

INSPECTION REPORT

LANCASTER SCHOOL

Westcliff-on-Sea

LEA area: Southend-on-Sea

Unique reference number: 115445

Headteacher: Philip Rodbard

Lead inspector: Adrian Simm

Dates of inspection: 7th – 10th June 2004

Inspection number: 269081

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

© Crown copyright 2004

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|--|
| Type of school: | Special |
| School category: | Community special |
| Age range of pupils: | 3 – 19 years |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| Number on roll; | 95 |
| School address: | Prittlewell Chase Westcliff-on-Sea Essex |
| Postcode: | SS0 0RT |
| Telephone number: | 01702 342543 |
| Fax number: | 01702 352630 |
| Appropriate authority: | The Governing Body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mike Sharp |
| Date of previous inspection: | 20 th September 1999 |

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Lancaster School educates 64 boys and 31 girls aged three to 19 years who have severe and profound learning difficulties. The number of pupils with complex learning needs has grown since the last inspection and accounts for around 22 per cent of pupils on roll. Pupils come from Southend-on-Sea and surrounding areas. Most travel by local authority transport. Thirty nine per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which is high. Overall, pupils' attainment on entry is low in comparison to their chronological age. Around 12 per cent of pupils come from family backgrounds other than white British. Just over seven per cent of pupils have English as an additional language. For these pupils, the principal languages are Panjabi, Cantonese and Portuguese. They are at the very early stages of communication and language development and as such are at the same level of learning as other pupils. Nearly all pupils have statements of special educational needs. A very small minority of pupils is placed at the school for assessment of their needs. It is less than two months since the current head teacher was appointed. For the previous school term, an acting head teacher was in place. The school is subject to reorganisation by the local education authority although the outcome of the process is not known. It may, therefore, experience changes to its designated role. The school is involved in inclusion initiatives with local schools and colleges.

| | | |
|--------------------------|--------|---------------------------|
| The school has achieved: | 2004 - | Careers Quality Award |
| | 2003 - | Healthy Schools Award |
| | 2002 - | Schools Achievement Award |
| | 2001 - | Investors in People |

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Members of the inspection team | | | Subject responsibilities |
|--------------------------------|-------------|----------------|--|
| 21138 | Adrian Simm | Lead inspector | Foundation stage, personal, social, health and citizenship education, modern foreign language (French), English as an additional language, special educational needs |
| 32676 | Nick Power | Lay inspector | |
| 32217 | Elaine Cole | Team inspector | English, art and design, religious education |
| 23412 | Alvin Jeffs | Team inspector | Mathematics, information and communication technology, history, music |
| 14787 | Sue Yarnall | Team inspector | Science, design and technology, geography, physical education |

The inspection contractor was:

Altecq Education Ltd

102 Bath Road
Cheltenham
GL52 7JX

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|-----------|
| PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT | 6 |
| PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS | |
| STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS | 8 |
| Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses | |
| Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities | |
| QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL | 10 |
| Teaching and learning | |
| The curriculum | |
| Care, guidance and support | |
| Partnership with parents, other schools and the community | |
| LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT | 15 |
| PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES – | 17 |
| AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE, SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 1, 2, 3, 4 and Post 16 | |
| PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS | 29 |

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Lancaster is a **satisfactory** school overall. The school's strengths outweigh the deficiencies in information and communication technology (ICT) and areas of management. Pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. The school is successful at promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. As a result, pupils achieve well in their personal and social skills. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The new head teacher is taking appropriate steps to clarify the school's strengths and weaknesses. The school offers satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Provision in the Foundation Stage and Years 12 to 14 is very good.
- Pupils' achievement in ICT is unsatisfactory in Years 3 to 11.
- The school's procedures for working out what is going well and what else needs to be done are not sufficiently effective. Staff training is not tied into this process as well as it could be.
- At times, school transport arriving in the morning has to wait on the busy dual carriageway in front of the school before entering the car park for pupils to alight.
- Very good links with parents, other schools and colleges and the community contribute well to the quality of pupils' learning opportunities.

Overall, the school has moved on satisfactorily since the last inspection in improving pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching and learning. Improvement has been good in pupils' writing. It has been very good in the Foundation Stage. Very good teaching and learning have been maintained for pupils in Years 12 to 14. Development issues from the last inspection have been addressed satisfactorily although pupils' achievement in ICT has not moved on sufficiently.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

| Pupils' achievement at the end of: | in relation to individual targets in: | |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| | Subjects of the curriculum | personal and social education |
| Year 2 | Satisfactory | Very good |
| Year 6 | Satisfactory | Good |
| Year 9 | Satisfactory | Good |
| Year 11 | Good | Very good |
| Year 13 | Very Good | Very good |

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

Although pupils' achievement is **satisfactory** overall, they achieve well by the end of Year 11 and very well in the Foundation Stage and in Years 12 to 14. The overall judgement is not higher because well over half of the pupils are in Years 1 to 9 where achievement is satisfactory. Personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) permeates the whole of school life. Pupils achieve well in this overall: very well by the end of the Foundation Stage and Years 2, 11 and 13. Pupils achieve well in speaking and listening and physical education. They achieve satisfactorily in all other subjects inspected apart from in ICT, where achievement is unsatisfactory for most pupils. Boys and girls, those with English as an additional language and pupils with differing special educational needs achieve similarly to other pupils. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good**. Their attitudes to school and their behaviour are good. Attendance is satisfactory. It is affected understandably by the absence of a small number of pupils' with severe medical conditions.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **satisfactory**. Overall, teaching is **satisfactory**. This results in pupils learning acceptably. Teaching and learning are very good in the Foundation Stage and for pupils in Years 12 to 14. This is partly because lessons are planned meticulously and teachers and support

staff work very closely together. Staff use different but very effective ways to ensure that pupils learn. For those pupils with more profound difficulties, very good management support programmes and advice from staff in the rehabilitation unit are effectively implemented. Staff have good relationships with pupils, which results in pupils working hard for the full length of lessons. Management programmes for pupils with complex difficulties are implemented consistently. Where this results in support staff working away from the classroom with individual pupils, this leaves classes short of staff support, which reduces the effectiveness of learning for other pupils. Whilst staff check on what pupils know and understand by effective communication strategies throughout lessons, information gained is not always used to see how teaching and learning can be improved. The way in which staff plan for and check on pupils' learning in the Foundation Stage and in Years 12 to 14 is very good. It enables learning to build systematically.

The curriculum offers good opportunities for developing pupils' learning. In recognition of the good quality of long term planning and provision in readiness for students leaving school after they have finished Post 16 education, the school has gained the Careers Quality Award. School accommodation is good overall. Its strengths are in the exciting outdoor provision. The small size of the school car park is contributing to a few school transport vehicles double-parking on the dual carriageway in front of the school, waiting to enter the school grounds for pupils to alight. Provision for personal and social development is good. Pupils take part in a very good range of trips off site in which they learn very well from practical experience. Links with other schools and colleges are very strong and ensure that pupils' learning opportunities are broader than would otherwise be the case. Links with parents provide very effective opportunities for them to support their children's education. The school has appropriate systems of care, which use effectively the expertise of health professionals who visit the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Overall, leadership and management are **satisfactory**. The new head teacher has already taken steps to become clearer about the school's strengths and what else needs to be improved. Information that the school has on pupils' attainment and the quality of teaching and learning is not used as effectively as it should be in deciding how well the school is providing for its pupils. Staff training is not geared to this process as well as it should be. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are committed to the school and provide active support. They ensure all statutory requirements are met. However, they are short of information to fully evaluate how well the school is doing because ways of checking on this are not precise enough. Staff have not had time to check on the success of those areas for which they have responsibility.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are highly satisfied with the school. A very high majority consider the school has strengths in all aspects of its work. Pupils are highly satisfied with what the school provides for them.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve pupils' achievement in information and communication technology.
- Ensure staff are clear what aspects of the school's work are effective and what needs to be improved. Make sure staff training is effective in supporting the improvements identified.
- Improve arrangements for the arrival of school transport in the morning so pupils are not sitting in vehicles that are waiting, double-parked, on the busy dual carriageway in front of the school.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils' achievement is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children in the Foundation Stage and students in Years 12 to 14 achieve very well.
- In comparison with this high achievement, a relative weakness is pupils' satisfactory achievement in reading, writing and mathematics between Years 1 to 9.
- Achievement of pupils between Years 3 and 11 in ICT is unsatisfactory.
- Pupils achieve well in personal and social development and in speaking and listening.
- Pupils with English as an additional language and those with more complex learning difficulties achieve equally as well as other pupils.
- The school's process for setting statutory targets is not effective.

Commentary

1. In the Foundation Stage, because of excellent lesson planning that ensures all pupils' needs are met, pupils achieve very well against the goals expected of them in all areas of learning. This gives pupils starting school a very good introduction to school life.
2. Students in Years 12 to 14 are taught in what are known as the transition classes. Overall, they achieve very well apart from in ICT where achievement is satisfactory. Students benefit from courses upon which they show how well they do on nationally recognised levels of work. This has been a strong feature of provision since before the last inspection. Those working on the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) courses 'Towards Independence' have achieved successes in a broad range of units of work. In 2003, these covered areas such as horse riding and stable management, independent living, sport and leisure and using transport. In 2004, students achieve very well on an increased range of courses that now include amongst others, 'going to college' and a 'residential challenge'. The number of modules studied varies according to individual student's needs. School data points to success levels that are higher than average nationally. The ASDAN courses are helping pupils in Years 10 and 11 to achieve well as their learning builds and prepares them for moving into the transition classes.
3. In nearly all subjects that were the focus of the inspection, pupils in Years 1 to 9 achieve satisfactorily in reading, writing and mathematics. This is also the case in science, apart from by the end of Year 2, where achievement is good. The overall picture is in line with the satisfactory quality of teaching and shows acceptable improvement in achievement since the last inspection, particularly in writing. Overall, the school has maintained good standards in physical education and in personal, social and health education that now includes citizenship education (PSHCE). Part of the success in PSHCE is because of the good relationships staff develop with pupils and because pupil-choice is integral in most activities at a level that staff know is right for each pupil. Pupils' achievement in PSHCE is very good by the end of Years 2, 11 and 14 because of the very good teaching and learning that ensures pupils' personal development is built very well into every lesson.
4. Overall, pupils' achievement has remained similar to the last inspection. In ICT, the co-ordinator has worked hard in ensuring that staff have a good foundation for planning lessons and have been trained more in the use of computers. However, this has not yet paid off sufficiently in improved standards. Pupils' achievement in ICT is unsatisfactory throughout most of the school.

It is good in the Foundation Stage and satisfactory for pupils in Years 1 and 2 and students in Years 12 to 14.

5. The school sets statutory targets for pupils in Years 6, 9 and 11 but has changed recently the type of data used. Because of this, the process is not yet effective. The 2003 targets used the nationally recognised system of 'P' scales, which the school did not find useful. For 2004, the school reverted to using annual review targets with a view to introducing sharper nationally recognised targets in the future. However, the school has only tried this process in mathematics and is not ready to set sharper targets in other areas.
6. The achievement of pupils with more complex and challenging needs is as good as other pupils' achievement in their classes. This is one example of where the school has improved their expertise through additional training. Also, trained support assistants based in the school's rehabilitation unit contribute very well to the overall assessment of pupils' specific equipment needs and therapy programmes. Development programmes designed by medical staff are effective in supporting pupils' achievement at school and at home. In all year groups, girls and boys achieve equally well.
7. Pupils with English as an additional language are in the early stages of language acquisition. They benefit as well as all other pupils from the well thought out teaching methods to improve their standards in communication, including speaking and listening. Overall, pupils' and staff's good use of alternative methods of communication, such as signing and picture clues, give all pupils in need of this approach alternative ways of communicating well.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **good**. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is **good**. Attendance and punctuality are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has a good range of strategies to ensure that pupils develop well in their attitudes and behaviour.
- Pupils in the Foundation Stage and in Years 12, 13 and 14 develop very well personally.
- Attendance levels are below the national average for similar schools.
- Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a successful focus of the school's PSHCE lessons.

Commentary

8. Quiet times throughout the school, the 'Forum' in Years 12, 13, and 14 and other educational programmes ensure that pupils' personal qualities are well developed through times of quiet reflection and thoughtful discussion. The school has a calm atmosphere, and pupils enjoy taking responsibility for tasks when given the opportunity. The school council is a very good feature and its members enjoy their involvement. Pupils respect and get on well with each other.
9. In the Foundation Stage, children get to know the routines and high expectations very quickly. This means they settle easily each morning and therefore, respond very well. They learn to wait their turn, make choices and become more independent within a very caring and supervised environment.
10. Students in Years 12, 13 and 14 develop their personal qualities very well. They gain significantly in confidence during this stage of their school life as a result of carefully designed activities. For example, the 'travel training' programme is very effective in providing students with skills for life. Students thoroughly enjoy participating in this programme. Students' attitudes to their learning and behaviour are consistently very good. They respond to the very good relationships they have with all the adults in the department. Because of the high expectations of behaviour they work

hard, concentrate well and behave as young adults. Staff and students are sensitive to each other's needs. They work in an atmosphere that is supportive and where there is a shared sense of enjoyment and humour.

11. Although the school's attendance levels are less than the national average for this type of school, the school and educational welfare officer work well together to try to improve this. Attendance is affected by the absence of a small number of pupils' with severe medical conditions.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

| Authorised absence | |
|--------------------|------|
| School data: | 11.6 |
| National data: | 10.8 |

| Unauthorised absence | |
|----------------------|-----|
| School data : | 0.8 |
| National data: | 0.6 |

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

12. Exclusion of pupils is very rare. There have been none during the current year. One exclusion last year shown in the table below happened after all other approaches had been exhausted.

Ethnic background of pupils

| Categories used in the Annual School Census |
|---|
| White – British |
| White – Irish |
| White – any other White background |
| Asian or Asian British – Indian |
| Asian or Asian British – Pakistani |
| Black or Black British – Caribbean |
| Black or Black British – African |
| Chinese |
| No ethnic group recorded |

| No of pupils on roll |
|----------------------|
| 81 |
| 2 |
| 1 |
| 2 |
| 3 |
| 1 |
| 1 |
| 2 |
| 2 |

| Number of permanent exclusions |
|--------------------------------|
| 1 |
| |
| |
| |
| |
| |
| |
| |
| |

13. The quiet times that pupils have during candle time allow them to think about the world, others and themselves. This is a good opportunity for pupils to develop spiritually. Pupils get on well with each other and are involved in raising funds to support others. By the time they leave school they have a good understanding of right and wrong and behave responsibly towards others. From the youngest child in the Foundation Stage to the oldest student in Post 16, pupils are encouraged to think of others as well as themselves. For example, in Year 11 as part of their citizenship work, pupils ask after each other's wellbeing first thing in the morning. The school has a good range of visits and visitors that enhance pupils' appreciation of other cultures. For example, the link that the school has with a nearby junior school allows pupils to share the music of an African steel band. Overall, music contributes very strongly to pupils' cultural development both in the music chosen for lessons and the broad range of visits made to musical events including pop concerts. The school has recently celebrated its French week, highlighting the differences in culture and life to their own.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **satisfactory**. Teaching and learning are **satisfactory**. Partnerships with parents, the community and the impact of links with other schools are **very good**. The standard of

care and welfare is **satisfactory** whilst the support and guidance which pupils receive are **good**. Curricular opportunities are **satisfactory**.

Teaching and learning

The overall quality of teaching and learning is **satisfactory**. The arrangements to assess pupils' work and use the resulting information in planning for lessons are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children in the Foundation Stage are taught very well. They have a very good start to their school life.
- Students in Years 12 to 14 are taught very well and are very effectively prepared for transition from school to the community.
- Procedures for assessing pupils' levels are satisfactory but the information gained from this process is not used sufficiently to analyse how well pupils are doing.
- The school is short of information to help improve teaching and learning and pupils' achievement in Years 3 to 9.
- The development of different ways for pupils to communicate is carefully planned into lessons.
- Pupils' concentration and behaviour are good where there are regular changes in activity and teachers use resources imaginatively.

Commentary

13. The very good quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage contributes directly to the very good learning that takes place. Ongoing assessment ensures that teaching is focused closely on the children's learning and achievement at all times. The 'glue' that holds all of this together is the excellent way in which clear individual learning targets based upon children's annual reviews are built daily into lessons. Not only does planning set out exactly what is to be taught but it is also a good measure of success. Put together as part of the assessment package, staff are clear how well individual children are achieving and where they need to concentrate to improve even more.
14. In Years 12 to 14, the very effective teaching planned through the ASDAN course modules enables all students to build on their earlier learning through practical and real life situations. Teaching and learning are good and strengthening in Years 10 and 11 with the ASDAN course module introduced there. However, through Years 3 to 9, incorporating pupils' individual targets in daily planning is not as clear and effective. At review time, a small minority of pupils' targets show 'not met' or 'partially met', without it being clear whether, for example, it was the targets that were too challenging or that pupils had not made progress. Analysis of this type of data is not fully effective.
15. Where teaching and learning are good or better, a strength is the determination that all pupils will learn as well as they can. Comprehensive planning ensures that work is linked to what pupils have already learned. In a Year 1 and 2 physical education lesson, pupils showed a clear understanding of an established routine and, as a result, were able to acquire their skills with greater independence. They sat, watched and listened carefully as the teacher explained and signed each new activity. Consequently, all pupils participated in developing the skills of fast and slow movement. The good use of the effective support provided by special school assistants was typified in a Year 10 'Transition Challenge' science lesson. The teacher's planning made support staff aware of the purpose of the lesson and their role in it. The assistants reinforced the pupils' learning of the lesson objectives and key vocabulary. They sought actively to encourage pupils to share their ideas, which they did confidently.
16. In Years 3 to 9, teaching is satisfactory overall. At times, higher attaining pupils wait for others to finish. Consequently, they do not always have the opportunity to develop their ideas as well as they might. Similarly, the strategies used for teaching rely too much on pupils being supported

by adults in order to access the lesson. The use of ICT or interactive techniques such as individual whiteboards or response cards have yet to be fully used. In lessons where teaching and learning are unsatisfactory, it is because planning and assessment lack detail, the learning intentions are unclear and expectations of what each pupil is able to achieve are too low. As a result, pupils do not engage with learning at a level appropriate to their need and find it difficult to remain on task for more than half of the lesson. During good and better lessons, teachers and support staff use signs and symbols effectively and are vigilant to check if pupils know what they are learning. This is evident in the way that they repeat and modify questions and explanations to ensure that all pupils understand.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 43 lessons

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|----------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 1(2%) | 13(30%) | 10(23%) | 17(40%) | 2(5%) | 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.

17. The school has established satisfactory procedures for recording pupils' achievement. The use of 'P' levels, annual review and individual education plan targets and assessed levels on entry into the school in the Foundation Stage, provide information about pupils' strengths and areas to focus teaching and learning. Although the school maintains comprehensive photographic evidence of individual achievement and collects a range of pupils' work samples, these are not always dated, annotated or levelled to be able to validate pupils' achievement. The school improvement programme has identified the use of assessment and monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning as priority areas for future development.

18. Where the style of teaching and learning recommended in the National Primary Strategy and the Key Stage 3 Strategy has been fully implemented, this supports teachers in managing pupils' behaviour effectively. Similarly, in lessons where regular changes of activity and resources are used, pupils' interest, concentration and engagement with learning are maintained. A Year 10 and 11 music lesson followed a well structured plan that incorporated a range of activities that matched each pupil's needs. The opportunities for pupils to copy the teacher in song, dance, the hand jive and playing hand chimes, held their attention fully. For pupils who have more challenging behaviour well established routines and management programmes enable them to be fully supported in their learning.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **satisfactory**. The way the curriculum is enriched through many other activities is **good**. Accommodation and resources are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school provides very good curricular opportunities for children in the Foundation Stage and students in Years 12 to 14.
- The school's rehabilitation unit for pupils with the most complex difficulties is very good.
- Whilst the school accommodation is good overall, there are significant drawbacks to specialist subject provision, the effectiveness of the outside gardens for pupils with sensory loss and the size of car parking facilities.

Commentary

19. Pupils in the Foundation Stage have a full and imaginative curriculum where all learning targets are frequently built into each lesson. Lessons link pupils' learning so that their knowledge, understanding and experiences build step by step. For students, the ASDAN 'Towards

Independence' course builds on and extends pupils' learning developed through the 'Transition Challenge' course in Years 10 and 11. Students participate in school-based lessons, college courses, work related learning and community projects. Since the last inspection several new modules have been introduced, including a module for students with the most complex needs. There is very good practice evident in these areas of school, which has not been shared sufficiently with other staff.

20. The curriculum meets all statutory requirements and has improved satisfactorily since the last inspection. This means that the school's plans to ensure that pupils' learning builds successfully from year to year are fully in place and that gaps in both provision and individual progress can be identified. However, the lack of time for subject co-ordinators to check on how well planning is turned into practice means that there is not the consistency in provision throughout the school or the certainty that curriculum time allocation is appropriate in each class. For example, timetables in Years 7 to 9 do not identify clearly where English lessons are taught and as a result, how much time pupils are spending on developing their skills to ensure that they are being given every opportunity to progress in their learning. The curriculum for ICT was identified as a weakness during the last inspection. It still is a weakness both in the teaching of computer skills and in their use to support the full range of subjects within classrooms. There is a good scheme of work for personal, social and health education, including good work on sex and relationships, which makes use of a wide range of expertise. All of this contributes well to pupils' growing confidence and the mature attitudes observed in older pupils.
21. The school runs popular out-of-school clubs for drama and sport. It also arranges a good range of day visits to places that have included a theme park, zoo and sea life centre. In addition there are visits to the theatre, discos, parties and picnics. All of these activities enrich the experience that all pupils have at the school. Development of a drama class for pupils with the most challenging behaviours and discussions seeking to identify appropriate residential experiences for non-ambulant pupils, indicate that the school is now more actively involved in improving this area of provision than it was at the time of the last inspection.
22. The level of staffing is good, with a higher than average number of support assistants. This provides opportunities to develop good one-to-one work within classes and effective support in outside play and lunchtime settings. Professional support for the special school assistants, for example, in training that relates to disabilities where specific techniques are required, such as autism and challenging behaviour has not been as effective as some assistants would wish.
23. The rehabilitation unit for pupils with the most complex needs is an imaginative and effective use of accommodation. It contributes significantly to the development of pupils with the most complex difficulties. Outside play areas have been developed imaginatively for most pupils, although there is a need for more interactive and stimulating experiences for pupils with sensory loss. Also, there are no specialist curriculum areas for science and art and design for pupils in Years 7 to 14, which restricts the content of lessons.

Care, guidance and support

The school ensures the **satisfactory** care, welfare, health and safety of its pupils. **Good** support, advice and guidance are given to pupils. The school seeks, values and acts on pupils' views **well**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The advice, support and guidance given to children in the Foundation Stage and students in Years 12, 13 and 14 are very good.
- All staff know their pupils well and relationships between staff and pupils are good.
- Arrangements for the arrival of school transport at the start of the school day are unsatisfactory.
- The school does not monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of its policies and procedures to ensure that, for example, pupils' care, welfare and safety are as good as they can be.

- Support staff in the rehabilitation unit work closely with health professionals to ensure that the pupils they work with are very well supported.
- Through the school council pupils have very good channels for being involved in the development of the school.

Commentary

24. Overall, teachers and support assistants know the special educational needs of their pupils well. Pupils are confident that they can approach staff if there is anything worrying them. Staff give pupils appropriate support when necessary. As a result, pupils' personal development is good. It is very good in the Foundation Stage and with pupils at the end of Years 2, 11 and 13. It is stronger than elsewhere because here, staff have sharper ways of knowing how well the pupils are achieving in their class work. At the Foundation Stage, outstanding planning includes pupils' individual targets. Evaluation of children's response to these provides valuable information for guiding the children's next steps in learning. At Year 2, personal development is built very strongly into all lessons. In Years 12 to 14, guidance is also based upon information from pupils' response to ASDAN courses. The advice, support and guidance that the teachers and other staff and visitors give to students prepares them very well for life beyond school. Meetings are held each half term to discuss individual student's progress. Students are invited to attend. The success of each student's learning programme informs very well their transition to life after school. There are good links with the Connexions adviser, who is involved in providing guidance and work related learning. In recognition of the good quality of long term planning and provision for student's future needs, the school has gained the Careers Quality Award.
25. Although pupils are safe and cared for satisfactorily overall, the school does not review its processes and procedures regularly to ensure that this will always be the case. There are, for example, minor deficiencies in risk assessment in design and technology, child protection training, internet safety and the safe use of the wheelchair lift. When pupils arrive for school by school transport, they do not enter school until staff are ready at 9.10 a.m. There is not enough space on the car park in front of the school to accommodate all transport. Some vehicles have to wait on the dual carriageway in front of the school. This is unsatisfactory as it endangers pupils and other road users.
26. The educational rehabilitation assistants follow the programmes set up by the visiting physiotherapists for individual pupils very well. They review the progress that has been made regularly and liaise with parents to try to ensure that progress is maintained when the pupils are not at school. They also organise other clinics and maintain equipment. This is a very good feature of the school.
27. The school has an active school council made up of a representative from the upper school classes. They meet regularly and discuss all aspects of the life of their school. Through the school council, pupils have a voice in the development of the school by writing to governors about their ideas for spending. Amongst a wide range of achievements, they have been responsible for improved playground provision and special bicycles for pupils with more profound difficulties. All the pupils spoken to have a very strong sense that this is really 'their' school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school's has **very good** links with parents, the community and other schools.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents have good ways of finding out how well that their children are doing in their personal development.
- Home-school diaries and other ways of communicating with parents build very good relationships between school and home.

- Links with other schools, colleges and the community are used very effectively to enhance pupils' education.

Commentary

28. Parents are kept well informed about their children's progress through annual reviews and home-school diaries. The diaries are an effective communication tool between parents and teachers. They are checked every morning for parental comments and action is taken when necessary, for example, to celebrate pupils' achievement outside of school. Parents feel staff are easy to talk to and are happy to approach class teachers or assistants if they have any concerns. The school has a very good relationship with parents and values their input. The very good links that the rehabilitation unit has with parents means that physiotherapy can be continued beyond the school day if appropriate.
29. Pupils often visit other schools and colleges and pupils from other schools visit Lancaster School. Pupils regularly visit the adjacent technical college to use their facilities for design and technology lessons. The school's links with local primary schools are particularly effective at providing opportunities for pupils to be involved in music making. The school has received significant funds for specific projects and practical equipment from community groups. Local supermarkets and hotels provide work awareness sessions to give pupils a taste of what is involved in the world of work. Taxi drivers, rugby and cricket clubs and many other community associations and employers support the school. Overall, the school has cultivated a large array of links with schools, colleges and the community and uses these very well to provide additional valuable experiences for its pupils.
30. The time students in Years 12 to 14 spend in the community is used very effectively. A 'travel training' programme provides very good opportunities for social development and for students to apply their knowledge in everyday situations. Students acknowledge that as a result of the training, they are far more independent and able to talk about how they overcome difficulties. Alongside this training programme, a game 'Going Places' has been developed with the Centre for Transport Studies at University College London. The game allows for reinforcement and consolidation of skills learned through the practical experiences of travelling by bus in the local area.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership, management and governance are satisfactory. The leadership of the head teacher, other key staff and the effectiveness of management are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's systems for self-evaluation and the use of data to focus school development planning are unsatisfactory.
- Staff development does not fit strategically into an overall plan to raise pupils' standards.
- Leadership and management of the Foundation Stage and Post 16 are very good.
- Staff provide good role models for pupils.

Commentary

31. The new headteacher has an appropriate vision for the school, which is faced with a period of change. He has realised very quickly that for subject co-ordinators, whilst they have worked hard on improving what should be taught in their areas, they have no time to check if the improved planning is working in practice. Steps are already being taken to bring the school in line with the National Agreement on Workforce Remodelling, which will provide staff with extra time for this. Key staff in the Foundation Stage and Post 16 provision have a very clear sense of purpose and high aspirations for their pupils, which is very good. Members of the senior management team provide satisfactory leadership and support within their respective areas.

However, together with the deputy head teacher, their roles give them insufficient time to focus sufficiently on school improvement.

32. Governors are very supportive of the head teacher and other staff within the school. Between them, governors have a range of experience and skills relevant to their role. They all take responsibility for one or more subjects and classes, which forms the focus of their regular visits into the school. The school has developed a self-evaluation cycle based on routine tasks carried out during the school year. Although governors have a satisfactory awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, there is no regular analysis of performance or evaluation of outcomes to enable Governors or the senior management team to prioritise improvement focused on raising standards. All aspects of school life are reviewed in insufficient detail for self-evaluation to be fully effective and for resultant school development planning to be properly focused. The following are examples of areas that are not built as strongly as they should be into school self-evaluation:

- The outcomes of checking the quality of teaching and learning in lessons, including focusing on particular issues, for example, the teaching for pupils with particular learning difficulties or how well ICT training is paying off in practice.
- Recognising good practice and sharing it within the school.
- Ensuring policy and practice in procedures for pupils' care, welfare and safety are regularly checked and as effective as they can be.
- Using assessment and monitoring data to check the extent of pupils' achievement and the quality of teaching and learning. For example, is pupils' achievement as good as it should be in all subjects, in all classes and for all pupils?
- The strategic use of professional development for all staff to address priorities for improvement.

33. Whilst aspects of management are unsatisfactory, those areas that are satisfactory such as performance management and staff induction, and those very good aspects of school such as the Foundation Stage and Post 16 mean that overall management is just satisfactory. Also, financial management is satisfactory. Governors keep regular checks on how spending is progressing. The school is accruing funds in order to refurbish the hydrotherapy pool and update the administrative systems. In addition last year, the carry forward of seven per cent was higher than expected because of delays in building work not paid for by the end of the financial year.

34. During recent changes of headship, senior staff have maintained many of the strengths of the school, including the way staff actively promote equality and inclusion. Inspectors agree with the school's view that overall, the school's most significant aid to learning is its willing and hard working staff team. Pupils have a wide range of needs and there are good opportunities for them to access all areas of the curriculum both within and outside school. Staff provide good role models for pupils at the school. Overall, the school satisfactorily applies best value principles and this is being further developed with the support of the governors. The school is very strong on consulting with parents and pupils about what they want from the school.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

| Income and expenditure (£) | | Balances (£) | |
|----------------------------|-----------|-------------------------------------|---------|
| Total income | 1,526,063 | Balance from previous year | 101,556 |
| Total expenditure | 1,418,395 | Balance carried forward to the next | 107,668 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 14,930 | | |

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

Throughout the following commentary, overall judgements about provision relate to the effectiveness of teaching and learning, curriculum leadership and any other significant aspects that reflect the standards achieved by pupils.

Four lessons were seen in the Foundation Stage. A variety of other activities were also observed and contributed to the judgements made.

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children in the Foundation Stage is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well.
- Lessons are excellently planned to meet the individual needs of the children.
- Staff evaluate their work very well as they go along. They are clear about what is working well and what else needs to be improved.
- Very good teamwork between all members of staff, who know the children very well, results in every minute of taught time being used very effectively.

Commentary

36. There are too few children in the Foundation Stage to report separate judgements in each area of learning. There is a broad spread of ability in the Foundation class. Staff make children's school experience one where they enjoy their activities. This is very good improvement since the last inspection. Improvement is also very good because the lead teacher has developed excellent planning methods that link children's early learning goals very closely with their individual education plans (IEPs) and annual review targets. This basis for teaching and learning ensures all staff are clear what is expected of them and the children.
37. In **personal, social and emotional development**, children settle in to learning very quickly and easily each morning because they know the routines expected of them and respond very well. Those who recognise their names put their name cards in the appropriate place each morning thus recording their attendance. They wait patiently for their turn to do this before joining in a session to recollect what they have done since they last met. The discussion is based on entries in the children's home-school diaries, which provide a very good link for supporting children's recollections. A higher attaining pupil is very clear about the safety reasons of why he wore armbands whilst swimming. Children with more complex or profound needs are encouraged to become more aware of others by greeting them. Children are successfully encouraged to make choices and become more independent within a very caring and supervised environment. This includes lunchtimes where feeding programmes are clear and useful. Although the programmes are not updated regularly, children's needs are well known by staff and so this does not cause a significant difficulty.
38. In **communication, language and literacy**, children use and understand simple signs, symbols and pictures. They are learning very well to associate pictures with objects and activities. These aids to language are used very well. Those children able to speak make themselves understood very well. They play imaginatively in the seaside theme corner of the classroom where they 'sail boats' and 'look out for the lighthouse keeper' . A small number of children recognise a few familiar words from books although writing remains experimenting with marks. Children respond very well to recalling simple stories. A range of brightly coloured toy fish of different sizes and types based upon the story content, enthuse children to recollect the names of the fish and their part in the story. Pupils with more complex and challenging needs achieve very well in listening and responding to the stories and turning their heads towards staff members in response to their names. Pupils respond excitedly to this type of fun activity that ensures children achieve very well in communication, tactile and listening opportunities. Signs to extend children's understanding of

daily routines are used very well. Those pupils independent of movement are quick to recognise signs and respond to requests. Those able to use computer programs independently by switching from one task to another track shapes across the screen with great concentration.

39. In **mathematical development**, children are introduced to number activities very well, through number games and counting of numbers such as at registration time. Every activity is very well supported with language to enhance children's growing awareness of number. Higher attaining children recognise and count numbers from one to ten and know how to roll a large die and count the number of dots showing. Those with more complex needs are helped to drop beach pebbles into buckets to match the numbers rolled. There is good use of ICT programs that the children enjoy and are confident in using. Those needing close support are well monitored and helped to achieve their tasks. During group work, higher attaining children and those with more complex needs, work together in pairs with a member of staff. Not only does this mean children have very close attention so that they achieve very well at their own level but the approach adds significantly to children's social development.
40. In **knowledge and understanding of the world**, children's curiosity is sparked throughout the day in the broad range of opportunities. They have to explore and investigate objects, the classroom and the well resourced playground. They enjoy making marks with crayons. Higher attaining children identify similarities and differences, for example, between toys or simple shapes although they are not yet competent in talking effectively about their likes and dislikes. All children enjoy feeling the texture of different materials, for example, in finger painting. For those pupils who not long ago found this experience very unpleasant, this is very good achievement.
41. In **physical development**, children use indoor and outdoor equipment very well with support. They are gradually gaining confidence in their movement with mobile children achieving very well in controlling their speed and direction. There are very good opportunities for indoor and outdoor play, with many large toys that help children to develop physical skills and confidence. In a physical education lesson, independently mobile children worked both individually and with partners, with slow and quick actions such as in response to the song '*Row, row, row your boat*'. Listening skills were outstanding as they started, stopped and balanced in a movement lesson. Children with more complex needs worked with staff closely on therapy programmes linked to the theme of the lesson, in which they achieved very well.
42. In **creative development**, children learn to sing and join in very well with songs and rhymes. They enjoy computer programs that spark the tracking across the screen of moving objects. Displays on the classroom wall show the broad range of imaginative work achieved by the children in, for example, the computer 'paint' program or sand patterns. Children decide for themselves, from a choice of two colours, which one to mix with white glue. A higher attaining pupil, who mixed red paint, chatted continuously about the different shades of pink experienced during the process.
43. Teaching and learning are very good overall, because there is very good differentiation in the lessons that allows the children to achieve highly. There are very good records kept and children's progress is monitored very effectively in all areas. Very good leadership and management of the Foundation Stage are based upon accurate self-evaluation contributed to by the whole department team. The team are considering how best to involve support assistants even more in the monitoring and assessment of children's achievement.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1, 2, 3, 4 and Post 16

ENGLISH

Eight lessons in English were seen across all key stages, together with a range of pupils' work and other evidence of pupils' achievement.

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' good questioning and prompting helps pupils to express themselves with increasing confidence.
- Ways of checking on how well pupils achieve are not used systematically to ensure that pupils do as well as they might.
- Achievement for children in the Foundation Stage and for students at Post 16 is very good. Use of assessment to plan for their individual needs contributes to this.
- Teaching and learning are less effective in Years 3 to 9 because the links between curriculum planning and pupils' individual targets are not always sharp enough to move pupils forward in their learning.
- Pupils' independent writing skills have improved and are now satisfactory but inconsistent.

Commentary

44. Pupils achieve well in speaking and listening throughout the school. The school places a strong emphasis on promoting these skills at all times throughout the day. All pupils develop their language skills well through a range of experiences. They respond in different ways through spoken language and for those with more complex and challenging needs, the consistent use of signing, songs and, for some, pictures, symbols or objects of reference. In class registration in Year 10, pupils use role-play, signing and personalised objects of reference to ensure everyone is welcomed into class and recognise the start of the school day. Students in Years 12, 13 and 14 respond with the increasing maturity of young adults because of teachers' high expectations and planned opportunities for them to increase their conversation skills independently.
45. Overall in reading, pupils achieve satisfactorily. However, in parts of school achievement is stronger such as at the end of Year 2 where it is good. Pupils in Year 2 enjoy looking at books and being read to. For example, they listen to the story of *'Three Billy Goats Gruff'*. Pupils follow the story and respond well by laughing, signing and commenting in appropriate places. The class are attentive and anticipate the story. In Years 3 to 9, achievement is satisfactory overall. The guidance and resources from the National Strategies have been used less effectively to support planning, assessment, activities and resources. As a consequence not all pupils are challenged sufficiently with tasks that match their current level and which enable them to move forward in their learning. In one example, pupils in Year 9 were provided with a range of activities to develop understanding of different forms of travel. However, planning did not provide the opportunity for higher attaining pupils to work independently and show whether they understood different forms of transport in the right context or whether they recognised the key vocabulary without the support of a picture or symbol.
46. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' achievement is good overall. Pupils have started their 'Transition Challenge' course and English is an integral part of the modular structure. In a lesson about 'The Media', learning was challenging but pitched at the right level because of the teacher's good knowledge of the pupils' special educational needs and levels. The plenary provided the opportunity for pupils to volunteer to demonstrate their understanding of news broadcasting. Pupils produced a 'television broadcast', discussed and made choices about the content of their bulletin and spoke or signed their news report. Overall the lesson made a valuable contribution to the pupils' personal and cultural development and built on prior learning.
47. Since the last inspection, writing has been given greater emphasis within English and across the curriculum. Achievement is satisfactory overall. However in Years 1 to 9, the lack of annotated work samples and assessment of learning objectives to show pupils' progression in lessons,

means that it is difficult to track what pupils can do independently. This is recognised by the co-ordinator but time has not been made available to improve this.

48. Whilst the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, during the inspection, examples of good and very good practice were seen. Good or better teaching is a direct result of detailed planning and knowing what pupils are going to get out of lessons, checking that it happens and that the whole process supports pupils achieving their individual targets. Communication skills are improved by ensuring that all pupils including those with complex learning difficulties, speak or sign as part of all lessons. This was very clear in a Year 10 registration and communication session using objects of reference. Teachers modify and adapt the Primary Strategy and Key Stage 3 Strategy for English to ensure that their planning and resources match the needs and abilities of all of the pupils in the class. As a result, pupils engage fully with the lessons and are given every opportunity to develop their skills of speaking and listening, reading and writing. This is particularly effective with students in Years 12 to 14.
49. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic in developing the subject and improving pupils' achievement. The lack of opportunity check on the quality of teaching and learning has resulted in schemes of work in the lower school remaining incomplete and lacking a structure that will ensure pupils move forward. Timetables in Years 7 to 9 do not identify clearly where English lessons are taught. Therefore, it is difficult to judge how much time pupils are spending on developing their skills to ensure that they are being given every opportunity to progress in their learning. The co-ordinator has recognised the need to provide more challenging books and resources for pupils in Years 7 to 9. 'Writing with Symbols' has improved the opportunity for pupils to use ICT within their English lessons. However, well planned, purposeful ICT to reinforce and consolidate learning is limited. The library has recently been re-organised well with additional books purchased. With the support of the Schools' Library Service, it now reflects the standard library system, which is clearly explained in numbers, pictures and symbols on the wall for pupils to follow. Leadership and management of the subject overall are satisfactory. The school has made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

50. Provision for developing pupils' language and literacy skills in other subjects is satisfactory. For example, in music, pupils are provided with a range of opportunities such as turn taking, discussion, articulating and performing with a microphone, to develop their speaking and listening skills. Pupils in Year 3 are reading 'The Story of Noah' as a basis for cross-curricular work in English, art and religious education. Building the Ark and seeing it each day in the classroom has helped to consolidate their understanding of the story. Key vocabulary is emphasised by most teachers throughout the curriculum. However, not all classrooms have this displayed in a format that enables all pupils to access the language and make links with what they are learning at a given time. The use of signing to support spoken language is being developed successfully across the school. Students at Post 16 use their literacy skills very well in discussion, reading for information and to complete their written responses in module booklets as independently as they can. In the future students will have the opportunity to complete a literacy key skills module as part of their ASDAN programme.

MATHEMATICS

Seven lessons in mathematics were seen across all key stages, together with a range of pupils' work and other evidence of pupils' achievement.

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership in mathematics is good, but the lack of time to check on the quality of teaching and learning and how well pupils achieve limits management of the subject.

- Teaching in mathematics is characterised by good subject knowledge and use of resources to make lessons interesting. However, it is only satisfactory overall because of the limited use of assessment in planning lessons and ensuring learning opportunities are the best they can be consistently for all pupils.
- Relevant aspects of the Primary Strategy have been incorporated into lessons and this has had a beneficial effect on both teaching and learning.

Commentary

51. The current mathematics co-ordinator is a good practitioner who has a clear idea of how the subject should develop. Although holding the post only for a short time, a detailed way for assessing mathematics in appropriately small stages has been effectively introduced. Weaknesses in recording and in the use of mathematics across the curriculum have been identified. Improvement planning for the subject seeks to address all of these weaknesses. Without the allocation of enough time to fulfil the co-ordination role effectively, the exact quality of teaching and learning in classes is unclear and good classroom practice has not been shared across the school. The new assessment initiative, however, provides a good structure for teachers to record progress and identifies learning needs for individual pupils. Leadership and management overall, are satisfactory.
52. Pupils achieve satisfactorily overall. Students in Years 12 to 14 achieve well. During the inspection, teachers worked hard to motivate all pupils. Thus, in a good Year 3 lesson on two-dimensional shapes, pupils including those with complex and challenging needs enjoyed a range of stimulating activities involving song, shape recognition games and one-to-one discussion. The teacher and support staff worked as a coherent team with a clear understanding of the lesson's objectives. Two pupils learned very well as a result of the total involvement of all concerned. Similarly, in a very good Year 8 lesson on counting to twenty, very good use of whole group discussion to sum up the lesson, allowed the teacher to check on the pupils' good achievement.
53. Staff relate well to pupils in lessons. They know the pupils' special educational needs and how they will respond to activities. However, very few teachers use detailed assessment as the basis of planning their next lesson or adapting their planning in the light of observed progress. This means there are no clear, continuous records of pupils' achievement, which makes analysis of pupils' achievement very difficult. A lack of emphasis within the school on analysing and sharing information has meant that not enough emphasis has been placed on accelerating progress by building quickly on individual pupils' development.
54. Pupils enjoy mathematics. They have good relationships with adults and a strong desire to progress in the subject. Pupils between Years 1 and 6 achieve satisfactorily in developing early number skills, recognising and matching shapes, measuring in basic metric units and using more general sorting and pattern recognition skills. By Year 11, there is an indication that satisfactory achievement has taken place in the way pupils relate number, measurement and estimation skills to many real life situations. However, this has not been clearly tracked through school to see if there are any peaks and troughs in pupils' achievement in different year groups.
55. The progress in this subject since the last inspection has been satisfactory because of two major developments. Firstly, the breaking down of levels of achievement into smaller 'bite sized' chunks is beginning to assist teachers well and should now assist planning and assessing. In addition, techniques recommended within the Primary Strategy have been effectively incorporated into most teachers' lessons. There have been a number of practical attempts to develop mental mathematical skills but more remains to be done. There has also been effective use of the 'plenary' at the end of a lesson to discuss what has been learnt. Opportunities have not yet been found to share the best of practice within the school.

Mathematics across the curriculum

56. The use and reinforcement of mathematics across all subjects is satisfactory. There is effective use of number skills in PE, music and science, shape in art and design and in design and technology. There is a gradual, but improving, use of data collection as pupils progress through the school. The co-ordinator has ensured that all teachers are clear about the mathematical vocabulary relevant for their age groups and subjects and this has provided good enrichment in many lessons.

SCIENCE

Five lessons were seen across all key stages, together with a range of pupils' work and other evidence of pupils' achievement.

Provision for science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers have effective written subject plans, which set out ways of meeting the needs of all pupils.
- Teaching and learning in Years 1, 2, 10 and 11 are good.
- Not all assessment data is used effectively to ensure the good planning is transformed into good learning opportunities.
- In relation to the good provision in parts of school, the relatively weaker provision in Years 3 to 9 has not been recognised and addressed.

Commentary

57. Pupils' achievement in science is satisfactory overall. It is good in Years 1 and 2 where lessons are well planned with appropriate activities. The effective teaching here ensures all pupils are keen to join in activities such as exploring different light sources for those with complex learning needs to, for others, recalling from previous lessons that some lights need electricity to work and that candles and fireworks get hot. Achievement is also good in Years 10 and 11 where the ASDAN 'Transition Challenge' course provides a clear programme with linked assessment. For example, pupils demonstrate a good understanding of how seeds grow and use appropriate language to explain the cycle of growth.
58. Teaching and learning in science are satisfactory overall. Good teamwork in these classes means that pupils are appropriately supported, giving higher attaining pupils the opportunity to work independently and those with more complex needs the opportunity to explore the activities with additional support. Pupils are encouraged to take turns and share. In Year 2 pupils shared lights with one another taking turns to switch them on and off. In Year 10 pupils discussed plant growth and were keen to share their ideas with one another. Within most lessons teachers and support assistants appropriately use the key words relevant to the topic. However, this aspect has not developed sufficiently and there is no use of symbols and flash cards so that pupils can start to recognise these key words as being linked to the area of study.
59. The co-ordinator is a science specialist and has developed good subject plans for science although opportunities to use ICT in the subject are limited. Planning has recently been reviewed with other staff. It identifies what pupils are expected to learn relative to their ability and includes suggestions as to how to assess pupils' achievement. Teachers develop their own lesson plans from these guidelines. Leadership and management of science are satisfactory. It is the management of the subject that is by far the weakest part. This is due to the fact that although the co-ordinator checks that teachers are following the correct programme and is available to offer advice and support when needed, there is a lack of any systematic monitoring of teaching and learning. Assessment data is not analysed. The process is better in Years 10 and 11 because pupils are involved in the ASDAN 'Transition Challenge', which provides a clear focus and recognises pupils' success through the course units they achieve. Teachers use assessment to help them in their planning. The subject co-ordinator has ideas as to how

science can be further developed but at present there is no opportunity to do this. It is not planned for as a priority within the school. The lack of specialist science accommodation means that pupils are at times limited in what they can achieve and specialist subject teaching is available to very few groups.

60. As there was no scheme of work in place at the last inspection and therefore, no monitoring of planning for the subject at all, good improvement has been made from what was a very low base. However, there is much still to do.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Only one lesson was available on the timetable, which was seen. Also, in a very small number of lessons, ICT was used in other subjects.

Provision in ICT is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has not provided the resources or the leadership time to develop the subject appropriately.
- Despite training, staff show a lack of confidence and knowledge with computer equipment, software and the potential of both.
- Achievement by the end of Years 6, 9 and 11 is lower than might be expected for the current pupils. The use and analysis of assessment data to improve this picture is weak.
- The development of subject plans and the appointment of an ICT technician have been positive developments since the last inspection.

Commentary

61. The previous inspection concluded “The school has made unsatisfactory progress in ICT since the last inspection. Schemes of work have not been written, monitoring of the subject does not take place and, due to lack of expertise and confidence, the resources are underused.” With the exception of written subject plans that are now in place and some training of staff, this still summarises the current position. As a result, discussions with pupils, and observation of the few times in which ICT was used during the inspection indicated that pupils are achieving less than might be expected in this subject. Pupils’ achievement is, therefore, unsatisfactory. Most pupils develop basic word processing skills by the age of 11, although pupils with the most complex and challenging difficulties do not always have access to enough specialised equipment to communicate in this way. Similarly, ‘paint’ programmes allow younger pupils to produce attractive pictures and patterns, while switching systems assist some pupils in this task by reducing its complexity. By Years 11 and 14, pupils and students continue to use a limited range of activities, but these are undertaken more regularly as the result of the need to use them in accredited courses. Here, achievement is satisfactory. Progress in control and database work is severely limited as the result of lack of access and opportunity.
62. The school has a priority area within its overall development plan relating to “further improving the use of ICT.” Despite this, the school still lacks much basic hardware including touch screens and appropriate control and communication equipment. In addition, day-to-day provision of internet access, interactive white boards and freely available printing facilities are insufficient. This has stifled the development of this subject. As a result few pupils at Lancaster achieve the levels of computer literacy they should.
63. The co-ordinator has ensured that all teachers and most support staff received appropriate training. This has not had the desired effect. Many class teachers are still lacking in confidence and do not have the knowledge to use ICT effectively within their subjects and classrooms. Lack of co-ordinator time has meant that staff have not been able to receive back-up to the training received. Support staff have not had enough training to identify how their ICT skills can best be

used. Good teaching has not been identified and shared with others. As a result there is not enough useful information concerning either how ICT is to be used in lesson planning or what problems and opportunities present themselves to each pupil.

64. Two positive developments have taken place. There is now a scheme of work, which class teachers have a copy of. Also, a specialised ICT technician has been appointed who has checked out and serviced the computers available within classrooms. This is a sensible step and one that can now be built on to support the further training of staff and development of up-to-date hardware

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

65. The school has decided that computer skills will be taught as part of the general curriculum work within classrooms. This is a difficult method and requires a co-ordinator with time to monitor and advise. Neither of these is currently available. This means that pupils are not receiving specialised computer skills with enough emphasis and focus, nor are they using the computers effectively to learn about other subjects. The use of ICT within the dark room and sensory room has the potential for developing the awareness of pupils with the most complex difficulties. Some expertise is developing, especially among some support staff. However, the more detailed assessment and curriculum planning skills to support this work are not fully in place.

HUMANITIES

No judgements were made in geography and history because they were not part of the focus of the inspection. Three lessons were seen in religious education with pupils in Years 2, 9 and 11. Judgements in religious education took account of pupils' work and other evidence of pupils' achievement.

Religious education

Provision for religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have good opportunities to listen to visiting speakers and make visits out of school to extend their learning about a range of world religions.
- Detailed schemes of work and well organised resources and artefacts support all pupils in their understanding of themselves and others.
- The monitoring of teaching and learning and the use of assessment data to ensure pupils achievement have yet to be consistently implemented throughout school.

Commentary

66. Religious education has an established place in the school's curriculum and in the personal development of all pupils. Candle and quiet reflection time in classes, visits to local churches and religious centres and experiential days in school are an integral part of this. The more complex and challenging needs of pupils are met with successful planning.
67. Achievement and teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. By the end of Year 2 pupils have been introduced to aspects of Christianity and Sikhism, including relevant festivals and are developing an understanding of personal relationships. They know the importance of being kind, thankful and forgiving and how to respond during prayers and reflective time in class. In a good lesson, Year 1 pupils gained an early idea of belief in prayer and recognised the sign for 'pray' when they listened to the story of Holi. As a result of detailed planning and careful organisation, pupils were fully involved in role-play and provided sensible responses to the class teacher's questions. Links were made to earlier lessons about Sikhs to reinforce the pupils' understanding

of prayer. Less effective teaching and learning is as a result of weaknesses in planning and the use of assessment to pitch the lesson at a level that ensures all pupils move forward in their learning. In another lesson, Year 9 pupils were provided with the opportunity to draw links with their visit to a church by lighting candles and sharing their thoughts about the significance of this. However, the approach taken did not successfully include all pupils or clear learning objectives and this meant that the full impact on the lesson was lost. As a result, a significant number of pupils' learning was unsatisfactory.

68. Religious education contributes well towards pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils and students explore and celebrate world festivals such as Christmas, Easter and Diwali. As a result they have the opportunity to expand their knowledge and appreciation of other cultures. There are opportunities for teaching and learning to explore religious education through a well organised range of religious artefacts and resources alongside the suggested strategies detailed in schemes of work.
69. The co-ordinator for religious education is currently a temporary position. The school follows the Locally Agreed Syllabus, modified to suit the needs of the pupils. From September 2004 the school will follow a revised syllabus and the co-ordinator has attended training to ensure that the school are aware of the changes. As a result there will need to be some changes to present planning for the subject. Schemes of work need to ensure that religious education for the Foundation Stage and Post 16 pupils is outlined in greater detail. The school uses 'P' levels to assess the pupils' knowledge and understanding. Whilst there is a comprehensive range of photographic evidence to show pupils' involvement in a range of celebrations and experiences, there is limited annotation on this to identify pupils' levels of achievement and progress over time. Checking on how well teachers transfer planning into practice in lessons has not been a focus for the co-ordinator because of lack of time. Co-ordination of the subject is sound and has ensured satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. It is in the area of self-evaluation within management of the subject that the weakness lies.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design, design and technology and music were not part of the inspection focus. As such, no overall judgements were made in these subjects. Teaching and learning were satisfactory in the one lesson of design and technology that was seen.

In two lessons seen in music with Years 10 and 11, teaching and learning were very good. From discussion with the subject co-ordinator for music, the following strengths were identified.

70. Music continues to be taught very well by a specialist teacher with very good knowledge of how to teach pupils with a broad range of severe, complex and challenging learning needs. Teaching is characterised by the pace of the lessons, the wide range of singing and performance opportunities available to pupils and a strong emphasis on inclusion for all pupils. This means that all pupils progress very well, develop strong performance skills and, along the way, add to their own self-confidence and ability to communicate. Effective assessment and planning skills ensure that all lessons are well focused on individual needs and identify progress, both musical and personal.
71. Pupils' experience of music is strengthened by the opportunities to perform within school, in concerts and events locally and to visit drama groups and musical events, including pop concerts in Wembley Arena. The co-ordinator has also been active in developing strong links with other schools and colleges, which has added to the effectiveness of the school within the locality.

Physical education

Six lessons were seen across all Key Stages, together with a range of pupils' work and other evidence of pupils' achievement.

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement in physical education is good because of teachers' knowledge and strengths in the subject.
- Some students achieve near to national expectations in swimming and sports events.
- Good use is made of specialist sports facilities off-site

Commentary

72. Pupils' achievements in physical education are variable across the school but good overall. They are very good at Post 16 when taught by the co-ordinator who is a physical education specialist. Some students at this stage are able to achieve near national norms when, for instance, swimming or competing in some athletics events. Students know the importance of warming up before participating in any sporting activity. Most follow the teacher's lead and warm up independently. When participating in athletics students follow instructions well and many remember, for example, how to stand correctly when throwing the javelin. Achievement in Years 2 and 3 is also very good. Pupils listen well and follow instructions. They walk, jump, march or hop to music in the school hall or sprint individually and in relay races in athletics practice. Pupils with complex and challenging learning needs try hard and succeed in controlling their movements very well. They stop what they are doing and stand still when requested.
73. Teaching and learning in physical education is good overall but at its best when the subject specialist leads lessons. In this situation very specific skills are taught that mean students are able to develop the skills which will help them participate in external competitions at their own level. For some students at Post 16 this means they compete alongside their peers from other schools and colleges. Teaching is stimulating, fun and proceeds at a pace that requires students to maintain concentration at all times. There are frequent references to health and safety and the majority of students demonstrate a good awareness of this within lessons. Students praise and encourage one another. They evaluate their own performance and that of their peers, making suggestions as to how they can improve. Teachers have a good knowledge of their pupils' individual difficulties. Physical education programmes are developed that take this into consideration. Therapy, for instance, is very well integrated into lessons. This was seen in a Year 3 lesson where pupils with more complex needs were part of the lesson but at the same time had their specific therapy needs addressed.
74. The school makes very good use of specialist facilities for physical education, for instance, a local swimming pool, a leisure centre and gymnastics club. This gives pupils the opportunity to work with specialists outside the school and develop their skills in a different environment. At other times, coaches or sports people from different disciplines such as football and crown green bowling visit the school to train the pupils. This means that pupils have access to a wide and varied programme of physical education. The subject co-ordinator is keen to involve the school in local initiatives and within this pupils have had the opportunity to engage in tag rugby and zone hockey.
75. Overall leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory and not stronger because of lack of time to check on what is going well and what needs improving. The co-ordinator is a physical education specialist and has developed overall plans for the subject, which are good. These provide non-specialist staff with a range of activities, which identify what pupils are expected to learn relative to their ability. There is also guidance for staff on assessment. Teachers develop their own lesson plans. The co-ordinator is available to offer advice and support when needed and takes the opportunity when she can to monitor teaching and give demonstration lessons. However, there is no systematic programme of monitoring or evaluation of physical education to check on the quality of teachers' planning. Also, there is no monitoring or moderation of assessment in the subject across the school. The subject co-ordinator is

involved in the School Sports' Co-ordinator project but without any identified time to develop the subject.

76. The introduction of 'power walking' as part of the Healthy Schools initiative has encouraged pupils in the upper school to take more exercise. Progress within physical education since the last inspection is good. Pupils continue to achieve well overall. The school continues to make good use of local facilities.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Three lessons were seen across all Key Stages except Key Stage 1. Also, because PSHCE permeates the whole of the school day, a variety of other activities was observed and contributed to the judgement made.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well at the end of Years 2, 11 and 14.
- The co-ordinator has worked very hard to improve provision but is unclear how well staff turn planning into practice. No time is made available to check on this.
- The Healthy School Award contributes very successfully to school life.
- The school council offers pupils a very good way of being involved in improving the school.

Commentary

77. All staff are very aware of the importance of promoting pupils' and students' personal development. Because they understand the pupils and students well, they are good at doing this in lessons and in other activities. Overall, pupils achieve well. Each pupil and student has an individually designed target for personal development in their annual review targets. There is a strong emphasis placed on helping pupils achieve these. At lunchtimes pupils sit in family groupings with a member of staff. A calm, orderly atmosphere pervades as pupils chat together over lunch. Feeding programmes are set up for those with more complex needs although the programmes are not updated frequently enough for them to be totally successful.
78. Pupils willingly take on responsibilities, which contribute very well towards their personal and social development. For example, they return class registers to the office where they meet office staff and exchange points of view using various means of communication. Play outside is very much a social event. Pupils are encouraged to make choices and respond well to the good range of playground activities. Consistently good teaching and learning promote the development of social and self-help skills well. Very good examples were evident in Years 2, 11 and 12 to 14. For example, in Year 2, pupils joined in very sensibly in role-play about the Hindu story of prayer. In Year 11, pupils used signs and symbols where necessary to discuss a broad range of issues. These included issues from the headlines of newspapers, such as the European football tournament and the tracking of Venus across the Sun or in planning how they were going to spend £1 each on drinks or tuck when they visited the local swimming pool. They were taught very well the importance of helping each other and sharing.
79. Much has happened in developing provision for PSHCE since the last inspection. The co-ordinator has reviewed and improved planning well for all teachers upon which they are expected to base their lessons. Ways of measuring just what pupils are attaining in their knowledge and understanding from lessons was introduced. Steps taken to achieve 'The Healthy School Award' led, for example, to improved choices for pupils in healthy eating and the citizenship focus of setting up the school council. The school council involves electing upper school council members, class forums and relevant agendas for meetings that reflect pupils' wishes. Direct impact of the school council is evident from the success pupils have achieved in improving the school. Although day-to-day improvements show to some extent, the value of the

various strands, the co-ordinator has no time to check how well planning turns into practice in lessons. Assessment data is not analysed. That which is available points either to pupils' lack of progress in Years 3 to 9 or teachers being unclear about how to assess pupils' levels against the national 'P' scales. Such hypotheses have not been drawn, followed up and rectified. The school is unclear how pupils' achievement could be improved. Therefore, improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory but not stronger. This is because, whilst leadership of the subject is strong and many new and imaginative approaches have been introduced, this is not matched by systems to ensure good impact from developments. Overall, leadership and management are satisfactory.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

* In a special school such as this, 'standards achieved' are judged in relation to students' individual targets and not in relation to national standards.

