out but does not have access for disabled people.
89. Both these subjects have improved very well since the last inspection. They have been very 'high profile' in the school's planning. It is a credit to the school and the subject leaders that their enthusiasm and hard work has resulted in such a high level of achievement by pupils.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

90. Only a small number of **music** lessons were seen and the subject was not fully inspected. Prior to the inspection the subject co-ordinator had left the school and music was taught by a former teacher who will take over the subject formally from September 2005. The teaching observed during the inspection was very good; there is a strong vision for the subject including the development of music technology. Pupils' responses were also very good and pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 were observed joining in freely, enjoying composition and performance and singing with enthusiasm.

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school and pupils take a great pride in what they achieve.
- The skill and enthusiasm of the specialist teacher are evident in pupils' passion for the subject and the quality of their work.
- The demand for high standards means that pupils try their very best.
- The pupils achieve remarkably well despite the limited accommodation.

Commentary

91. The school is rightly very proud of its success in art and design and the corridors abound with exceptionally high quality artwork. The co-ordinator's own skill as a facilitator is evident in the high level of visual impact on the observer and in the pride with which the work is presented. Pupils, too, are very proud of what they achieve, so much so that they continue to work on projects outside lessons. The subject makes a significant contribution to pupils' self-esteem and emotional well-being. Art and design is excellently managed and led. There is a clear view as to what needs to be done and how to get there. In addition, the leaders' passion for the subject is passed onto the pupils – this fires their enthusiasm and imagination.
92. In relation to the pupils' starting points, the quality of their work represents excellent achievement. The skills that pupils gain are as a result of the very hard work, dedication and enthusiasm of the specialist teacher and the very high level of guidance and support given to pupils. A major emphasis is on pupils trying ideas for themselves, helping them to think creatively and imaginatively and on developing techniques which they are confident to try out in their own pieces. The curriculum is very carefully planned. A very rich range of opportunities is provided and a very wide range of media is used. During the inspection, Year 10 pupils learning about the processes used in developing in photography were amazed at the changes in the images and concentrated excellently in the cramped, hot darkroom for nearly three-quarters of an hour! The opportunities that pupils have to learn are very well balanced and ICT is used excellently for research and design. Key skills, such as the 'language of art' and problem solving ideas, are expertly woven into the planning and delivery.
93. The demand for high quality work is evident in the consistently excellent teaching. It is exceptionally well planned and takes full account of the pupils' personal needs. This results in pupils rising to the challenge and trying their best. Their interest, involvement and enthusiasm for the subject are excellent. Their respect and enthusiasm for the subject and their teacher are evident in their excellent behaviour and the way they concentrate. Teaching is successful because the work is planned in such small steps, so that pupils gain a great sense of success in what they do. The modelling of techniques by the teacher is excellent; it is sensitive, yet demanding of pupils. It results in pupils gaining the skills in a supportive way.
94. Improvement since the last inspection has been very good. Standards have risen well and opportunities widened markedly. The only small weakness is in the accommodation. It is small and cramped and pupils do remarkably well to manage in such conditions. The main impact is on health and safety; there is poor ventilation and pupils knock into furniture and each other as they move around. This is unsatisfactory.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement has improved for pupils of all levels of capability.
- Teaching is good and promotes enthusiastic learning.
- The curriculum is good and it is strongly enriched by opportunities for learning outside the taught lessons.
- Good leadership has led to better management of resources and enhanced opportunities for pupils and students.
- There is insufficient use of ICT to support learning

Commentary

95. At the last inspection, achievement was judged to be satisfactory. The involvement of girls and the breadth of the curriculum were judged to be insufficient. Improvement since the last inspection has been good and achievement is now good for all pupils and students. The range of learning activities offered to pupils and students is appropriate for their age and modified to match their needs. Pupils develop their physical skills well. They make good progress as they move through the school. Swimming and dance are now fully embedded into the curriculum and provision for girls has been significantly enhanced.
96. The planned range of activities fully meets the requirements of the National Curriculum and includes swimming, dance, games, gymnastics, athletics and outdoor and adventurous activities. The broad range of activities available in taught and club sessions has ensured that all pupils engage in purposeful and motivational activities. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 exceed the amount of sports time targeted through the national strategy.
97. Specialist teachers have a good grasp of the curriculum requirements and a very good knowledge of the individual characteristics and needs of their pupils and students. Lessons are planned well. Staff are enthusiastic and work together very well as a team. As a result, pupils try hard and join in, actively, in lessons. With the encouragement of their teachers, they develop increasing confidence, a sense of achievement and progress. External cricket coaches provide very high quality tuition for pupils. These significantly raise the pupils' level of performance, resulting in the school's cricket team attaining county representative honours.
98. Pupils enjoy physical education. They work safely and sensibly with equipment, wear appropriate clothing and exercise a high level of self-discipline, listening and responding well. Pupils develop essential personal skills during their lessons. They learn to listen and to follow instructions, to work together with others in a team, to accept rules and the judgments of others. They also demonstrate an appreciation of 'fair play'. These personal qualities were clearly evident in a well-planned cricket lesson for Year 11 pupils. They demonstrated game specific skills as well as an appropriate balance of supportive and competitive elements.
99. The subject is led and managed well. The good organisation and variety of clubs, including one specifically for girls, interschool fixtures and residential visits enhance the curriculum well. Accommodation and resources are good overall. Outside accommodation is very good and attractive to the pupils, encouraging them to participate in physical activities outside the taught lessons.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

The provision in personal, social and health education, with citizenship, is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make good progress and achieve well because the teaching is good.
- Pupils' development in this area is a central aim of the school, underpinning all lessons and activities through a wide variety of approaches.
- Aspects of citizenship are well embedded in the curriculum.

Commentary

100. The progress that pupils make is good overall and is very good in Post-16. Most pupils pay very good attention in lessons and learn about being friends, how relationships work, how to take turns and share things. They develop their independence very well, learning to plan their shopping expeditions, catch the bus, cross the road, and use money, for instance. They learn to cook simple meals independently, decide what they will wear each day, and what they will do in their leisure time. They learn to behave in a sensible and mature way around school and on visits to places of interest or work-related situations. Many pupils become responsible enough to take part in work experience placements where they develop their social and personal skills as much as their job skills. They go on residential trips to outdoor activity centres, where they also have very good opportunities to be part of a team and to challenge their own limits. Pupils learn well about the role of the school nurse, and the jobs that other people in school, and further afield do. Often, the trips that the older pupils go on are related to work and training opportunities for the future.
101. In the Post-16 unit students make very good progress through the 'life skills' courses and through all the other lessons that include targets for personal and social development. Often, pupils and students will set their own targets for self-development
102. The school adopts many effective approaches to this subject. There are 'circle times' when pupils discuss moral issues such as stealing, murder or war. Or they may talk about things that have happened to them or their families, or what they have seen on the television. Often, these lessons are under the title of 'citizenship', and the school has a well planned scheme of what is to be taught and discussed each year. Pupils learn about, for instance, how to help themselves in different situations, who to go to for help, the jobs of different community people, who to trust and about changes that they have experienced, and will experience, in their own lives.
103. The quality of teaching varies, but is good overall. Lessons are mainly very well planned, and are based on a very clear, well thought-out plan for the long term. Teachers have good and trusting relationships with pupils, and this helps discussions and role-play activities very much. It also sets a good role model for how pupils should behave themselves. The school makes very good use of other people such as the therapists and school nurse for helping pupils to understand about health aspects such as drugs, sex education, relationships and how to keep healthy. In physical education lessons pupils also learn about why they need to keep fit, what they should eat and what to avoid. These points are very well reinforced in food studies lessons, where pupils develop their skills in working together, and being able to manage independently as well. The merit award system helps pupils to see a real, solid value in behaving well, and trying hard. In assemblies and class lessons pupils talk about the thought for the week, such as 'respect' or 'having courage'. In many parts of the school there are illustrated class rules and school rules, posters, and displays about moral matters, encouraging pupils to think about the rights and wrongs of different situations.

104. This subject is very well led and managed through the school, including the Post-16 unit. There is a very clear vision for subject development and how it can permeate the whole of learning. This area of learning was considered to be very good at the time of the previous inspection. The school has done well to maintain this level of provision.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE POST-16

The provision for students in the Post-16 is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- This new unit is being set up very well; the curriculum is good.
- Students are making very good progress in the major subjects because the very good teaching leads to very good learning.
- There are very good links with outside people and places.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory.

Commentary

105. The Post-16 department has been set up for less than a year. The positive impact of the provision has meant that students achieve well overall. The new curriculum has been very well thought out, with a good balance of core subjects such as English, mathematics and life skills. These three areas are very well reinforced and extended in all other lessons. In a food studies lesson, for instance, students were learning very well about cooking and kitchen safety and hygiene. They were also reinforcing their skills in weighing and measuring, using money at the shops, developing their speaking and listening skills, following instructions and co-operating together. There are also good courses for vocational subjects that give students a very good idea of what career opportunities may be open to them. Additionally, students have very good opportunities for creative and practical learning through physical education, ICT, music, French, food studies and art. This gives students a well balanced spread of subjects that are very relevant to their needs. Even so, senior staff are planning to adjust the balance of some subjects in the light of the first year's experience and with a view to the new students who will soon be starting. This is why the students' achievements are good rather than very good. This new class of students will give the school the opportunity to offer some choice in what students are able to study. There are plans to introduce new optional subjects such as child care, video making and business studies.
106. Students make very good progress in English, mathematics and life skills because these are the focus of separate lessons almost every day and because there are individual targets for each student in these areas of learning in all other lessons. It is the very good teaching that makes students' progress and achievements possible. Lessons are planned carefully and thoroughly, with good use of resources. Support staff are given different roles in different activities and they carry them out well, perhaps giving help to a single student in one lesson, or helping a group at the computers in another lesson. The teacher has a very warm and positive relationship with students and they respond with willing attention; learning is at least good in lessons. Students gain good skills in their understanding of what is spoken to them. Staff are careful about using clear speech, repeating phrases and explaining new words. All the current students come from homes where English is not the first language, and staff are particularly sensitive to their language and cultural needs as well as their learning needs. Life skills are also very well developed, through separate lessons such as food studies and also, through the planned extra aspects of each lesson such as working together; using computers for research; discussing friendships and families; dressing and undressing for swimming; and crossing the road to the shops. Students' skills also develop well in the other areas of learning, such as information technology, drama, citizenship and sports.

107. All students are working towards nationally recognised qualifications such as ASDAN and GCSE. They have not been running long enough to see the first successful awards. The unit has very positive links with many outside agencies for a range of different purposes. The Connexions service, for instance, gives high quality advice and guidance on career possibilities, surviving an interview and filling forms in. There are links with local businesses and agencies that help with visits to places of interest and possible work placements – such as going to a professional football club, a snack food factory and a horticultural centre. In turn, many of these places have opened their own links with the school and have given very valuable support to students. All students have the opportunity to go on a work experience placement, for example at a hairdresser's, child care nursery, warehouse or garden centre. The school has clear plans to extend all of these work-related opportunities in the near future. There are also regular visits in support of their learning and applying it in other subjects, such as to the nearby leisure centre for swimming, fitness club, or playing pool. They go to the cinema, supermarket, shopping centre and pizza shop, learning to use money properly and how to ask for things they want. Each year, students have the opportunity to go on a residential visit for several nights and take part in various adventurous activities that help in team building and confidence. They also attend a local college every week for a day's classes, practising their social skills, personal development, travelling expertise and independence, as well as the in-class learning that is part of 'Young Enterprise'. This has the great advantage of giving students the opportunity to decide for themselves if the college is the place for them when they leave school. Seeing their old school friends there, joining in lessons together, and having breaks in the café together, lead most students to opt for the college as the next step in their educational career. Their transfer is very well managed.
108. The Post-16 room is just another classroom. It has no sink and water and no area in which students can relax at lunchtimes. Without such a room, there is no way they can feel 'different' to the main school pupils. There is no atmosphere of being more 'grown up'; no opportunity to practise their social and independence skills without direct supervision. A portable classroom is due to be delivered shortly, but there will then be two Post-16 classes, so the situation will not improve immediately. There are also plans for a new purpose-built unit on site, but this may not be ready for some time.

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	4
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	3
Attendance	5
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	4
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	4
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	4
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	4
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
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.