

INSPECTION REPORT

UPLANDS SCHOOL

Penhill

LEA area: Swindon

Unique reference number: 126555

Headteacher: Miss Mary Bishop

Lead inspector: Mrs Patricia Potheary

Dates of inspection: 22 - 24 November 2004

Inspection number: 271591

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
Age range of pupils:	11 to 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	74
School address:	Leigh Road Penhill Swindon Wiltshire
Postcode:	SN2 5DE
Telephone number:	01793 724751
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Barbara Shaw
Date of previous inspection:	23/03/2000

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Uplands is a community day special school for 74 girls and boys aged 11 to 19 years who have severe learning difficulties. Of these, approximately half have profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and 20% have autistic spectrum disorders (ASD). There are 74 pupils on roll. Sixty pupils are of white British origin and 14 are broadly distributed between six other ethnic groups, although none have English as an additional language. There is one pupil supported by the LEA as a traveller. Pupils' socio-economic circumstances are roughly average, mobility is low and attainment on entry is very low.

The school is piloting the 'Transactive' MENCAP initiative for person centred planning with Wiltshire and is involved in the New Opportunities Fund for extra-curricular activities. It has the Healthy Schools award 2004, Investors in People status and a 'Team Enterprise' award. The school is also involved in community provision for parents, hosts a Social Services play scheme, provides home tuition outreach for one pupil over 16 years and offers life skills to students from Swindon College. The school uses a two-bedroom terraced house as a base for teaching life skills to students post 16. The school is due to move into new, purpose built premises in September 2006.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
21765	Patricia Potheary	Lead inspector	Science Art and design Music Physical education Sixth Form
9619	Robert Miller	Lay inspector	
20622	Ann Sydney	Team inspector	Mathematics Geography History Information and communication technology
27409	Susan Hunt	Team inspector	English Modern Foreign Languages Religious education English as an additional language Special educational needs
2512	Brian Emery	Team inspector	Citizenship Design and technology Personal, social and health education

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Uplands is a warm and very caring school which offers a sound level of education, with several good and some very good features. Pupils' achievements, the quality of teaching, learning, leadership and management are satisfactory overall, with an increasing number of strengths. The curriculum is good and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good; they mature confidently and try to do their best.
- The quality of teaching, although good in several subjects, is satisfactory in English and mathematics and unsatisfactory in information and communication technology (ICT).
- The curriculum provides a rich variety of opportunity to meet pupils' and students' needs.
- The high quality provision in music and physical education ensures that pupils develop very good skills which support their learning in other subjects.
- The school provides very good levels of care and good community links to keep pupils safe and help them make the right choices.
- The centre for pupils with autism (ASD) is very successful in helping them to learn alongside their peers.
- The leadership and management of school improvement have led to several positive changes but lack sufficient impact in key areas, especially the quality of teaching.
- Some pupils miss lessons regularly or even whole subjects for therapy or other activities.

The school has made satisfactory improvements since the last inspection, especially by ensuring that science, mathematics, religious education, design and technology, geography and history now provide an acceptable standard of teaching and learning. The quality of teaching and learning has also improved, in art, music and physical education. The curriculum is much better balanced and has enhanced provision for pupils and students with profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) and ASD. There has been good improvement in the sixth form curriculum. There is increasingly good quality accreditation. ICT remains unsatisfactory despite improvements made.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 11	Satisfactory	Good
Year 14	Satisfactory	Good

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

Pupils and students make satisfactory overall achievement regardless of age, ability or significantly different needs. In English, mathematics and religious education pupils' and students' achievement is satisfactory rather than good because teaching contains some weaknesses. In ICT, achievement is unsatisfactory. In music and physical education pupils achieve very well, leading to increased confidence and poise in pupils generally. Pupils and students gain many skills, achieving well in their personal and social education (PSHCE). Achievement in science is now good, due to specialised teaching. By the age of 16 the most able pupils achieve well in entry level GCSE for science and mathematics and students in the sixth form make good progress in their work-related and life skills courses. Some good and very good progress is seen for pupils with PMLD and those with ASD within aspects of their specially adapted curriculum.

Pupils' and students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are good. They behave well and the school has some very good programmes to help those with the most difficult behaviour to relate well to others. Strongly positive relationships lead to pupils and students wanting to do well and trying hard, but the slow pace of some lessons loses their attention at times. There are good activities to encourage social, moral and cultural development, but opportunities to encourage spiritual awareness are sometimes missed.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. Teaching is also satisfactory. Teaching is inconsistent in quality; it is strongest for pupils aged 14 to 16 years and in science, PSHCE, art, design and technology and particularly music and physical education. Teaching is unsatisfactory in ICT and satisfactory in English and mathematics; key areas where pupils could do better. In good lessons pupils and students build well on earlier learning based upon detailed assessment, and interesting activities fill the time available. These qualities are missing from the weaker lessons. Teaching assistants contribute skilfully to most lessons, but in some they lack guidance in helping pupils learn effectively. The good curriculum has a broad array of opportunities. Pupils and students with ASD and PMLD are well supported and those with challenging behaviour are successfully included. The sixth form and arrangements to help students prepare for life after school are strong. However, those who go to alternative activities or therapy sometimes miss out on whole subjects or their lessons are disrupted. Accommodation is unsatisfactory until the new school is built. The grounds are good but, inside, the school is poorly presented. The care, guidance and support of pupils are very good and help them make the right choices. Links with parents, colleges and the community are also strong, helping pupils and students play their part in the wider world.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a strong vision for inclusion and a commitment to raise standards. They have improved the systems for achieving this very well, particularly in the collection and analysis of performance data and in monitoring teaching. However, although many improvements have resulted, the systems lack sufficient impact in key subjects. The role of subject and curriculum leaders is much improved but is underdeveloped in raising standards in those key subjects. Highly committed and sound governance ensures that finance is well managed and the school is suitably held to account, although some statutory duties are not met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents speak highly of the school and think that their children make good progress, gain confidence and are well cared for. They report no major concerns. Pupils and students are also highly satisfied, they are expected and want to work hard and find Uplands a happy place to be.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the quality of teaching and the way pupils learn, particularly in English, mathematics and information and communication technology.
- Develop the effectiveness of the systems and strategies used to improve teaching and learning throughout the school.

and, to meet statutory requirements:

- Ensure that all pupils receive their full curriculum entitlement.
- Complete plans for fulfilling reporting requirements to parents.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is satisfactory for pupils aged 11 to 16 and for those in the sixth form.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is unsatisfactory in information and communication technology (ICT).
- Achievement is satisfactory overall in English, mathematics and religious education, with several strengths but some weaknesses.
- Pupils and students achieve very well in music and physical education and this leads to good learning in other areas.
- Areas where pupils aged 11-16 achieve well include PSHCE, science, speaking, listening and communication and mathematics for those aged 14 to 16.
- Students in the sixth form achieve well in their life skills programme and with college courses.
- Pupils and students with PMLD and those with ASD often achieve well in the specialised elements of their programmes.

Commentary

1. Pupils in all age groups, regardless of special educational need, gender, ethnic origins or ability, make satisfactory overall progress. The school's difficulty in raising achievement in some subjects above the satisfactory level is directly related to weaknesses in the quality of teaching.
2. The school's data show steady progression and satisfactory achievement for pupils in English, which remains the same since the last inspection. Pupils aged 11-16 make satisfactory progress in mathematics and those aged 14-16 achieve well. The subject shows some overall improvement since the last inspection, when achievement over time was unsatisfactory. Pupils now achieve well in science, which has improved well since the last inspection due to improved teaching and an improved curriculum. In religious education pupils' achievement is satisfactory, which also represents an improvement. In ICT achievement remains unsatisfactory since the last inspection. This is despite some improvements in provision, because the subject is not taught sufficiently well in all subjects throughout the school and resources are too limited.
3. There has been good improvement in music and physical education, where pupils now achieve very well and gain skills that help them in the other subjects. The performance skills learned in music, in particular, lead to pupils' greater confidence in trying new things. The physical agility and team spirit fostered in physical education can be clearly seen as pupils take on their responsibilities as part of the school community.
4. Pupils with significantly different needs such as PMLD and ASD make good and even very good progress in some areas of their work because the curriculum is adapted well to suit their particular needs. For example, progress with reading and communication for those in the ASD centre is often good or better.
5. In English pupils continue to make good progress in speaking, listening and communication because teachers and teaching assistants plan well to foster these skills throughout the school day. Pupils communicate readily and with confidence. Progress, in reading and written work,

is satisfactory rather than good and this relates directly to weaknesses in lesson and curriculum planning.

6. The progress pupils make in mathematics is satisfactory, although progress is often good for pupils in key stage 4. The more able older pupils gain good grades in their entry level GCSEs and therefore achieve well. Weaknesses in teaching lead to generally slow lessons for the younger pupils where, although some progress is made, they do not all achieve as well as they can.
7. In science in all age groups pupils achieve well. They show an increasing level of skill in investigating why things happen and improve their knowledge of many scientific topics such as living things and electricity. By the age of 16 several pupils gain good grades in the entry level GCSE. This is largely due to a very well planned science curriculum, successful specialist teaching and attention to the different learning needs of each individual pupil. For the very few who miss science for other activities achievement is not satisfactory.
8. The unsatisfactory achievement in ICT is due, among other things, to insufficient equipment and the absence of a dedicated ICT suite. In addition, teaching does not aspire to sufficiently high standards, and planned opportunities to gain ICT skills in all subjects are too few. Despite this, pupils' progress in the subject has improved since the last inspection because there is a clear scheme of work and dedicated ICT lessons.

The sixth form

9. During their time in the sixth form students achieve well in a wide range of practical skills to help them manage themselves, their homes, their leisure time and the world of work. Development of their basic literacy, numeracy and ICT skills is satisfactory. Last year sixth form students gained a suitable range of accredited modules for the Accreditation for Life and Living (ALL) scheme in home management. This year students also took the ICT and communication modules.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Behaviour is good because pupils' and students' needs are understood and managed well.
- There are very good relationships between pupils, students and staff, which contributes to the warm and positive ethos of the school.
- Pupils usually work hard in lessons and try to do their best, although sometimes they do not have enough to do and so lose concentration.
- There are many opportunities for pupils and students to develop their self-esteem and a sense of responsibility.
- Moral, social and cultural development is good and has improved well.
- Provision for pupils' and students' spiritual development remains limited despite an improvement since the last inspection.

Commentary

10. Behaviour at Uplands is good and is managed well. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when the management of challenging behaviour was not sufficiently effective. The school now has considerable success with pupils who cannot be contained in other schools.

There have been no fixed term or permanent exclusions in the last twelve months. This is partly due to the work of the Autism Resource Centre (ARC), which very successfully helps pupils and students with ASD to manage and modify their behaviour. In addition there are very succinct individual behaviour plans in place for those pupils and students who need them and comprehensive behaviour contracts which give pupils and students ownership of and responsibility for their own behaviour. There is no evidence of any bullying.

11. Pupils' and students' attitudes to learning are generally good and often very good. Occasionally, when the lesson is not stimulating enough, attitudes can deteriorate and during several lessons a lack of pace meant that pupils lost the motivation to stay on task. Pupils work well in groups and they are keen to help each other. During one Year 11 literacy session, for example, after finishing her own work, one pupil helped another, displaying a mature level of care. Lunchtime clubs are keenly attended, particularly the very good choir and football practices, illustrating pupils' general enthusiasm. Pupils and students understand the school's systems for rewards and sanctions and are keen to receive praise, certificates and prizes for hard work and achievement.
12. Pupils' and students' personal development is good. Regular residential trips, some as far as Majorca and Canada, help them develop positive relationships and they begin to take on some responsibility for themselves and others. By Year 11, and more so by Year 14, pupils and students have benefited from these opportunities to broaden their horizons, to make choices, and to contribute to a community. The school council gives an opportunity for them to take some part in the running of the school; for example, last Christmas they requested a magic show for the whole school. The many charities the school supports such as 'Children in Need' 'Jeans for Genes' and 'National Doodle Day' all contribute to this sense of responsibility. There is an emphasis on personal development, which is fostered very well through strong and positive relationships between everyone in the school. Raised voices in the classroom are not heard and there is very good racial harmony.
13. Opportunities provided for pupils' and students' spiritual development have improved since the last inspection and are now satisfactory. There is now a daily period for reflection and music, and some PSHCE provides good spiritual elements. Opportunities to develop a spiritual awareness further in all subjects, particularly religious education are sometimes missed and assembly takes place only weekly.
14. The moral development of pupils and students is good; the majority are helped by staff to develop a true sense of right and wrong. The provision for pupils' and students' social development is also good, and pupils and students are evidently at ease with each other and adults. At lunchtime, pupils chat with staff or each other and are happy to talk to visitors about school life. Pupils' and students' cultural awareness is developed well; visits to museums, art galleries and ancient sites develop their understanding of the arts and their own culture and heritage. The visits abroad, work in geography and history and, for example, the celebration of religious festivals such as Ramadan and Diwali, also give pupils and students some insight into how different people live.

Attendance

The school has worked very effectively to improve attendance since the last inspection and it is now very good. The level of unauthorised absences is well below the average for similar schools, the authorised absences are due mainly to illnesses. The school's systems for following up absences are thorough, pupils' and students' transport arrives before the start of the day and lessons start on time.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	6.7
National data	8.7

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.0
National data	0.5

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is satisfactory. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. The curriculum and partnerships with parents other schools, colleges and the community are good and the care, guidance and support provided for pupils are very good.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and pupils' and students' learning is satisfactory. Assessment of pupils' and students' work is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The majority of satisfactory rather than good teaching is in the core subjects of English and mathematics, with unsatisfactory teaching overall in ICT. This has a negative impact on the ability of pupils to achieve highly.
- In the most effective lessons, such as science, interesting teaching includes and engages pupils of all abilities very well so that they can build on their understanding and gain good skills.
- Lesson planning, in many cases, lacks sufficient structure, variety and interesting resources to engage pupils fully or to fill the lesson time available.
- Pupils with the most difficult behaviour are managed very well, allowing them and others to take part in what is being taught.
- In most lessons teaching assistants make a substantial and skilled contribution, but in some, their work is not planned well enough for them to use their skills in helping pupils make good progress.
- Assessment of what pupils have learned, in the majority of subjects, is good, but it is not always used effectively to take pupils' individual learning forward when planning the next lesson.
- Some lessons lack sufficient challenge to help the more able pupils progress as well as they can.

Commentary

15. The quality of teaching and pupils' learning is inconsistent, but the strengths outweigh the weaknesses. For pupils aged 11 to 14 and for students in the sixth form teaching is satisfactory overall. In the classes for pupils aged 14-16 the majority of teaching is good. There is some unsatisfactory teaching and about a third of this is with small groups or individuals, which does not reflect the experience of the majority of pupils.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 29 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
2	3	10	11	3	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.

16. There is satisfactory improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection, except in English, where it remains satisfactory. In most subjects where teaching was not satisfactory, such as science, music and art, it has improved well. Even in ICT, where teaching remains unsatisfactory overall, the quality of teaching in discrete lessons is now satisfactory and lessons have improved. However the lower quality of teaching in the key areas of English, mathematics and ICT, which are crucial to pupils' success in many subjects and walks of life, means that pupils could do better if teaching in these subjects improved further. The quality of teaching in music is outstanding and in physical education it is very good and this lifts the experience of school for many pupils.

17. Where teaching is good or better, presentation is lively and tasks are pitched well to help pupils of all abilities to make good progress. This is evident in most of the non-core subjects, such as food technology, personal and social education, and art.
18. In the weakest lessons, planning for what each individual pupil is expected to learn is insufficient. These lessons often do not fill the time available and rely on mundane activities and few resources. Despite this, pupils usually try their hardest, but some lose interest after a while. This lack of planning has a particularly negative effect upon the work of teaching assistants who are unclear at times about what should be taught or is expected as responses from pupils. In many lessons teaching assistants show considerable skill, very good knowledge of the pupils and make an effective impact on how much pupils learn.
19. A key strength is in the quality of behaviour management and pupil relationships. Considering the level of challenging behaviour some pupils have when they arrive at the school, teachers and teaching assistants in all lessons are remarkable in helping them to keep on task and to try hard.
20. There is very good inclusion in many lessons where pupils of all abilities play a full part. In the less effective lessons a lack of high aspirations and challenge means that the most able pupils and those with the most severe difficulties do not achieve as well as they could.
21. The quality of assessment has improved significantly since the last inspection. In the majority of core subjects, with the exception of ICT, teachers carefully record what pupils have learned and know what National Curriculum and P levels pupils have reached in each attainment target. These are used well to monitor performance, but not always to guide lesson planning. This leads to the weaker lessons being pitched to some but not all of the pupils.

The curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good. Enrichment of the curriculum is good. Resources are satisfactory and accommodation is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum offers a rich range of opportunities for pupils and students, which includes the regular involvement in high quality school productions, sports and the arts.
- The specialist provision for pupils with autism and with profound and multiple learning difficulties is good.
- Good extra-curricular provision ensures a wide range of opportunities to suit pupils' different aptitudes.
- Uplands prepares pupils well for life after school, through personal social and health education, work related learning and through the sixth form curriculum.
- Provision for ICT is unsatisfactory, with insufficient resources and limited planning to help pupils develop the full range of skills within other subjects.
- A few pupils have an unbalanced and disjointed timetable, which does not meet their statutory entitlement.
- Accommodation is well maintained outside but poorly presented and maintained inside. The sixth form accommodation is generally good with a useful house to support life skills.

Commentary

22. Improvement since the previous inspection is good. The school has broadened its curriculum. While an appropriate amount of time is spent on literacy and numeracy with form teachers, the rest of the curriculum now follows a mainstream secondary model. The use of specialist subject teachers has helped to raise achievement in several subjects. The Uplands curriculum is innovative and they are experimenting with a two-week timetable to allow more subjects to be studied. There are excellent opportunities to develop performance skills, with

many productions offered in school and the community. The main difficulties with the ICT curriculum are that resources lack technical maintenance and are insufficient to allow group teaching. In addition, some teachers lack the necessary skills to use the technology effectively to support learning in their subjects.

23. At the end of Year 11 the most able pupils sit examinations in science and in mathematics, but there is no accreditation in English, in ICT or for those working at the earlier levels. The school has improved opportunities for accreditation well since the last inspection and is in the process of increasing the accredited subjects offered to pupils and students. Most accreditation comes at the end of the sixth form; this is of good quality and has increased since the previous inspection. There is a weekly school assembly and a daily act of collective worship in form groups. Statutory requirements for collective worship are now met.
24. The school makes good provision for the growing number of pupils and students who have additional special educational needs. Close links with the visual impairment service and the RNIB support pupils with visual impairment well. Mobility programmes are very good and effective in helping pupils gain independence in their mobility. Pupils with ASD spend part of their day in a specialised resource centre (ARC) with skilled teaching. This prepares them very well to learn alongside their peers in their main class for increasing lengths of time. Programmes include an innovative social interaction session three mornings a week in the hall and an innovative reading programme, which is being developed by the ASD teacher. All staff are trained to manage pupils with autism very positively. In addition the Special Education Centre (SEC) provides good appropriate learning opportunities for pupils with PMLD following a sensory curriculum. The provision for pupils with PMLD in ordinary classes is usually good and they are included well. However occasionally staff lack the training to engage these pupils with sufficiently varied learning experiences for any length of time.
25. Extra-curricular provision and enrichment are good. Parents and governors speak highly of school productions involving all the pupils. Although organised transport limits after-school clubs, there are a number of well-attended lunchtime clubs. Music and sport are strengths and the school has a choir and pupils play in sports teams against other schools. Facilities at a local mainstream secondary school are used for sports to compensate for the lack of a sports hall.
26. The school promotes pupils' personal, social and health education and citizenship well. This happens throughout the day, for example at lunchtime, with well-supported eating programmes and break times. All pupils have careers education. While only the more able pupils have work experience outside school, there is a mini-enterprise coffee shop run by students in school. Since the last inspection the sixth-form curriculum has improved and is now good. The school has a house off-site where groups of pupils spend one day each week practising life-skills. This is very effective. Other pupils link to local colleges, for basic vocational courses, for example in ICT and in horticulture.
27. The school has a flexible approach to the curriculum, adapting it to meet the varying needs of the pupils well. Within classes, subject teachers typically have pupils on different programmes at the same time. Some pupils have their own timetable with individual support and many need a range of therapies, which largely take place outside the classroom. Pupils coming and going to therapy, the special units or sports and swimming frequently interrupt lessons, and therefore a few pupils get a very disjointed experience of some subjects. There is a small number of pupils who miss whole subjects such as science or music and this is unsatisfactory.
28. Accommodation is unsatisfactory overall. This will be addressed when the new school opens. The sixth form has a more recent purpose-built unit, which supports their different curriculum well. They also have the use of a house called 'Villa' which enables them to develop good practical living skills. There are many shortcomings, particularly a lack of specialist rooms for science, design and technology, ICT, or art. Apart from ICT and much of design and technology, other subjects overcome the difficulties as well as they can, but it does present a barrier to helping pupils achieve their best. The lack of a library directly affects the quality of

reading, as pupils do not have ready access to a wide range of books. The outside spaces are attractive and well developed but the general presentation of the inside of the school is cluttered and maintained at a basic level. There have been considerable difficulties with securing caretaking and maintenance, to keep the inside of the school looking smart, although some very good external work and basic maintenance are carried out regularly. The presentation of the inside environment is not of a sufficiently high quality for pupils who still have two years to wait before moving into the new school.

Care, guidance and support

The school ensures pupils' care, welfare, health and safety very well. It provides them with very good support and guidance and involves them well in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The care given to pupils ensures they feel secure and can do their best.
- Pupils have very good access to well-informed support, advice and guidance.
- Pupils have good and trusting relationships with staff.
- Although the school council meets, this is not frequently enough to make the views of the pupils sufficiently heard.

Commentary

29. The formal policies and practices relating to health and safety and child protection are well considered and properly carried out. As well as this, teachers and other staff know the pupils very well and recognise their needs. They act quickly if a pupil is unhappy and are particularly careful to make sure new arrivals are helped to settle in. Parents consider that the transition and induction arrangements are a major strength of the school. Pupils and students told inspectors how happy they were in the school and that they were expected to work hard and do their best. The very good care given to pupils is a continuous improvement since the last inspection.
30. Pupils are very well supported by the good relationships that exist. Pupils and students feel that staff treat them fairly and with respect. They say teachers are accessible and helpful and that their work is assessed so that they know how to improve. Pupils' achievements and personal development are very well monitored and reported upon. Older pupils receive impartial advice both from within school and from outside agencies on further study or career opportunities. The school works closely with Connexions services from pupils' home areas to ensure that the transition to local further education is well planned and effective. The very good support and guidance given to pupils represent a continuous improvement since the previous inspection.
31. The school considers pupils' views, mostly through the pupil council, on a number of topical issues. Pupils approve of this and feel they are valued and listened to and that their views are welcomed. However, the school has identified the need to meet with the council more frequently, in addition to forming class councils in order to make pupil consultation more effective.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very pleased with the school.
- End-of-term reports are of a high quality.
- Educational links with colleges serve to enhance the curriculum.
- The transfer arrangements of pupils into the school and out into colleges are good.

Commentary

32. Parents are very satisfied with the work of the school. They feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions, problems or complaints. The school, to the satisfaction of parents, deals with any such concerns swiftly and effectively.
33. The information provided for parents is good overall. There is a comprehensive school prospectus and an annual report from the governors, both of which meet legal requirements. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The Home-School books are very much appreciated by parents and give opportunities for regular dialogue with the teaching staff. The end-of-term reports received by parents give clear indications as to pupil progress and the targets set for improvement. Parents' views are also sought through the school self-evaluation process and included in the school improvement planning.
34. Almost half the students and a few pupils spend part of their week at local colleges and one school. There is a close liaison with a college ICT department, where students are able to use their facilities. An agricultural college organises courses in floristry and animal husbandry as well as environmental studies. There are a number of staff links with Swindon College for the purposes of a successful transition for Uplands students into their next stage of education. These college links serve to enhance the curriculum and provide opportunities for students to practise their life skills in another environment. This is significantly helping their personal and social development. Parents of pupils transferring from the primary phase of education into Uplands speak of the smooth process that takes place and how quickly staff get to know their child and their needs and capabilities so as to provide as well as possible for them. The school has identified in its improvement plan the need to further develop links and outreach opportunities with mainstream schools to benefit pupils and staff alike.
35. Pupils benefit from trips they make into both the local and wider community and these include residential visits here and abroad. Local businesses take part in school improvement plans by providing buildings for storage and enhancing the fabric of the school and its gardens. There are good links with the local post office and church and pupils enjoy close connections with speech therapists and a number of other support services. Visitors to the school include the police and fire services, storytellers and theatre groups. Parents say these community activities are helping their child become mature and independent and, as a result, they are growing in confidence and improving their social and communication skills.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are satisfactory. Leadership is satisfactory with several good features. Governance and day-to-day management are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher and deputy headteacher have a good strength of purpose and vision to raise standards; they are deeply committed to the school.
- There is a strong commitment to equal opportunities, inclusion and concern for individuals.
- Very good systems are in place to monitor how well pupils achieve.
- Induction arrangements and professional development arrangements are good.

- Good financial management gives the school scope to innovate and respond to changes.
- Monitoring and evaluation, particularly of teaching, lack rigour and impact in key areas.
- Curriculum and subject managers have an enhanced role, but it is underdeveloped in driving further improvement in key subjects.
- The highly committed governors oversee all areas of school development and manage finance well but do not comply with some statutory duties.

Commentary

36. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are deeply committed to the school and the needs of individual pupils and students. They are very caring and have high expectations of behaviour. Staff, governors and parents attest to their high level of care and concern. This attention to the different needs of each pupil or student has resulted in a strong focus on equal opportunities and inclusion. This is evident in the inclusion arrangements for pupils with ASD and PMLD who spend part of their week in their main classroom, supported through the special centres. The administrative officer plays a significant role in supporting managers and governors and in the smooth running of the school.
37. Since the last inspection, very good systems to monitor pupils' achievement across the curriculum and in their personal development have been introduced and efficient performance management arrangements are in place. However, despite the good focus on monitoring achievement and performance management, this is not fully effective in securing strong improvement in key areas, especially teaching in the core subjects of English, mathematics and ICT. In practice, during the well-planned system of lesson observations, the quality of teaching tends to be overestimated and follow-through lacks rigour. This has resulted in satisfactory and unsatisfactory practice not being fully recognised. The headteacher and deputy headteacher are now in a position to link these observations of teaching with the analysis of pupil performance in each subject to improve teaching further.
38. The role of curriculum leaders and subject co-ordinators is generally strong with regard to subject development, and all subjects have improved since the last inspection, some, such as science, very well. However their, role in analysing the quality of teaching and learning in terms of overall subject performance is not well developed. For this reason they cannot drive sufficient improvement in some subjects. The elements of presentation of the school, which are within the control of the leadership, such as display and general tidiness, lack attention and do not set a tone of suitably high aspirations for pupils or staff.
39. The governing body is generally effective and very supportive. They have good insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the school, but lack knowledge of some of the finer points of the school's performance and of their responsibilities. Governors are involved and dedicated to the wellbeing of the school; they challenge and support the senior management team and carry out their role as 'critical friend' in a generally satisfactory manner. The governors recognise that they do not fulfil some statutory duties for reporting requirements to parents, which are now being addressed. Governors have also failed to ensure that all pupils have full access to the whole curriculum.
40. The school provides a very strong programme of professional development. Teachers and teaching assistants have good opportunities for training in key areas such as behaviour management and the management of pupils with autism. Induction arrangements are good. New staff, either permanent or temporary, are well supported by senior staff in a variety of ways.
41. Financial management is good. The governing body has very effective systems in place which ensure efficient control of expenditure and that the school can respond to changing needs and

be innovative. Best value principles are always applied and acted upon. As at the time of the last inspection, value for money is satisfactory.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004.

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	934,731	Balance from previous year	33,412
Total expenditure	904,319	Balance carried forward to the next year*	83,818
Expenditure per pupil	12,736		

**The carry forward contains a sum for an additional month, which is committed but not paid or accounted while the system changes.*

42. The aids to raising achievement in the school are primarily the vision and commitment of the whole staff and, particularly, senior management to continue improving and helping pupils and students to do their best. The practical systems for achieving this are already in place with the very good systems to monitor pupil and staff performance. There is little doubt that school leaders have the capacity to address the issues from this inspection well.
43. The barriers to raising achievement have contributed towards the satisfactory, rather than good, overall quality of education. The current unsatisfactory accommodation is one clear factor. The senior team, as part of a small teaching force, have also had to spend very large amounts of time involved with various bidders and the final design team for the new school. In addition there have been some serious staffing issues, long-term illness, problems securing maintenance and caretaking and several changes of co-ordinator in some subjects, including English and art. Many of these barriers are ongoing.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

What is the effectiveness of work related learning?

The effectiveness of work related learning (WRL) is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The range of experiences and opportunities is being developed well from Year 9 onwards.
- Links with the community are good and provide opportunities for pupils and students to undertake WRL.
- The approach to enterprise is good.
- The WRL programme is well managed.

Commentary

44. Pupils are prepared throughout their time at Uplands for the world of work. They have opportunities, often as part of the PSHE and citizenship programme, to learn about what people do and the skills they need. Within WRL the community is used well; for example visits to local shops and seeing people at work. Older pupils and students are introduced to the Connexions service and they are aware of the need to consider the world of work and college. Pupils and students also have opportunities to gain a valuable insight into the world of work through, for example, the Transition Challenge.

45. Students in Years 12 to 14 are introduced to work experience; they gain confidence and some independence and responsibility. Strong links have been forged with some local employers and careful planning ensures that work placements are appropriate. One student, through his successful work experience placement at McDonalds, now works there formally on Saturdays and has featured in the company's house magazine. Students are well supported and guided and the programmes are suitably varied according to the abilities of the students. This includes helping teachers manage registers in school, looking after the sensory garden and undertaking a successful work placement.
46. The school has fully adopted the principles of enterprise education. As part of a mini-enterprise, students make sausage rolls and cakes to sell at a coffee shop they run in the sixth form centre, and at the life skills house they manage and maintain a garden which produces vegetables and plants to sell.
47. The management of WRL is good. New structures are planned to take the subject forward and there is a wide range of contacts and links in schools and colleges on which to build.

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

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective use of the picture exchange communication system (PECS) ensures good achievement, good understanding and extends communication skills for pupils and students with ASD.
- There is a lack of reading by pupils within lessons, and there is no easy access to books around the school.
- There is no accreditation in English for pupils aged 16.
- The new innovative accreditation for Post-16 students is well suited to their needs.
- ICT is not used to promote pupils' and students' writing skills.
- There is good speech and language support which promotes communication throughout the school.

Commentary

48. The satisfactory achievement and progress of all pupils and students, including pupils with profound and multiple difficulties (PMLD) and pupils for whom English is a second language, have been maintained since the last inspection. For those pupils and students with ASD achievement and progress have improved and are now good. Since September 2004 there have been innovative and very relevant accreditations introduced for students in the sixth form. These courses promise to be able to raise achievement considerably over time. There is still no accreditation for pupils aged 14 to 16, which prevents recognition of achievement, especially by the higher achieving pupils; however the subject leader recognises this and plans are in place to introduce accreditation next year.
49. Speaking and listening are good throughout the school, with all pupils and students very anxious to engage visitors in conversation and with lively and informative discussions taking place within lessons. In the majority of lessons inspected, pupils and students listened attentively to staff; even pupils and students with speech and language difficulties were eager to express their views and opinions verbally. In the ARC, during a literacy session, PECS was used skilfully by staff so that pupils could begin to make their needs known. In addition, across the school there is good speech and language support, with a resident trained assistant who helps pupils and students in need of assistance to communicate by learning 'sign-a-long' vocabulary and PECs so that their ability to communicate is increased. This support is evident in classrooms with the assistant working with teaching staff and on an individual or small group approach.
50. Achievement in reading remains satisfactory, and has not improved since the last inspection for various reasons. All pupils and students have reading books; however, high attaining pupils and students do not always understand what they are reading, and they struggle with text which is too difficult for their capabilities. There is a lack of interesting and colourful books on display throughout the school and, although there is a library area, the reading and fictional books are locked away in a cupboard not easily accessible to pupils. There is, however, more opportunity in the Post-16 unit for students to access reading material. In lessons pupils were given no opportunity to read anything out loud to the class; this reading was entirely done by teaching and support staff even in the best lessons. During a literacy

session in ARC all pupils were guided well with their reading tasks by the use of individual key-word cards and skilful teaching. A multi-sensory approach is used in the SEC in which pupils and students with PMLD have the opportunity to look, touch, taste and smell real objects and artefacts to extend their literacy skills. While achievement and progress are good within the SEC, there is not always that level of attention and progress when they are taught within the main part of the school in some classes.

51. Writing achievement across the school is satisfactory but ICT is insufficiently used to interest and support pupils and students in doing longer pieces of writing. Pupils are often asked to fill in blanks or write short single sentences to complete work sheets and this gives less opportunity for self-expression and creative writing for the higher achieving pupil or student.
52. With the exception of the one good lesson seen during the week of the inspection, teaching and learning within lessons inspected were satisfactory. Although elements of the key stage 3 literacy strategy had been incorporated into most lessons the majority of lessons were lacking in enthusiasm and sparkle. In addition, time management and lack of materials affected the overall success of some sessions. Despite all this, pupils' and teachers' relationships were good within class, which led to generally good and very good behaviour. There are some good procedures for assessment so that clear appropriate targets have been developed for the pupils and students.
53. Due to recent staffing difficulties, the subject co-ordinator for pupils aged 11 to 16 is also the deputy headteacher who, in addition, manages assessment and science within the school. At present she is also monitoring and evaluating the planning and teaching of all staff. This is a heavy workload for one person and is having a detrimental affect on English, which needs more focused attention. For this reason most teachers teaching English lack the guidance and support to enable them to produce sufficient enthusiasm and pace for the subject.
54. Improvement since the last inspection has been satisfactory. The subject does contribute well to pupils' and students' social and cultural development, with regular theatre and cinema visits and annual theatrical productions by the school, the most recent being 'Harry Potter' with staff and pupils and students taking part.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

55. Literacy is developed well in some subjects but not all. Key words are identified in lesson planning but are not always brought to the attention of the pupils and students during the course of the lesson. However, there are exceptions to this within mathematics, art, physical education and music lessons, as well as the ARC, where key words are used to emphasis targets and increase confidence. For example, during a Year 9 art lesson pupils were well supported to encourage language development through a very relaxed conversation whilst drawing and painting pictures of family members.

Modern foreign language

56. All pupils are disapplied from learning a modern foreign language. Each year pupils and students take part in a special day to experience the culture of different countries. During a Spanish day, for example, typical Spanish food was prepared, cooked and eaten, dancing took place and a group re-enacted 'Carmen'. Spanish words were used and the work of Picasso and Miró were studied.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good for pupils aged 14 to 16 where most of them reach or exceed their academic targets. It is satisfactory for pupils aged 11 to 14 and for students post sixteen.
- The National Numeracy Strategy is not being implemented by all teachers and the quality of lessons, especially in Years 7, 8 and 9, suffers accordingly.
- There is a strong focus on number but not enough on problem-solving or on helping pupils to say how they reached their answers.
- Numeracy is appropriately reinforced in other subjects such as PE, science and ICT.

Commentary

57. Achievement in mathematics for pupils aged 11 to 14 is just satisfactory. By the age of 16, however, achievement is good; most pupils reach their predicted levels by the end of year 11 and several higher attaining pupils gain entry-level certificates at GCSE. Pupils and students make sound gains in everyday practical mathematics, with number reinforced in maths lessons right through the school. Pupils and students of all ages use real money and make choices about their purchases. More able pupils can work out if they have enough money to buy tuck and they understand simple fractions. Older pupils show good progress and many can tell the time to the hour and half hour for example. Pupils with the most severe difficulties make satisfactory progress in activities such as matching colours and shapes. While pupils in the post-16 classes can solve simple problems, they have difficulty describing how they worked out their answers.
58. The quality of teaching is satisfactory for pupils aged 11 to 14 and for students post sixteen. It is good for students aged 14 to 16. Although pupils are keen to learn and the topics are well chosen, many lessons lack structure, there is insufficient variety of activities, and many pupils are taught in small groups by teaching assistants for the whole lesson. The teaching assistants are usually skilled at helping pupils but, too often, their instructions lack the detail necessary to take learning forward at a faster pace. Older pupils, especially in Year 11, achieve well because of the good mix of whole class teaching with some individual support. Computer programmes are used well to reinforce their learning. One of the strengths is the way mathematics lessons reinforce literacy across the curriculum, especially in speaking and listening and developing specialist vocabulary.
59. Leadership and management of mathematics are satisfactory. Provision has improved since the previous inspection with a new scheme of work suited to special schools, and better resources. Mathematics is taught by all form tutors and they have had training in the National Numeracy Strategy. They get together to check the levels they are giving pupils, and this ensures consistency. However, despite some monitoring of teaching, not all teachers are implementing the three part lesson, which has been proven to be successful in raising standards. More rigorous implementation of this strategy would be needed to raise the quality of lessons in Years 7, 8 and 9 and to ensure a wider range of mathematical experiences.

Mathematics across the curriculum

60. There were several examples seen during the inspection where numeracy skills were practised appropriately in other lessons. One good example was in a Year 8 ICT lesson where pupils were programming a device to make it move different distances and directions. In geography, pupils have produced graphs to compare the climate in two contrasting places. Physical education provides the opportunity for pupils to measure their pulses, and, in science and design and technology, pupils measure quantities and read instruments. Pupils from the post-

16 classes get practical experience of handling quantities and money at the in-school coffee shop.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main Strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils aged 11 to 16 years achieve well in science and some gain entry-level GCSEs.
- The quality of teaching is at least good, with a wide variety of activities to enliven learning.
- The curriculum is rich and broad and very well adapted to pupils' different needs.
- Leadership and management, assessment and planning in science are very good.
- Specialist teaching throughout the school has ensured very good improvement.
- There is no specialist science laboratory, which is unsatisfactory, although the school overcomes this well.
- A few pupils with the most profound difficulties do not receive their entitlement to science.

Commentary

61. Only one lesson of science was taught during the inspection and this demonstrated that pupils achieve well. A scrutiny of pupils' work also shows good progress and good achievement in a wide range of topics. Pupils in all age groups progress by an average of one P scale level per year, which is good. Those with the highest ability soon learn to contribute to discussion and learn how to carry out investigations into healthy living, how the body works and working with magnets. Pupils with the most profound and complex learning difficulties also make progress and the high quality of the work recorded for them shows that their achievement is also good. One boy, for example, was able to respond differently to magnets, different foods and sounds. By the time they reach 16 years most pupils understand what happens during puberty, for example, can name the different parts of a plant and can distinguish between living and non-living things. A few pupils gain their entry-level GCSE certificates in science each year, which is a significant achievement.
62. The quality of teaching is at least good. The scrutiny of work shows that learning is assessed very thoroughly and teaching is planned well to build understanding from lesson to lesson. The specialist teacher introduces topics through a wide range of interesting activities to bring lessons alive for the pupils. For example, when learning about joints of the body, pupils wore arm splints to help them understand how hard it would be to manage without them. In the one lesson observed pupils were successfully helped, through skilled individual and whole group teaching, to build a simple electrical circuit and work out what makes a light brighter or dimmer. Teaching assistants contributed significantly to the good learning taking place in this lesson. Pupils show considerable maturity, listen well and keep on trying, because teaching is patient and the relationships and encouragement they experience build confidence.
63. Leadership and management of the subject are very good. The schemes of work are very well planned to provide a suitable and increasingly challenging set of scientific experiences for the pupils. The specialist co-ordinator is now seeking to introduce the 'Transition Challenge' accreditation so that all pupils will gain recognition for their achievements in the subject. Reports to parents are regular and give good detail on what pupils have learned. Accommodation remains unsatisfactory and limits the opportunities for pupils, especially in investigating chemical reactions. The co-ordinator has adapted the curriculum to overcome these difficulties and is now seeking links with a secondary school laboratory. A few of the pupils with the most severe and profound learning difficulties miss science this year for other things, such as swimming. This is unsatisfactory and does not fulfil statutory requirements. There has been considerable improvement since the last inspection in almost every aspect of science.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology is **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement remains unsatisfactory, although there have been several improvements since the last inspection.
- There is limited evidence of ICT being used effectively across the curriculum with the exception of music.
- Teaching in discrete lessons is satisfactory and sometimes good, but the level of staff skills in ordinary subjects is unsatisfactory.
- Assessment to help plan what pupils should learn next is unsatisfactory.
- There is no accreditation to show what pupils achieve at the end of Year 11.

Commentary

64. Pupils' achievement is unsatisfactory throughout the school, although there are more skills being learned than during the last inspection. By the time they reach the age of 13 pupils can, for example, predict how many paces a robot needs to travel and make it change direction and move into a pretend garage. By the age of 14 the more able pupils have used video cameras and tape recorders, and some others can do these things with verbal prompts. Pupils in this age group can use a mouse and drag and drop items on the screen. By the age of 16 pupils can use a telephone, identify switches in everyday life and create graphs among other things. Students aged 16 to 18 years gain more skills at college, where they learn to word process, changing font size and printing their work. There is little evidence of consistent development of these skills, although pupils and students do have targets. Some pupils with the most severe difficulties begin to understand cause and effect through the use of a touch screen and with different switches. Where pupils have difficulty with fine motor skills and writing, only one example was seen during the inspection of a pupil using a computer programme to overcome this. Currently there is no accreditation for pupils to demonstrate their ICT skills at the end of Year 11. In the post-16 classes, more able pupils attend a basic skills course at college where they learn or reinforce their skills.
65. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in the discrete lessons, but not in other subjects and general classrooms. The good teaching is well planned, based upon a good scheme of work and captures pupils' attention, being sensitive to pupils' different needs. Teaching in these lessons is calm and confident, helping to motivate pupils well. Where teaching in the sensory rooms is done systematically and well, pupils with the most severe difficulties show good progress in controlling their environment and in scanning. Where teaching is weak, it is because the technology is unreliable and the part time technician is not always available to support the teacher. Teaching in the separate lessons for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties is also satisfactory. Teaching assistants who run substantial parts of lessons show skilled approaches to some pupils, but are lacking in all the skills necessary for helping pupils to use switches, communication aids and specialist software. Assessment is unsatisfactory and, too often, pupils' work samples give no indication of how much help they required or what the next step in their learning should be.
66. Leadership of ICT is satisfactory. There has been some improvement since the last inspection because there are now discrete lessons for all classes, an improved scheme of work and an improved range of equipment and software. However, the new resources do not support effective group work and there is no ICT suite. In the ICT lessons there is generally only one computer for the group. One classroom has an interactive whiteboard but the technology is not reliable and there is no expertise on site. The scheme of work now covers most areas of ICT except modelling, which is not well developed. This is not balanced by well-planned teaching of ICT in other lessons. Improved resources include networked computers with Internet access and there is a good range of specialist software that is

appropriate to the pupils' needs. There are two sensory rooms and a range of access devices so that pupils with fine motor difficulties can use the computers and a range of everyday equipment. The co-ordinator has a good scheme of work, which involves other forms of technology, but resources restrict what can be learned. Numeracy is well supported in ICT lessons with, for example, pupils practising directions and counting out distances when they programme a roaming device.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

67. ICT across the curriculum is still in its infancy. The new co-ordinator has established where ICT is being taught, but there has not been any subject-based training to develop where it could be exploited, nor is it incorporated in all teachers' planning. There are a number of subject areas where modelling, for example, could be taught and areas in geography and science, where a greater use of ICT could bring the subject alive. Pupils' experience of ICT across the curriculum is not assessed to show their progress. There are exceptions to this such as is music, where a sound beam is used imaginatively with pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Although there has been some staff training, there has been none that is centred around different subjects of the curriculum. The scheme of work for ICT is directed at discrete ICT lessons. Several subjects such as mathematics do use computer software to engage pupils or reinforce lessons.

HUMANITIES

68. **Geography** and **history** were sampled and no overall judgements were made. No geography or history lessons took place during the inspection. One religious education lesson was observed. The co-ordinators for all three subjects were interviewed and pupils' work was scrutinized.
69. Geography and history have improved since the last inspection, when they were unsatisfactory. Planning indicates that pupils now receive their entitlement in Years 7, 8 and 9 and carry on studying geography and history into Years 10 and 11. Both subjects are taught by a subject specialist as part of the two-week timetable for one term each in each year. The geography curriculum includes local studies and work on natural features, with some human geography. The quality of the planning is satisfactory, with experiences suitable for a range of ability. Planning for practical work in geography however, is limited, and opportunities are sometimes missed to use the Internet or other ICT to bring the subject alive. Neither geography nor history lessons lead to any examination, but this is recognised by the school and accreditation will be available from September 2005. Records show that a good variety of suitable history topics is covered and these are chosen to suit a wide range of ability; for example, pupils have planted bulbs to see changes over time, and can recognise people from different generations. They have learned about life in ancient Greece and Rome and been introduced to myths and legends. Photographic records show that pupils enjoy role-play, for example dressing in chain mail when they study the battle of Hastings.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

Provision in religious education is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is a new subject leader who is working hard to develop the subject.
- There are insufficient resources within the school to support learning in religious education.
- The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' and students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- There is a good emphasis upon pupils' learning about major faiths.

Commentary

70. Lessons are based suitably for pupils up to Year 11 on the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Much of their learning is associated with the celebrations and festivals of the Christian faith and other world religions. During the week of the inspection it was only possible to inspect one lesson, for Year 10 pupils, when the feast of Ramadan was explained. Unfortunately, this was not successful in engaging the pupils; for instance, pupils did not receive enough help through signing and the amount of visual and technological aids to support learning, particularly for the PMLD pupil, was unsatisfactory and so they could not follow the lesson sufficiently well. In addition, the behaviour management of the more challenging pupils was weak. Religious education for students in the sixth form is taught through their Asdan module. Scrutiny of work indicates that teaching and achievement are satisfactory overall.
71. The subject is taught to pupils aged 11 to 16 by the subject leader, who has only been recently appointed to the role since the summer term. There are satisfactory assessment procedures in place, using 'P' levelling for pupils to record their achievement. However, there is little evidence of written work, owing to the fact that the subject is mainly taught through role play. Resources are unsatisfactory and the subject leader recognises the need to improve and develop these. The subject has maintained its satisfactory provision since the last inspection.

TECHNOLOGY

72. Provision in **design and technology** was sampled. Only two lessons of design and technology were observed - both food technology. As a result, there is insufficient evidence to judge the overall quality of the subject.
73. Scrutiny of the subject policy, scheme of work and teacher's planning suggests that work with resistant materials is underdeveloped, but pupils have good opportunities to work within food technology, despite the lack of an appropriate teaching area. The lessons observed were of good quality and both were concerned with the preparation of dishes which would be eaten in school. The choice of these dishes, Portuguese omelette and fruit salad indicates the high expectations teachers have of the pupils within food technology. Good teaching ensured that the quality of the finished product was good and, throughout both lessons, there was a strong and appropriate focus on health and hygiene issues. Resources and accommodation for both aspects of the subject are unsatisfactory.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

74. **Art** was sampled. Only one lesson was taught during the inspection, work was scrutinized and the deputy headteacher was interviewed in the absence of an art co-ordinator. There have been four different subject co-ordinators in the last four years for art. The subject is now taught by a temporary teacher while the current co-ordinator is on long term sick leave. There have been several improvements since the last inspection, including developing schemes of work, more detailed assessment, better timetabling and good links with other schools. The current quality of teaching is good; activities are interesting and ensure that pupils do make at least steady and often good progress in their skills. The main weakness of the overall good lesson observed was that planning was insufficient to fill the two hours allocated, leaving pupils with too little to do towards the end. The curriculum provides a variety of experiences, including the use of digital cameras, access to different media and techniques and successful entry to competitions, where one pupil came second. During some terms a few pupils with the most severe difficulties are not able to take art due to timetable difficulties: this is not satisfactory. Without a co-ordinator and with no specialist art room, the

breadth and quality of the curriculum remains satisfactory rather than good. The subject contributes well to pupils' literacy skills.

Music

Provision in music is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Music is a major strength of the school's provision, helping pupils in many ways.
- Pupils gain considerable musical understanding and performance skills.
- Teaching is of the very highest quality, leading to some excellent learning by pupils.
- The curriculum offers some excellent opportunities for pupils to experience music.
- Leadership and management of the subject are very good.

Commentary

75. Pupils achieve very well. Pupils of all ages experience a whole range of musical opportunities, enabling them to develop very good skills in keeping a rhythm, singing in tune, recognising musical notation through signs and symbols and composing their own pieces. They have a wide repertoire of songs, which the majority know well and sing with great confidence. This holds true for pupils of differing abilities, who are valued for their different contributions to performances. The choir practice demonstrated how a very wide mix of pupils sing together very well as they prepare to perform at local businesses such as ASDA, where they have been invited back this year. Students in the sixth form are working on the musical 'Miss Saigon' as part of their entry-level certificate which they are expected to achieve well.
76. The quality of teaching is excellent. The teacher, who is a music specialist, has excellent knowledge of her subject and excellent knowledge of the special educational needs of the pupils at Uplands School. This results in some of the best pupil performance skills observed in special schools. Teaching, based upon very detailed assessment of what each pupil has learned in the last lesson, is highly sensitive to individual pupils' learning skills, which helps them make unexpected progress. For example, one pupil with autism and severe communication difficulties, transferred skills learned in 'interactive music' to a whole class music lesson, using sound and movement, in order to help himself pinpoint where to come in. This was remarkable. In another lesson the teacher's expert understanding of how to wait enabled her pupil with profound learning difficulties to gradually respond to a sound beam, making music and showing enormous effort and pleasure in doing so. The teacher's enthusiasm, excellent use of voice and carefully constructed learning opportunities means that lessons are skilfully managed and successful in helping pupils sing and use percussion instruments.
77. The leadership of the subject is very good. The curriculum is written using several schemes adapted to suit pupils as their needs change. The co-ordinator undertakes very regular professional development, so that additional skills are being brought regularly into the school.
78. Music is a major contributor to the quality of the school. It brings pupils and staff together in whole school performances such as Music of the Night' 'Harry Potter' and 'The Russian Shoemaker'. Pupils are involved in events as diverse as brass concerts, the Japanese festival run by the Swindon music centre at the Oasis, and an 'interactive' performance by CCQ, a rap group from Bristol. Through these events pupils grow in confidence, which enables them to succeed in other areas of their learning and development. Improvement since the last inspection is very good in all elements.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Provision for physical education (PE) is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- PE contributes substantially to the overall development of the pupils.
- The quality of teaching and pupils' achievement is very good in PE.
- The PE curriculum offers a very wide range of opportunities to interest pupils.
- Most activities successfully include pupils with a wide range of abilities and aptitudes.

Commentary

79. Pupils achieve very well. In all age groups, pupils learn how to pass a ball in many different ways; for example, with a hockey stick, at chest height and with their feet. They can do bounce passes and develop early dribbling skills very well. Pupils play in team games such as football, co-operating well with each other and developing some high-quality skills, such as shooting accurately in basket-ball and hockey. The way pupils play together represents a significant development of their skills in listening to instructions and operating as a group, especially for those with ASD. Students aged 16 to 19 years develop good quality leisure-based skills such as swimming, weight training and dance. Almost all pupils gain swimming certificates and this year some pupils aged 15 are working towards entry level GCSEs, which they are predicted to achieve. The subject plays a major part in helping pupils to remain fit and develop their confidence and therefore succeed more easily in the wider curriculum.
80. The quality of teaching in physical education is very good. Lessons are well planned and organised, fast paced, challenging and very enjoyable. Pupils respond by being fully involved and doing their best. In one lesson pupils of different ages and abilities played a successful game of basketball. With suitable support, those of limited physical ability, including those in wheelchairs could join in and those with the highest level of skill were able to work at their own pace to extend those skills. Specialist coaching is brought in regularly from Swindon Town Football Club, for hockey, for Boccia, for indoor curling and at the local pool for swimming. This ensures that pupils receive the best teaching in different aspects of the subject. This leads to wider participation in local teams and the school football team has played other local schools.
81. Leadership of the subject is very good. The co-ordinator seeks to provide a very wide range of experiences, which include links with local schools and colleges, physiotherapy and hydrotherapy for those with the most severe physical difficulties, horse riding and the Western County Youth Games. Some pupils also attend the RNIB access day and take part in rock climbing, snooker, fencing and ice-skating. Resources are good and ensure that all pupils make some form of progress; for example, a new trampoline is keenly used by almost all pupils. There is a well-established mobility programme, which helps pupils with severe physical or visual disability to gradually learn to stand, move around and for some who cannot yet do so, to walk. Improvement since the last inspection is good, with many more elements in place, although schemes of work are not quite finalised.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils and students achieve well in understanding and responding positively to some challenging and sensitive topics.
- Teaching is good and helps pupils and students understand important personal issues and their place in the wider community.

- The subject is well led.

Commentary

82. Pupils and students make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of important areas of learning. They achieve well in the study of challenging and diverse topics such as relationships, health and sex. Good teaching uses these topics to promote discussion and enhance learning and higher attaining pupils and students demonstrate mature insights into some of the issues. Older pupils and students study the subject as part of their ASDAN programme. Their work is of good quality and indicates both the good teaching they receive and their mature attitudes to the subject.
83. Good practical work is a feature of many PHSE and Citizenship lessons. For example, a Year 9 class visited a local supermarket to purchase ingredients for cooking and followed this with a snack in the supermarket café. They showed good awareness of how to behave in public, and good teaching insisted that they ordered and paid for their snack individually. A lesson in the FEC with PMLD students linked PSHE and citizenship with the social and cultural development of pupils. As part of their work on Diwali the students explored the smells, tastes and textures of Indian foods and considered items used and valued within the Hindu religion. Students in the FEC have access to a small house in the town centre with they use to practise life skills in a realistic situation. They shop, cook and serve lunch and good teaching ensures the students have good understanding of hygiene and diet and issues such as consumer knowledge.
84. Because the teaching is good, sensitive and informed, the pupils and students show interest and behave maturely when discussing issues such as sex, relationships and health related topics. The teaching is confident and enjoys positive but respectful relationships with the pupils and students.
85. The subject is well led by two staff who work well together. The effective PHSE and citizenship curriculum contributes substantially to the main work of the school, in helping pupils and students to become more mature, and to be able to learn and understand their responsibilities in the wider world. Citizenship is incorporated successfully and work-related learning, for example, provides practical opportunities for pupils and students to contribute as citizens within local communities. All teachers support the subject when appropriate both in lessons and outside of school and this contributes to its effectiveness. The subject has maintained its high standards since the last inspection and has a continuing high profile in the school.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN THE SIXTH FORM

Work in the subjects and courses of the **sixth form** was sampled and contributed to the overall picture of teaching and learning in the school. These are reported under the relevant subject headings for the main school. Seven lessons were observed altogether. Two in English, two in mathematics one in ICT, one life skills lesson and one personal and social education lesson. Students' records and samples of work were scrutinized.

The sixth form post-16 provision is **satisfactory** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum provided for the pupils is distinctive from the main school and is appropriate to their needs.
- The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall.
- The links with local colleges are good and provide some well-organised courses for students to enjoy.

- Pupils grow in maturity and behave with increasing responsibility through the help and guidance they are given.
- Additional provision for students with ASD and PMLD is appropriate in helping them mature.
- The courses offered contribute to success in externally accredited certification.

Commentary

86. The sixth form caters for students aged 16 to 19 years with a wide range of learning difficulties. Students of all abilities achieve to a satisfactory level or better. The curriculum is divided for some of the week so that pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties receive a sensory curriculum based upon their own learning needs. This enables them to learn in a way which is more meaningful to them. They show increasing ability to recognise people and objects, control events around them through sign, symbol and switches and join in with events. Achievement in the core subjects of English and mathematics is satisfactory overall and pupils learn to do practical everyday things, which need literacy and numeracy skills such as ordering Christmas gifts, costing their purchases and filling the form in correctly. These students hold discussions on topics that interest them. In one food hygiene lesson they showed a good understanding of why they should wash their hands and how to avoid contamination. In all of their subjects students work towards a general accredited course through the ASDAN scheme and they all achieved an award in home management in 2003.
87. The quality of teaching is generally satisfactory and sometimes good. The quality of relationships and general good behaviour in lessons leads to a well-ordered and very good-natured atmosphere. The reasons that lessons in the basic skills are satisfactory rather than good is because lesson planning does not use the time available imaginatively, and some students spend too much time with too little to do. In addition the lessons do not plan effectively for the different rates of learning from each student. The information and skills taught are learned well and so students show a good basic level of understanding in each area. However the most able, in English, for example, are not sufficiently challenged to do even better. For the students with PMLD teaching assistants do not always have sufficiently clear guidance to know what is expected from pupils in each activity and learning is slow as a result. Teaching is good in the more practical activities during life skills courses and in personal and health education, and students make good progress in these subjects.
88. The quality of leadership of the sixth form is good. The new co-ordinator has taken an imaginative approach to designing the curriculum and has worked tirelessly to involve local colleges where the quality of joint courses is high. The new life skills house (VILLA) and business enterprises all contribute to the growing maturity of students. Students run a coffee shop, for example, and make and sell cakes and sausage rolls. Assessment is well organised and staff know well where pupils have reached, but it is not yet used to full effect when planning the next lesson. The overview of the quality of teaching and learning is not yet effective in raising standards. Since September 2004 there have been new developments in innovative and very relevant accreditation introduced in the sixth form by the enthusiastic head of the post 16 unit. These courses promise to raise achievement considerably over time.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

The leadership of the headteacher		4
The leadership of other key staff	4	4
The effectiveness of management	4	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 against individual targets and not national standards