

INSPECTION REPORT

Isebrook School

Kettering

LEA area: Northamptonshire

Unique reference number: 122157

Headteacher: Mr Peter Henshaw

Lead inspector: Charles Hackett

Dates of inspection: 14th – 17th March 2005

Inspection number: 269293

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	82
School address:	Eastleigh Road Kettering Northamptonshire
Postcode:	NN15 6PT
Telephone number:	01536 500030
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Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Fiona Powell
Date of previous inspection:	20 th November 2000

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Isebrook is a day school for boys and girls of secondary age with statements of special educational need for a wide range of difficulties. These include moderate and complex learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorders and emotional and behavioural difficulties. As a result of these difficulties pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below the national average. The school population has changed since the previous inspection and there are now more pupils with complex learning difficulties. All pupils are of a white, English background and of the current population there are no pupils for whom English is not their first language. The school has been through a period of uncertainty and has been managed for two years prior to the current academic year by an acting headteacher and deputy headteacher. The new headteacher started his duties in September 2004 and since that time, two new assistant headteachers have been appointed. There has also been a large turnover of staff and currently there are four temporary teachers.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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9173	Sarah McDermott	Lay inspector	
14691	Jenny Hall	Team inspector	Science, personal, social and health education and citizenship, French and work related learning.
3055	Clive Tombs	Team inspector	English, religious education, history and geography
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Isebrook is a **satisfactory** and improving school. Pupils enjoy attending the school and overall their achievements and the quality of teaching are satisfactory. The overall quality of leadership and management and the governance of the school are satisfactory. The school provides adequate value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses:

- Pupils make good progress in art, science, information and communication technology (ICT) and personal, social and health education.
- The new headteacher, with the support of his assistant headteachers, has stabilised the school and made a good start to improving its effectiveness.
- Systems to record and check on pupils' achievements (assessment) are inadequate and do not effectively track the progress of pupils.
- Teachers' planning does not always allow for the different individual needs of pupils and relies too much on the use of worksheets.
- Pupils behave well and show very good attitudes to their work, as demonstrated through their good attendance.
- Only limited training opportunities are available to all staff and learning support assistants are not sufficiently involved in supporting pupils' learning.
- Work related learning opportunities are good and effective links have been established with the community.

Improvements since the previous inspection have been satisfactory. Many of the issues identified as being in need of improvement, such as cultural and multi-cultural development and the promotion of the National Literacy Strategy, have been given appropriate attention and have improved. However, there are still weaknesses in the assessment procedures and the roles and responsibilities of subject leaders. The school's accommodation and resources have improved and will improve further with the completion of a specialist autistic unit and food technology suite.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 9	Satisfactory	Good
Year 11	Satisfactory	Good

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

Pupils, irrespective of their special needs, make satisfactory progress overall. They make good progress in art, science, information and communication technology and personal, social and health education (PSHE). In English pupils make satisfactory progress; better progress is made in speaking and listening than in writing because pupils have limited opportunities to develop their skills to write independently. Records show a few pupils with autistic spectrum disorders are making good progress and integrating well with other pupils. Although making satisfactory progress, pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties are not always sufficiently challenged by the work. Pupils' personal development is good. Their moral, social and cultural development is given appropriate attention but spiritual development is less prominent. Pupils' attitudes to work are very good and although a few individual pupils are prone to incidents of difficult behaviour, overall behaviour is good. Pupils' attendance is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education in the school is **satisfactory**. Staff provide pupils with a good, safe, caring environment. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Weaknesses in assessment procedures mean that staff do not plan well for different ability levels and this means that pupils, particularly those of a higher ability, are not always challenged by the work. Too many of the lessons involve pupils completing worksheets which are then cut and stuck in text books. However, there are examples of more imaginative teaching approaches, for example, where science is taught by the teacher responsible for the subject, the more 'hands-on' practical approach she adopts successfully engages pupils in learning. Staff are beginning to make effective use of ICT and digital cameras are used well to record pupils' achievements in many subject areas. Learning support assistants offer good pastoral support to pupils and in many lessons work well with individual pupils but at times they are not well directed by teachers as to what they should be doing. In addition too often in lessons they are there only to deal with emergencies and are not involved in supporting pupils' learning. The school provides pupils with a satisfactory curriculum, which has a number of strong features. These include good work related learning opportunities, where pupils undertake work experience placements, as well as college placement courses. A good range of activities, visits and visitors enrich the curriculum well. The care of pupils is good and staff provide satisfactory support and guidance. The accommodation is adequate and being well developed; there is a good science laboratory and a very good gymnasium. Links with parents and with other schools and colleges are satisfactory. Links, however, with the local community are good and used well to enhance the curriculum.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management and the governance of the school are **satisfactory** overall. The new headteacher has shown in the short time he has been in post that he has the vision and understanding to improve the quality of education the school provides. He has been well supported by an assistant headteacher in dealing with pupils' behaviour difficulties, however, there is not a clear understanding of how other staff can be empowered to take a more prominent role in managing the pastoral needs of pupils. Subject leaders do not have a sufficient overview of pupils' achievements and are not monitoring the work of their colleagues. Governors are very supportive of the school and the minutes of their meetings show that they have had an increased involvement in monitoring the work of the school over the past year.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents have mixed views of the work of the school. The majority are happy and feel that their children are doing well. However, there are a significant minority who are concerned that staff have not received sufficient training to meet the special needs of their children. Pupils themselves are clearly happy to be in school. They enjoy the activities and say that they get on well with staff.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Develop an appropriate assessment system that gives staff detailed knowledge of pupils' ability and the progress they are making.
- Provide all staff with increased training opportunities to assist them to develop their skills in working with the pupils the school now admits.
- Use a greater variety of teaching methods and fully involve learning support assistants in the planning and teaching of lessons.
- Improve management arrangements through developing the role of subject leaders.
- Develop the skills and responses of all staff in the day to day management of pupils experiencing emotional or behavioural difficulties.

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

- Although Year 11 pupils achieve well in the external examinations, pupils of a higher ability level are not always stretched by the examination opportunities available.
- Pupils' achievements are good in science, art, ICT and PSHE.
- Pupils make satisfactory progress in English, mathematics, religious education and physical education.
- A few pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) make good progress and are being integrated well into other classes but pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties do not always make the same progress as other pupils in their class.

Commentary

1. Last year's leavers achieved good success in entry level examinations; almost three quarters of the 16 pupils entered gained five passes. The best results were in ICT where almost all pupils achieved the highest grade. Good passes were also achieved in science, mathematics and life skills. However, current examination opportunities do not test pupils of a higher ability level and this means that there are missed opportunities for these pupils to achieve to their full potential. Whole school targets were set for pupils' achievements and the results from last year's are currently under review by the senior management team. For the present academic year appropriate targets have been set for pupils' achievements at the end of Year 9 and Year 11.
2. Pupils make their best progress in science, art, ICT and in PSHE. Pupils make very good progress in the lessons taken by the science subject leader. Her infectious and enthusiastic approach creates interest in the subject amongst pupils who work hard and respond well to the variety of activities on offer. Similarly in art pupils work hard to produce pieces of work of a high standard. In ICT, although records indicate a drop in standards during last year, this has been addressed and pupils are clearly now developing good ICT skills. The overall school environment helps pupils with their personal development and PSHE lessons contribute to this although there is inconsistency in the progress that pupils make in individual lessons and at times learning support assistants do too much for pupils.
3. In English pupils make good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills and this is reflected in the contributions they make to discussions in many subject areas. Progress is not as good in writing because there is an insufficient emphasis in many subjects on pupils being required to write at length. Progress in mathematics varies according to the quality of teaching, which is not consistent throughout the school. Year 7 pupils are making very good progress in physical education in relation to working as a team and taking part in good physical exercises in lessons. However, progress overall in physical education is satisfactory because older pupils are not always sufficiently physically challenged in lessons, recording of their achievements is limited and not all pupils are fully included in the activities.
4. There is limited information about the progress and achievement of different pupil groups such as girls/boys and types of learning difficulties. However, a few pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) although mostly taught in separate groups are now able to join other class groups for lessons. This is an indication of the good progress they are making. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD), although overall making similar progress to other pupils, are on occasions in lessons not willing to engage in learning. A few pupils with other

special educational needs, such as visual impairment, make the same satisfactory progress overall as their peers.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils have **very good attitudes** and their behaviour is **good**. Their personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is also **good**. The attendance of pupils is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy their time at school and readily take part in the activities on offer.
- Pupils get on very well with each other and with adults in the school.
- The attendance rate is better than similar special schools.
- There is little disruption to lessons although at times EBD pupils need extra support out of the classroom.
- The school is preparing pupils well to be sociable, sensible and culturally aware.

Commentary

5. Pupils have a very positive view about their education, as borne out by their good attendance levels. Their attitudes have improved since the last inspection. Staff are welcoming and routines are well established and as a result pupils arrive happily in the morning and look forward to their day in school. A good number of pupils take part in the clubs at lunch time and after school. In lessons most pupils get down to productive work as soon as possible. They co-operate very well and are pleased to give ideas or to be asked questions. Many higher ability pupils are quick to take the initiative in their learning, but a few pupils have come to rely too much on reminders and help from adults too often.

Exclusions

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	82	13	0

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

6. Relationships in the school are very good. Staff act as very good role models because they are cheerful with the pupils and with each other. Most pupils enjoy each other's company. Invariably in lessons pupils are willing to help each other and lend a hand to their less mobile peers. The collaboration of pupils in science lessons is particularly impressive. Pupils with a wide range of different disabilities are successfully learning to tolerate each other's idiosyncrasies. The pupils with EBD who find it difficult to be patient and who are more likely to flare up are supported calmly to patch up quarrels. There is no evidence of bullying and despite all the pupils having a white ethnic background good race relations are promoted well.
7. Most pupils have a very good attendance record of over 95%. The rate of unauthorised absence is low because parents are conscientious about informing the school why their child is off school and the staff are quick to follow up unexplained absences within the day. Registers are marked promptly, but the use of symbols for absence is inconsistent and makes the monitoring of attendance trends difficult. The majority of pupils are brought to school in time by their parents or local authority buses. However, it is difficult to track lax punctuality accurately because teachers mark lateness according to different timescales.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	8.0
National data	8.2

Unauthorised absence	
School data	1.1
National data	2.1

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

- At the start of this academic year an above average number of temporary exclusions was used to stabilise the school and establish clear behaviour expectations. This has been effective and the school is now calm and orderly. In assemblies, at lunchtimes and break times the vast majority of pupils behave very well because they feel safe and secure with the routines and expectations. During lessons most pupils are well behaved and willing to follow the teacher's instructions. However, in a few lessons EBD pupils stop learning and disturb the education for others when they feel the content is irrelevant, too childish or does not stretch their capabilities enough.
- The school is working more successfully to promote social, moral and cultural development than at the time of the last inspection. PSHE and citizenship lessons, as well as sports events and collaborative learning, give pupils good opportunities to increase their ability to relate appropriately to each other. A range of small jobs around the school give pupils a chance to take on duties, but are insufficiently planned to increase pupils' own responsibility to do things for themselves. Most pupils are clearly learning right from wrong. They are patiently encouraged to think through the consequences of any inappropriate action. The promotion of cultural development has improved since the last inspection. The school now introduces pupils well to the ways of life in other countries and other backgrounds through colourful displays, interesting visitors and a range of cultural music and dance. The spiritual development of pupils is satisfactory. Good work is being done in promoting a sense of self-worth in the pupils, but opportunities are often missed in the end of school R and R (review and reflection) sessions to encourage pupils to think more deeply.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. Teaching and learning are satisfactory as is the basic curriculum but the extra activities and events available for pupils provide good curriculum enrichment. The quality of assessment is unsatisfactory and this contributes to the guidance and support provided for pupils as being only satisfactory. The care of pupils, including procedures for their welfare and medical needs, though, is good. Satisfactory links have been established with parents and other schools, and links with the local community are good.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **satisfactory**. Assessment procedures are **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good subject expertise is available and used well in science, art and ICT.
- The use of ICT to make lessons interesting is being developed well by teachers.
- Assessment procedures are not effective and fail to help teachers plan for the different ability levels of pupils in each class.
- Teachers rely too much on the use of worksheets and the cutting and sticking of them into exercise books.
- Learning support assistants provide good individual support for the care of pupils but are not sufficiently involved in supporting pupils' learning.
- The teaching ASD pupils is effective in enabling many to make good progress but the strategies used for working with EBD pupils are not always as effective.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 40 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
0	9 (22)	16 (40)	12 (30)	3 (8)	0	0

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

10. In the subjects where specialists are available there is a consistently high standard of teaching. For example, the very good quality of teaching by the science subject leader means that in her lessons pupils make very good progress. This, though, is not the same for the teaching of science by other staff. Equally in ICT the high quality of subject expertise of the learning support assistant attached to this area makes an important impact on the progress pupils are able to make. He offers good specialist support to the temporary teacher currently teaching the subject. In art the teacher's subject expertise is used well to demonstrate many different artistic techniques using a wide range of media.
11. Good use is now being made of ICT by many teachers. All classrooms have interactive whiteboards and during the inspection there were good examples seen of the effective use of these. This is particularly the case in all ICT lessons because the teacher and support assistant use the interactive whiteboard to engage all pupils in the starter and introduction activity for the lesson. Good use of the interactive whiteboard is also a key feature of lessons in science. Most teachers make very good use of digital cameras to record pupils' work and show the activities they have been engaged in.
12. During the inspection in many lessons pupils' different ability levels were being well planned for. However, records show that this is not always the case and an examination of pupils' work shows that often all pupils, whatever their ability, are asked to complete the same work. The lack of good assessment procedures when pupils come into school reduces the opportunities to base teaching programmes on pupils' ability levels. There is no consistency in methods and communication of assessment information and reliability and validity of assessment data are not checked between staff at the school, or moderated with colleagues from different schools. This means that assessments are not playing a useful role in influencing what teachers teach. Targets set for pupils are often too general and are not reviewed sufficiently and there is little evidence that they are referred to in lessons. Marking is inconsistent across the school and there is no evidence of 'levelling' pupils' work against National Curriculum criteria. However, appropriately the school now has plans to use a software package to show pupils' progress through 'P' scales and National Curriculum levels.
13. Although, there are examples of teachers using a variety of strategies in their teaching overall it is clear that teachers rely too much on pupils completing worksheets and then these being cut and stuck into books. This means that in many subject areas pupils' work is a collection of exercise books with worksheets stuck in them. For those pupils with reading difficulties this is unsatisfactory as often they are unable to read the worksheets and for those pupils of higher ability levels this practice does not stretch their individual writing skills.
14. There is a good number of learning support assistants in the school. Many work well individually with pupils and provide good care and support and this results in pupils feeling secure and happy in school. There are, though, occasions when they do too much for individual pupils, thus reducing the opportunities for them to make independent decisions. Learning support assistants are not involved in the planning of lessons and not all teachers make best use of them to support pupils' learning. This means there are many occasions when learning support staff are in a lesson just in case there is an incident they need to deal with. This is an ineffective use of their time and expertise.

15. Appropriately the school uses a nationally recognised individual approach for the teaching of ASD pupils (TEACCH), as its core method. This gives pupils the chance to work individually with the minimum of distractions. However, the school recognises the importance of helping pupils learn to work with others and provide variety in the lessons. It therefore ensures that pupils have good opportunities to mix with their peers and work in groups. This was the case in a good mathematics lesson seen where a small group of four ASD pupils remained as a group to follow a demonstration using an interactive whiteboard. Each took part in experiments in estimating the weight of different household products and all took an active part in recording their findings. In the best lessons seen EBD pupils were fully integrated. However, because of staff weaknesses in managing the behaviour of these pupils there are occasions where EDB pupils do not learn as well as other pupils.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **satisfactory** and curriculum enrichment is good. The quality of the accommodation and resources is satisfactory overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All National Curriculum subjects are covered but the quality of the planning is not consistently good for each subject.
- Work related learning opportunities are good but the range of other courses in Years 10 and 11 is limited.
- The school provides a good range of visits and other activities to enrich pupils' learning and extend their independence.
- Specialist sports and science facilities add greatly to the quality of the accommodation and there are good plans to improve this further.

Commentary

16. The curriculum for each subject meets statutory requirements. Strengths include enquiry skills being well planned in science and in art and design the most able pupils in Years 10 and 11 studying GCSE. In ICT, very effective arrangements with local ICT consultants give pupils access to high quality specialist tuition and resources. Weaker aspects include the English curriculum placing an insufficient focus on writing and reading and the mathematics programme not giving pupils enough opportunity to solve mathematical problems or apply their number skills. The personal and social education programme in Year 11 has a very well planned and accredited Life Skills course, but in other year groups the taught programme has limited detail of what will be covered each year.
17. In Year 10, pupils gain good experience of the world of work through an imaginative programme of team enterprise activities. In Year 11 work experience is very well organised. However, a number of factors currently limit the curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11. The amount of taught time is below that found in similar special and mainstream secondary schools. Links with colleges are limited to a week in Year 10 and there are no opportunities for pupils to take vocational examinations. The present curriculum provides little opportunity for pupils to make choices and specialise and there are no suitable examination courses for the least or more able pupils. The school is, however, aware of many of these weaknesses and is actively engaged in seeking solutions.
18. The school makes good use of the community to enhance pupils' learning. Residential visits are planned, and after school clubs for all year groups are well attended. Visits to the theatre, museums, cinema, shops, leisure and sports centres, and to other schools and a college, effectively extend pupils' independence and self-confidence. Visitors to school, including specialist advisers and theatre groups, have all made significant contributions in extending pupils' learning in aspects such as sex and drugs education, health education, and computer skills. Subject days, in science, for example, and inter-school activities combining work in art,

science and design and technology are very effectively used to generate pupils' interest in learning.

19. There are very good facilities for physical education, including a large sports hall, used well by the school and the community. The amount of outdoor play space is good, and the youngest pupils have their own play space. The large playing field, however, is easily water-logged. Science, design and technology for resistant materials, and ICT benefit from good specialist facilities, although the computer room is rather cramped. Art and design, music and science are well resourced, although there is no technician to support the large amount of practical work planned in science. The library is out of use in order to accommodate autistic pupils. Plans are well advanced, however, to improve the accommodation for autistic pupils, the food technology room, and toilet and changing areas.

Care, guidance and support

The care, welfare, health and safety of pupils are **good**. The provision of support, advice and guidance based on monitoring is **satisfactory**. The way in which the views of pupils are sought is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good attention is given to the medical and first aid needs of pupils.
- The school works well to link the work of therapists to the needs of pupils.
- The assessment of risks associated with the building is not rigorous enough to allow for the increasing number of pupils with behavioural problems.
- Staff know their pupils well and give them good pastoral support.
- Not all staff have sufficient skills to manage the behaviour of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties.
- There are not enough opportunities for pupils to take on greater responsibilities around the school.
- Induction procedures for new pupils do not provide a good basis for them starting school.

Commentary

20. The school meets the medical needs of all pupils very well. The availability of a comprehensive list of pupils' requirements ensures that all staff can react very quickly to any emergency. The physio-technician has devised well thought out systems to ensure that the administration of medicines is accurate and well recorded. First aid procedures are effective and parents are informed immediately should pupils injure themselves. All staff have had up to date training on child protection and know what to do should they be concerned about a child's welfare.
21. Pupils' learning benefits from a range of therapies matched well to their needs and carefully co-ordinated by the physio-technician. The school has just gained a very well appointed new physiotherapy room and physiotherapy is carefully arranged as much as possible to avoid pupils missing lessons. However, outside organisations dictate the timing of the hydrotherapy sessions and the Riding for the Disabled lessons. As a result, for example, a few pupils regularly miss science and religious education. In the classroom several pupils have improved their learning because of small but very important changes linked to posture or furniture recommended by the occupational therapist.
22. The school has satisfactory systems to check that the site is secure, fire procedures are up to date and vehicles are safe. However, there are potential hazards in the design and technology room that need immediate attention. Pupils feel at ease at Isebrook because they appreciate that staff know their particular needs and circumstances well. The assistant headteacher in charge of pastoral care, leads by example and has built up good, trusting relationships with the pupils and spends a good deal of his time personally dealing with their concerns. With his support, aided by the daily review of grades awarded for pupils' attitudes and effort, the

monitoring of pupils' personal development is good. This is not the case, though for the guidance given to pupils for their academic improvements because of the weaknesses there are in the assessment procedures in the school.

23. The school has reviewed its behaviour policy and set in train an agreed system of rewards and sanctions. The good conduct of most pupils proves the effectiveness of the behaviour management procedures. In addition good procedures and levels of support are available to manage the challenging behaviour of ASD pupils. The school, though, is not yet proficient in dealing with the particular problems of EBD pupils. Not all teachers feel sufficiently competent to deal with emotional and aggressive behaviour. Support staff are not adequately involved in the behaviour management procedures and are not always clear how to deal with angry outbursts. As a result the troublemaker is often sent to the assistant headteacher in the pastoral base, so diminishing the pupil's respect for the teacher and learning support assistants. It should be noted, though, that the placement of ASD and EBD pupils in the same small school is unusual and presents staff with a considerable challenge.
24. The school council provides good opportunities for a group of pupils to discuss community issues. Informally the views of pupils are listened to, but there are not enough planned times for all the pupils to be surveyed on what they like or do not like about school life. Some pupils undertake small jobs, such as returning the register. However, there is scope for more pupils, in particular those of a higher ability level, to be encouraged to show their initiative and increase their involvement in school life.
25. Inspectors agree with the parents' concerns about the induction process for new pupils. The induction procedures for pupils starting in Year 7 are not effective enough to ensure that pupils get underway with their learning as soon as possible. Currently there are not enough opportunities for new pupils to get to know the school and for staff to be thoroughly prepared for the individual needs of each pupil.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a **satisfactory** partnership with parents. Links with the local community are **good** and links with other schools and colleges are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Although most parents appreciate the work of the school, a significant number have concerns about aspects of its work.
- Communication between school and home on children's well being and progress is good.
- The school makes good use of the local area for visits to enliven the curriculum.
- There are not enough well established links with colleges of further education for pupils' transfer to post-16 education.

Commentary

26. Most parents are supportive of the school and many, as part of the 'Friends of the School' group, have raised money to extend its resources. They value the care and support given to their children's difficult lives and have confidence in the new headteacher. There are, though, a significant minority who feel that the school does not support their children's learning as well as it should. Inspectors agree with the concerns that some pupils are not stretched enough in their learning and there is insufficient training of staff in supporting particular special needs.
27. The staff keep open good lines of communication with home for the pastoral and medical care of pupils. Home-school diaries are used well for daily contact. Additionally, teachers telephone parents if they have concerns about behaviour, but also get in touch to report good work and behaviour. Annual reports give parents a clear message on what pupils have covered but are not all consistent in letting them know how their child has improved in each subject over the

year. A grid identifying attitudes and effort is a useful indicator on personal development but is not sufficiently adapted to be meaningful for ASD or EBD pupils. Overall the partnership with parents is not as good as at the time of the last inspection.

28. The school has good links with the local Kettering community. Pupils often visit local villages and places of interest to bring an added dimension to their learning. For example, in art pupils have greatly benefited from observing local houses and churches at first hand. The adjacent Wicksteed Park is a popular venue for developing life skills and a strong connection has been established with the local Riding for the Disabled Association. Pupils are offered a good range of work experience opportunities because the school has built up productive links with an interesting range of local businesses. The school contributes well to the local community by making its facilities, such as the new and very well appointed sports hall, available to local special needs and mainstream groups. A regular car boot sale brings in local residents and raises the school's profile in the community.
29. The school has established a few effective links for Isebrook pupils to attend mainstream schools part time or for other pupils to come to Isebrook for specific sessions. The school does not have an established a link with any one further education college to cater for the particular needs of its pupils and to allay the concerns of parents as their children move on from Isebrook. Governors and the local education authority are, though, discussing the possibility of setting up a post-16 unit in the school.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Although, the leadership and management of the school is **satisfactory** overall, the leadership of the new headteacher is **good**. Governance of the school is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a good vision of how the school can be successfully developed.
- Although subject leaders are enthusiastic and supportive, many lack a clear understanding of how their areas of responsibility will be developed.
- Management of the school on a daily basis is good and ensures that staff and pupils are working in a safe and pleasant environment.
- Insufficient attention by senior staff has been given to developing the role of learning support assistants.
- Only limited opportunities for further training are being provided for all staff to enable them to develop their skills to meet the needs of the changing population of the school.
- Governors are supportive and have recently increased their involvement in monitoring the quality of education being provided.

Commentary

30. The new headteacher upon his appointment in September 2004, realised that there were a number of aspects of the school's work that needed to be developed. Since that time action taken and his planning shows that he has a clear understanding of how he wishes to improve the quality of education provided by the school. An interim school development plan has been produced which shows very appropriate priorities for improvement. In addition the headteacher is planning to make use of the findings of the Ofsted inspection to link with the school's own evaluation of its current strengths and weaknesses.
31. Although the assistant headteachers and many subject leaders have only recently been appointed, they have demonstrated enthusiasm and support for the development of the school. At this stage, though, it is not clear all have the vision to take their responsibilities forward. For example, the assistant head has produced a behaviour policy which has been approved by governors but is not being fully implemented by all staff and he is spending the majority of his time supporting pupils with difficulties rather than empowering other staff to do so. A few

subject leaders are only temporary members of staff, for example, English is the responsibility of a temporary teacher. They and other subject leaders have not been given sufficient opportunity to monitor the effectiveness of the work in their subjects, particularly when the lessons are being taken by other members of staff. There is not an effective system that enables them to have a clear overview of how well all pupils are achieving and what is the quality of teaching and learning.

32. The arrangements to ensure that the school has a safe and welcoming environment are good. Good supervision arrangements are made during the school day, including breaks and lunchtime. Pupils are greeted as they arrive and there are safe arrangements for their departure at the end of the school. Senior staff play a prominent role in all of these arrangements and act as good role models in leading the staff team.
33. There are many learning support assistants in the school, some of whom work with individual pupils whilst others work with class groups. These learning support assistants, however, do not have a direct line manager or access to regular meetings with senior staff. Their opportunities to make a contribution to the development of the school are limited and, for example, currently they do not attend staff meetings. A number who have been recently appointed lack an understanding of the school's policies and procedures because the staff induction process, including the quality of the staff handbook, is unsatisfactory.
34. Teachers and support staff have received training in child protection and a brief overview of the school's behaviour policy. However, other training opportunities have been very limited. The headteacher has reported to governors that because of staff absences it has been very difficult to release staff for training. Learning support staff report that they wish to increase their knowledge of the more complex needs of pupils in the school but have not had the opportunity to undertake suitable courses.
35. The school's finances are managed very well by a competent finance officer who has developed effective systems to control and monitor expenditure. Governors receive regular financial reports but a scrutiny of the minutes of their meetings fails to show that they have given sufficient attention to monitoring the impact of expenditure on the school's effectiveness. Larger than average underspends have been accrued in the last two years but this is understandable given the temporary status of senior staff at that time. A number of new governors have joined recently and together with the appointment of the new headteacher this has heralded a more pro-active approach from governors in their efforts to monitor the work of the school. They have now been allocated subject responsibilities and there has been an increase in the number of visits made to the school. These improvements will prove invaluable as the headteacher seeks to put in place his vision for the school's development.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	524498
Total expenditure	517245
Expenditure per pupil	13980

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	69022
Balance carried forward to the next	76276

WORK RELATED LEARNING

Discussions took place with the co-ordinator for work related learning and the teacher who organises the work experience programme. Team enterprise activities were reviewed. There were brief discussions with pupils and displays were considered. Planning documents for work experience and careers education and guidance were read.

Provision for work related learning is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Work experience and team enterprise activities are organised very well.
- There is a well established careers education and guidance programme in Years 9 to 11, but the programme for Years 7 and 8 requires further development.
- Pupils have a brief but good experience of college in Year 10, but no college link course is provided in Year 11.

Commentary

36. In the team enterprise programme Year 10 pupils follow a very interesting range of activities to help them learn about the world of work and how companies function. Pupils have set up various businesses, such as designing and making greetings cards, spiral bound notebooks, personalised stationery, kites, and boomerangs. In recent years pupils have gained certificates for outstanding achievement in regional Young Enterprise events. In Year 11, the work experience co-ordinator assiduously seeks out appropriate placements for the pupils, based on their individual learning needs. She is meticulous in her organisation of this area of learning and pupils talk positively about their work experience placements.
37. Careers education and guidance meet the statutory requirement for this subject. There are well established links with the Connexions service for pupils in Years 9 to 11. Careers education in Years 7 and 8 is taught through the personal and social education programme. Planning, though, for personal and social education is at an early stage of development in all years and as a result, plans for teaching careers education in Years 7 and 8 are similarly at an early stage.
38. Pupils in Year 10 enjoy a well organised experience of college. They attend for one week and follow a range of vocational courses including plumbing, carpentry, brickwork, horticulture, floristry, interior design and cooking. Pupils are able to work with pupils from other schools. This brief college experience also supports the development of pupils' personal and social skills, for example their self-confidence and independence. Pupils receive a certificate of attendance. The school, though, has not been able to arrange a more extensive 14–16 vocational education programme at this or other colleges and there is currently no vocational accreditation available for leavers. These are the weaknesses in an otherwise good preparation for pupils leaving school.
39. The co-ordinator for work related learning is a recent appointment and it is too early to judge the quality of leadership and management. The 14-16 work related learning programme meets the new statutory requirement.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Inspectors observed seven English lessons and looked at pupils' work, scrutinised planning and spoke to staff. Not enough evidence was collected to make an overall judgement about provision in French. One French lesson was observed and pupils' written work in Years 7 to 9 was reviewed. The subject is not taught in Years 10 and 11.

French

40. In the Year 9 lesson seen, pupils with moderate learning difficulties (MLD) and ASD, made satisfactory progress learning how to give directions, such as, left, right and straight ahead, using an imaginary map of a town. Pupils concentrated well and made good efforts to speak in French to each other and the staff. Relationships were good, with plenty of praise for pupils' efforts. Too much of the teaching, however, was in English, and the range of resources was too narrow. An analysis of pupils' written work in Years 7 to 9 indicates that much of their time is spent learning new French vocabulary, and consolidating previously learned vocabulary. There is little evidence of pupils progressing to writing their own sentences in French.

English

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Speaking and listening skills are encouraged well in lessons but less emphasis is given to developing pupils' writing.
- Evidence to judge achievement and progress over time is limited by unsatisfactory assessment procedures.
- Teaching, although satisfactory, is inconsistent and high attaining pupils are insufficiently challenged.
- The role of the subject leader is underdeveloped and there are insufficient plans to enable her to bring about improvements.

Commentary

41. Overall pupils' achievement in English is satisfactory. Achievement is often good in speaking and listening because pupils' verbal contributions are encouraged and expected in lessons. They are given frequent opportunities to practise their skills during question and answer sessions, or when required to express ideas and preferences about a story or character. Those pupils who require it receive good additional support from the speech and language therapist. Overall pupils also make satisfactory progress in reading and most pupils read a variety of texts including plays, poems and stories. They use contextual, phonic, and picture clues well to enable them to sound out unfamiliar words, and even the youngest pupils talk about characters in the story. Regular reading homework makes a consistent contribution to pupils' progress in reading. The satisfactory progress made by pupils in developing their writing skills is not extended well as they move up the school. Pupils write for a range of purposes, including poetry, newspaper headlines, articles and stories, but their progress in punctuation, grammar, and writing at length and independently is inhibited by the overuse of worksheets in the teaching of most subjects.
42. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. In a most effective Year 11 lesson, pupils with moderate learning difficulties learnt to collate information quickly and accurately, because teaching is well paced and confident. The aims of the lesson are clear and shared with pupils

so that they know what is expected of them. Group work is well organised and planned at different levels to realistically challenge the range of ability of pupils in the class. The end of the lesson was used productively to review and reflect on what pupils had learnt. In less successful lessons, for example a Year 9 class, pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD) and emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) make unsatisfactory progress in applying punctuation to text because the task is not well matched to their different ability levels, expectations are far too low, and behaviour is not well managed.

43. Assessment procedures are not implemented with sufficient consistency across the school. This is partly as a result of staff changes, including the subject leader. Pupils have targets in their individual education plans but these targets are too general to be easily evaluated, little reference is made to them in lessons, and they are not used to influence teachers' planning. There are weaknesses too in the marking of pupils' work, which is rarely annotated or levelled, and gives little advice as to how pupils can improve. As a result of these inconsistencies in assessment, higher attaining pupils are not sufficiently challenged and not enough attention is paid to academic achievement. This was a finding of the previous inspection, which has not been fully addressed.
44. The leadership and management of the new and temporary subject leader are satisfactory. She is aware that there is much to do to bring coherence and purpose to the subject. She has identified a number of appropriate priorities in the subject development plan. However, insufficient time is available to enable her to fully fulfil her management role, in particular to monitor teaching, share the best practice that exists in the school, audit books and level them in terms of reading difficulty. The library is temporarily out of use and opportunities for pupils to read for pleasure or research are limited. Resources are satisfactory overall but there has been an improvement in the use of ICT as a tool for enhancing teaching and learning. Drama and role-play, though, are currently underused.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

45. Although not specifically planned for, language and literacy skills are developed in a satisfactory manner in subjects other than English. There are good opportunities for pupils to speak and listen. In personal and social education, in particular, pupils are encouraged to express their thoughts and feelings and listen carefully to each other's concerns. In science, mathematics, religious education and art, pupils learn and use key words. In most subjects reading is encouraged by providing satisfactory opportunities for pupils to find information from books, the Internet, newspapers and magazines.

MATHEMATICS

Five lessons were seen across age groups, together with a detailed scrutiny of work, discussions with staff and pupils.

Provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers make effective use of the National Numeracy Strategy, which includes energetic and well-paced starter activities to most lessons.
- Although pupils complete a lot of work, too much of this involves completing worksheets.
- Weaknesses in teachers' planning lead to work at times being either too difficult or too easy for a few pupils.
- Lack of consistency in assessment hinders the ability of teachers to plan effectively for individual pupils' improvement and measure their progress over time.

Commentary

46. The achievement of pupils in mathematics is satisfactory. Most pupils work hard in lessons and complete a lot of work in a good range of aspects of mathematics. Currently Years 7 and 8 pupils are developing their skills in handling data; most understand the concept of collecting information and are practising their number skills. Year 9 pupils have just started a new project on shape and space and are gaining an understanding of co-ordinates. ASD pupils in this age group understand the difference between light and heavy and can estimate differences in the weight of a range of everyday objects. Years 10 and 11 pupils are working on basic skills and have completed tasks on addition, fractions, length and time. Though pupils take Entry level examinations in Year 11, the lack of access to GCSE fails to acknowledge the progress and achievement of more able pupils.
47. Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. The National Numeracy Strategy is used well and pupils are familiar with the three part structure of lessons. Starter activities are a strong feature and effectively help pupils settle to work. In the most effective lessons, pupils know the work they are expected to do and work well. Good questioning not only reinforces literacy skills but also shows that pupils understood the concept of time in a Year 9 lesson on months of the year and this also reinforced their literacy skills. Other work supports the development of their literacy skills as well as developing mathematical understanding; for example, in a Years 7 and 8 group, work on data handling was being linked into pupils discussing personal preferences, starting by reading aloud a poem, 'Would you rather....?' by John Burningham.
48. Evidence indicates that pupils, irrespective of their special needs and different abilities, are often provided with the same tasks. This weakness is also reflected in teachers' planning which does not identify how individual pupils' needs will be met. In the least effective lessons teaching strategies used fail to generate pupils' interest in the subject. There is an over emphasis on activities such as cutting and shaping. This is particularly noticeable where pupils with physical difficulties, such as cerebral palsy, are concerned. Many pupils with speech and language difficulties are not provided with other forms of communication to access learning and worksheets are not adapted to meet their needs. There is generous provision of learning support assistants but their lack of involvement in lesson planning limits the effectiveness of their support.
49. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. There are good extra-curricular opportunities in mathematics, including projects with pupils from mainstream schools at a local activities centre. Homework is used to consolidate and extend learning but practice here is inconsistent. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory and although the subject leader has a clear vision for future development of the mathematics curriculum, there is insufficient management time available. This limits her knowledge of whole school provision in mathematics and prevents adequate monitoring of standards and quality assurance.

Mathematics across the curriculum

There is no planned approach for pupils to extend their mathematical skills whilst learning other subjects. There are, though, good opportunities for pupils to practise mathematical skills such as measuring, estimating and calculating in science, art and design and design and technology.

SCIENCE

Six lessons were observed. Pupils' assessment records, reports and written work were analysed. Subject plans, risk assessments and other subject documents were read. There was a discussions with the science co-ordinator.

Provision for science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in all aspects of science, but there is no opportunity for the most able pupils to take GCSEs.
- The quality of specialist teaching is very good in the laboratory, enabling pupils to develop a wide range of practical and enquiry skills.
- Pupils enjoy science lessons and behave safely with the equipment.
- The subject is led very effectively by an inspirational and creative subject leader.
- Although there are some good procedures for assessing learning, there is no system to effectively monitor pupils' progress over time.
- Resources are used very effectively, but learning support assistants have not had the training needed to be fully effective in science lessons.

Commentary

50. Pupils are interested in the subject and this contributes to their achievements being good overall. Improvement since the last inspection is good. High standards have been maintained and the quality of teaching and assessment has improved. Pupils develop a good scientific vocabulary, and a wide range of enquiry skills, because they are taught by specialists, and use plenty of good quality resources for practical work. For example, Year 7 pupils make very good progress learning how to separate mixtures, using chocolate chip cookies to simulate the extraction of gold in a gold mine. Older MLD pupils use microscopes effectively during investigations, such as when looking at the action of yeast in bread dough. They learned a simple word equation for the reaction they observed. By Year 11, pupils achieve Entry level certificates in the Science Plus examination but it is unsatisfactory that there is not enough time on the timetable for the most able pupils to take GCSE science.
51. Pupils mostly have access to a laboratory, and benefit from a well planned curriculum that meets National Curriculum requirements. Teaching is good overall and specialist teaching in the laboratory is consistently very good. In these lessons the teacher shows an excellent enthusiasm for the subject, an ability to motivate pupils and very creative use of resources. In the laboratory MLD, EBD and ASD pupils achieve equally well, although occasionally the fast and dynamic pace of lessons does not fully embrace the learning needs of the least able pupils. As a consequence of their special need a small number of ASD pupils have lessons in the classroom. This result in their science programme being significantly narrower than that of other pupils. In the lesson observed in the classroom, most of the ASD pupils were able to use the equipment and chemicals safely to test foods for starch.
52. Pupils frequently use mathematics to support their science learning; they have regular access to an interactive whiteboard and good opportunities to develop their listening and speaking skills. Pupils have a very positive attitude to science. They work hard, treat equipment with respect, and organise themselves well for paired and group activities. Learning support assistants are willing and care well for the pupils. However, they do not have sufficient scientific knowledge and skill to be fully effective in science lessons, particularly with the most able pupils in Year 11.
53. The subject leader has been the driving force in making science one of the school's most successful subjects, and consequently leadership of the subject is very good. Particularly effective are the science days, and the planning of activities with other subjects and other schools to enrich science learning. Many innovative ideas and creative use of resources make the science curriculum an enjoyable experience for pupils. For example, during the inspection, pupils enjoyed participating in lunchtime activities for national science week. Day to day management of the subject is good, but there is a lot of practical work and no science technician to support. There are a number of good quality assessment procedures but no time to develop an assessment scheme that effectively tracks pupils' progress from year to year. Similarly there is no time to monitor other science teaching or the programme for autistic pupils.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

Inspectors observed three ICT lessons and pupils involved in a lunch time club. In addition pupils' work was looked at, teachers' planning scrutinised and discussions held with staff and a supporting ICT consultant.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good recent developments have established an effective teaching programme for ICT throughout the school.
- Very good use is made of the local authority's specialist staff to support school staff.
- Records of pupils' achievements have been updated but do not show the progress made by pupils with more complex needs.
- The learning support assistant attached to the department provides good subject expertise.
- Resources including computers and digital cameras are good and there are good plans to extend the software available.
- Although ICT is being used in the teaching of other subjects, there is not a clear overview of how effective this is in developing pupils' skills.

Commentary

54. ICT has had a high profile in the school for a number of years, but following the departure of the specialist teacher a year ago, records indicate that standards had not been maintained. However, since the start of the current term, with the support of the headteacher who has taken over as the subject co-ordinator, the provision has improved. His leadership and management of the subject are good. In addition the school has made good use of the expertise of an ICT consultant. She is working with the school for two days each week this term and this is proving very effective in supporting staff, including the temporary teacher who is currently teaching the subject. An effective programme of work for each year group has been re-established, which is ensuring that a wide range of aspects of ICT will be covered by pupils during their time in the school. This term the emphasis has been on 'control' and the planned programme shows how pupils' skills are being extended in each year group.
55. Pupils' achievements are good and this is reflected in the fact that ICT achieved the best examination results last year. Pupils' skills are progressing well as they move through the school. For example, in Year 7, pupils know what 'control' is and can follow simple instructions to move robotic mechanisms (a 'Romer'). Year 9 pupils are establishing circuits through the use of a software programmes and as a result can move images of electrical items to form a circuit on their screen. Year 11 pupils can control a computer game that involves making a simulated 'roller coaster' work on the screen. Records of pupils' achievements have not been maintained over the previous year, however, recent records show a good rate of progress for most pupils. They are not, though, in sufficient detail to show the progress that pupils with more complex needs are making. There are plans to remedy this weakness in the future.
56. The quality of teaching is good. The specialist learning support assistant's very good subject knowledge is being well used to support teaching. Teachers make effective use of the current national teaching strategy for pupils in Years 7 to 9. Lessons are interesting and feature very good starter activities, which often include the support assistant making good use of an interactive whiteboard to explain the work that will be undertaken in the lesson. Pupils are encouraged to be actively involved. For example, in a Year 7 class a pupil was asked to put on a cycling helmet and headphones to imitate a robot to help the teacher explain to pupils the task they were undertaking in giving instructions to move an image on the screen. Good opportunities for pupils to practise and develop their skills followed and at the end of lessons pupils recapped on what they had achieved. Because there are many adults who support in

ICT lessons there are times when too much help is given to individual pupils and this means that pupils have limited opportunities to work independently.

57. Resources for teaching the subject are good. The ICT room is well developed, however, it is small and it does mean that pupils are working very close together and often distract each other. There is a second ICT suite but there are appropriate plans to close this and increase the number of computers available in each classroom. A good number of digital cameras are available in the school and an examination of pupils' files shows that these are used well to record pupils' achievements in a variety of subjects. There are suitable software programmes for most subjects and good plans to increase these further.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

58. The use of ICT in the teaching of other subjects is being developed. All classrooms have interactive whiteboards and in subjects such as science and mathematics regular use is made of these. The school's next stage of development is to consider the use of ICT in each subject and how this is being used to increase pupils' skills and knowledge and ensure that pupils are able to practise a wide range of different technological applications.

HUMANITIES

As no lessons were seen of history and only one of geography, there is insufficient evidence to make judgements for the overall provision in these subjects. Inspectors met the history co-ordinator and looked through the history subject file. Inspectors observed four religious education lessons, looked at pupils' work, scrutinised planning and talked with staff.

History and Geography

59. In the Year 11 geography lesson observed good use was made of ICT to research details on Mexico. The lesson, though, had no specific aims for what pupils were to learn and was too teacher directed. The curriculum meets national requirements and displays of work in classrooms and corridors show that recently pupils have studied the nature, causes and effects of earthquakes, and compared our lifestyles with people living in Italy.
60. In history, pupils follow a programme of work in line with the National Curriculum. Recently they have studied units on slavery, the Civil War and canals. Occasional visits to places of historical interest are used well to reinforce pupils' learning. ICT is used effectively to research topics and the subject offers higher attaining pupils opportunities for producing pieces of extended writing. Although all pupils take history as part of the 14–16 curriculum there are no opportunities to take an examination in the subject.

Religious Education

Provision for religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have good opportunities to reflect on their own views and beliefs and those of others.
- Although satisfactory, teaching does not always take account of pupils' different ability levels.
- The subject makes a positive contribution to pupils' personal development.

Commentary

61. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory and the subject ensures that their spiritual awareness is developed in a satisfactory manner. Examples of their achievements show that they develop a good understanding of the beliefs of different religions as they move through the school. For example, most Year 7 pupils know about many aspects of the Jewish faith and have

experienced a special Jewish meal of bread, salt, fruit and wine. They understand the meaning and purpose behind special terms such as the 'Shabbat' and 'Torah'. More able Year 8 pupils know the key beliefs of Hinduism including reincarnation. Year 9 pupils understand the story and significance of Easter for Christians, while Year 10 pupils have recently investigated how Sikh babies are given their names.

62. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. Teachers have adequate knowledge to teach the agreed syllabus, make the subject matter interesting and relevant and offer good opportunities for discussion. They use a range of strategies and artefacts to motivate pupils but there are times when tasks set are not well matched to meet pupils' individual needs. Good use is made of the interactive whiteboards in teaching and digital cameras to record special occasions.
63. Pupils have positive attitudes to the subject and this links well with the emphasis within the school on people caring for, and valuing each other. The quality of relationships, themes in assembly, and displays in classrooms, corridors and hall, are all concerned with celebrating pupils' work and contribute to the pupils developing an understanding of religious values. As a result the subject makes a good and consistent contribution to pupils' moral, social and cultural development.
64. The management and leadership of the subject are satisfactory. A specialist teacher maintains an overview of the subject and the programme of work that pupils follow has been modified to meet the needs of a changing school population. The subject leader provides good support, encouragement and ideas for non-specialists teachers. Time allocation for religious education is adequate. Overall improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

As only one music lesson was seen, there is insufficient evidence to make an overall judgement on the provision for music. Inspectors met with the subject leader and looked through the music file. No overall judgement on the provision for design and technology can be made. Two lessons were observed; one in Year 9 on mechanisms and levers and a food technology lesson for Year 11. Two double art lessons were seen together with discussions with pupils and staff and a scrutiny of work both in the art room and around the school. Four physical education lessons were seen and discussions held with the subject co-ordinator.

Music

65. Music makes an important contribution to school life. Not only does it feature in assemblies but it is also part of 'special events' that occur throughout the year. These include taking part in the World's Biggest Sing Song, and visits to the school from a travelling company who performed 'Peter and the Wolf'. Pupils' musical experience has also been enriched by visits from an Indian dancing company, and 'The Drum Man Phil'. A party of pupils from the school have visited the Royal Academy of Music and taken part in a school musical production of 'A Christmas Carol'. Good use is made of the digital camera to record special events and pupils' musical experience. Resources for the subject are good. The teacher is a specialist who brings high expectations and rigour to the subject, which makes a particularly good contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development.
66. In the good lesson seen the lesson began with the rousing school song, which involved pupils singing enthusiastically, clapping in time and with spontaneous enjoyment. They also listened quietly and carefully to a short piece of dramatic music and recognised it as being 'spooky' and 'ghostly'. Group work was clearly explained and well organised. Pupils worked in pairs and made up musical sequences from a selection of four notes. They did this with the minimum of fuss and practise on keyboards, chime bars and glockenspiels, before performing their short melodies to the rest of the class.

Design and Technology

67. Pupils experience an appropriate range of activities and have the opportunity to work with different materials. Photographic evidence shows that pupils of all ages enjoy a good variety of food technology activities. In the food technology lesson seen, an unqualified teacher, leading the session, worked well with her learning support assistant. The lesson benefited from the use of different activities and these all consolidated pupils' understanding of how the lesson content relates to the 'real' world. Pupils worked well as a team and in discussion show they understand key facts in relation to food hygiene and bacteria.
68. There is a well resourced design technology workshop. However, not all health and safety requirements are met. For example, there are no floor markings around the machinery and pupils have too easy access to dangerous tools.

Art and Design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have good opportunities to achieve in a wide range of different forms of art.
- Pupils have limited chances to pass examinations to recognise their achievements.
- Pupils benefit from the specialist knowledge of the teacher but at times their final efforts rely too much on his support.
- Good links have been established with a mainstream school's art department.

Commentary

69. Pupils' achievement is good. As they move through the school it is clear they are developing good skills in using a wide range of media. For example, Year 8 pupils when working in clay are able to roll, cut and join surfaces to produce detailed high quality finished pieces of work. Year 10 pupils can use images of themselves as starting points to develop ideas for modelling heads using pastel, paint, clay, plaster, wire and card. In lessons pupils take turns with equipment, handling it and materials with care and responsibility. Pupils' work from all age groups shows breadth of coverage and the respect they show for the many displays around the school is an indicator of their attitudes and values for art. There is, though, insufficient accreditation available to Year 11 pupils. Currently only two of the more able pupils are taking GCSE through a link with a neighbouring specialist arts school. This is a good opportunity but needs to be extended to allow the achievements of others to be recognised.
70. Teaching and learning are good. Lessons are well planned and good account is taken of the different needs of pupils. The teacher uses his subject expertise well, particularly in the demonstrations made of different techniques. Pupils have clear targets for their achievements and in discussion they know and understand what they are doing and what they need to learn in order to improve. Lessons are very effective at generating pupils' interest in the subject. This results in them working hard and listening carefully to the teacher. The teacher's focus on the final quality of pupils' pieces of work does at times, however, mean that pupils have limited opportunities to work independently and make mistakes from which they can learn. Pupils have the chance to work from direct observation, both in the classroom and in the local area as seen in an architecture project working from churches in a neighbouring village.
71. The curriculum is well planned and gives pupils a wide range of different experiences. There is good evidence of pupils working with local artists, for example, in a hot air balloon project and this influence is seen in work displayed in the art room in a variety of media including paint and clay. Also, there is clear evidence that pupils explore the art of other cultures, for example, through 'India Week'. A combined science and art week enabled pupils to work together to understand links between art, technology and science. There is a separate 'Handskills'

curriculum which links art and craft work with occupational therapy. However, the subject leader for art and design does not have management responsibility for this area and this limits opportunities for joint working, including co-ordinated assessment and the development of resources.

72. The subject leader is part-time, working three days per week and teaching all the art and design within the school. His leadership and management of the subject are good. The department has satisfactory resources, which include a well-used kiln. However, resources for recording and creating through ICT are limited. Computers are too few in number and outdated. However, scrutiny of work showed some evidence that the subject leader works hard to overcome this and pupils have opportunities to use ICT as a medium for developing their ideas. There is an adequate class library to enable pupils to explore the work of other artists and designers.

Physical Education

Provision in physical education is **satisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have the opportunity to take part in a good range of sports and physical activities.
- The gymnasium is a very good facility, but outside areas are limited.
- Lessons in physical education give pupils the chance to play games but do not always ensure that all pupils are actively involved.
- There is a limited emphasis on pupils warming up and cooling down as part of the established routines for each lesson.
- Year 7 pupils are physically active in lessons and have good opportunities to work together.

Commentary

73. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall. The best progress is made by pupils in Year 7, where pupils are physically challenged by the activities. In a lesson seen, pupils were set the challenge of working in teams to move objects from one end of the gym to the other by moving and jumping onto mats. Pupils showed a willingness to support each other to achieve the desired outcome and all worked very hard physically. As a result of the activity, pupils who were reluctant at the start of the lesson to jump were successfully doing so by the end. Older pupils achieve satisfactory standards but are not always stretched in lessons to achieve as well as they might. In swimming pupils make good progress. In a lesson seen lower ability Years 7 and 8 pupils increased their confidence in the water through the activities they were asked to undertake. Higher ability pupils showed good front crawl techniques, which they were developing further through swimming using either their arms or legs only.
74. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Good teaching in Year 7 features good warm ups at the start of lessons as well as a good chance for pupils to recap their achievements at the end. These lessons ensure that pupils are physically challenged by the activities. This level of physical exercise was not seen in the lessons for older pupils. There is no established routine for lessons to start with pupils stretching and warming up ready for the main physical activity. Older pupils, though, have good opportunities to engage in small sided games and the coaching from the teacher is good. There are, however, limited opportunities for them to practise their skills and too often pupils are left sitting on a bench waiting their turn. Routines to cool pupils down after being engaged in physical activity have not been established. In addition insufficient attention is being given to ensure that all pupils are fully engaged in lessons. For example, in a physical education lesson seen for Year 9, two pupils in wheelchairs were not integrated into the lesson; they spent much of their time watching others play and only had a brief time themselves joining in the activity.

75. Ineffective use is made of the other adults who are available to support the lessons. For example, in a Year 10 lesson giving pupils an introduction to squash the learning support assistant remained sitting on a bench throughout the entire lesson. This was similar to the situation in a Years 7 and 8 swimming lesson, where four learning support assistants merely watched from the sidelines and were there only to deal with emergencies.
76. The physical education programme has been well thought out and designed to give pupils the opportunities to experience a wide range of sports. These include ball games such as cricket and football, as well as carpet bowls and outdoor education activities such as walking and canoeing. The planned programme ensures that all pupils as they move through the school are able to experience a wide range of activities. The school has a very high quality gymnasium. This means that pupils have good indoor opportunities to participate in many games and gymnastics and appropriate plans have been made to extend this to dance. Outside facilities, however, are limited and poor drainage means that the school football field is often unusable.
77. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. A strength of the department is the range of activities on offer to the pupils. However, a limited record is maintained of pupils' achievements and there is no evidence of these being used in planning lessons to ensure that pupils of all abilities and types of special need are able to engage and make progress. The exception to this is swimming where pupils work towards achieving certificates for the distances they are able to swim.

Personal, social and health education and citizenship

Six lessons or part lessons were observed. Pupils' written work was analysed. There was discussion with the newly appointed subject leader, and with other members of staff. Lunch time activities, school clubs, and other enrichment activities were noted. Opportunities for personal and social development during registration, assembly, and review and reflection time at the end of each day were evaluated.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are confident and independent by the time they leave school.
- Circle time makes a good contribution to pupils' personal and social development, particularly for ASD pupils.
- There are many opportunities, outside formally taught lessons, for pupils to develop their personal and social skills.
- The newly appointed subject leader has not been allocated enough time to monitor the quality of teaching or plan the development of the existing provision.

Commentary

78. Pupils achieve well in all aspects of the subject. This is because the school places real importance on this subject and, although teaching in the subject is not always effective, pupils' skills and knowledge are developed well by whole school activities. The youngest pupils know about personal health and safety. Older pupils participate in a well organised Life Skills programme and achieve well in Entry level examinations. As a result of the work covered throughout the school pupils make good progress in their understanding of aspects such as self-awareness, personal and family responsibilities, friends and peer pressure, finding a home, citizenship, local government and the law.
79. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and particularly effective in circle time lessons. The principles of circle time are well planned enabling pupils to improve their communication, personal and social skills. For example, in a lesson for ASD pupils in Years 7 to 10, they learned how to stay in their seats for a whole lesson, listen to each other's likes and dislikes,

and make eye contact with each other. Learning was successful because the quality of teaching was good and the support assistants had a good understanding of the learning and other support needs of autistic pupils. In a very good and moving lesson with Year 9 boys with MLD, EBD and ASD, skilful teaching enabled the boys to explore their feelings and discuss events that made them sad.

80. The school's good enrichment programme is also valuable in promoting pupils' personal and social skills. Residential holidays, after school clubs, visits into the community, entertaining visitors to school, working alongside pupils in mainstream schools and at college, and working in an adult environment on work experience placements are just some of the opportunities for pupils to improve their social awareness, confidence and independence. In many lessons pupils are encouraged to work in pairs or groups and in assembly they are encouraged to be selfless and to think about the needs of others. There are, though, missed opportunities to make the most of registration time, and the review and reflection times at the end of each day.
81. The subject leader is new in post and has made a satisfactory start in the role. Insufficient time is allocated, however, for monitoring the quality of provision in this subject. Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory, and do not take account of the often differing rates of progress of MLD, SLD, ASD and EBD pupils in their attention and concentration, independence and organisational skills, interaction with others, understanding of citizenship, and knowledge and understanding of health, sex and drugs education. Curriculum plans lack sufficient detail to ensure that pupils can make progress, with the necessary repetition, but without undue duplication, of topics, from year to year. There is not enough evidence in the last inspection report to make an overall judgement about improvement in the subject.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement	Grade
The overall effectiveness of the school	4
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	4
Overall standards achieved	4
Pupils' achievement	4
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	4
The quality of teaching	4
How well pupils learn	4
The quality of assessment	5
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	4
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	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	4
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	3
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 pupils' individual targets and not in relation to national standards.