

INSPECTION REPORT

Claremont School

Westbury-on-Trym

LEA area: Bristol

Unique reference number: 109391

Headteacher: Mr Bob Coburn

Lead inspector: Sarah Mascall

Dates of inspection: 8th – 10th February 2005

Inspection number: 271610

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:	2-11
Gender of pupils:	mixed
Number on roll:	47
School address:	Henleaze Park Westbury-on-Trym Bristol
Postcode:	BS9 4LR
Telephone number:	0117 9247527
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Barry Trahar
Date of previous inspection:	1 st November 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Claremont is a school for boys and girls between the ages of 2 and 11 who have physical and complex learning difficulties. There are 52 pupils on roll, 14 of whom are in the Foundation Stage. When they start school all pupils have levels of attainment well below average and all have, or are in the process of being assessed for, statements of special educational need. Pupils travel in from Bristol and its surrounding area and the majority of pupils are from a white British background. Ten pupils are from a range of ethnic groups and four pupils are from homes where English is not the first language. There are no pupils in public care. A number of pupils are dual registered, that is they attend Claremont and a mainstream school. The school has close links with Henleaze Infant and Junior schools where pupils work together and there are a number of on-going projects. The school is involved in several initiatives including inclusion, leadership development strategy and outreach work to mainstream schools.

The school has undergone a number of changes since the last inspection and has fewer pupils than in 1999. The school is now designated to take 53 pupils with physical impairment and 14 pupils with profound and multiple difficulties. It revised its vision statement in 2000 and this is now – “At Claremont School we value everyone as individuals and work closely with families so that every child can learn and lead a fulfilling life”.

There are only a small number of pupils in Years 1 and 2 (Key Stage 1), all but one of whom are taught in the Foundation Stage classes. Because of the small numbers involved it is not appropriate to make judgments about their achievement and progress. Judgements are made about achievement in the Foundation Stage (Lower School) and for those in the Upper School (Years 3, 4, 5 and 6).

At the time of the inspection there was no deputy headteacher. The two heads of department had taken on these responsibilities as temporary assistant headteachers.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20536	Sarah Mascall	Lead inspector	English, religious education, history, geography
19693	Sally Hall	Lay inspector	
17529	Anthony Finch	Team inspector	Personal, social and health education
29452	Christine Emerson	Team inspector	Foundation Stage, science, music, art and design
14691	Jenny Hall	Team inspector	Mathematics, information and communication technology, design and technology, physical education

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	8
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	10
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	16
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 2	18
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	30

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Claremont is an **outstanding** school. The inspirational leadership of the headteacher has resulted in an exemplary commitment to pupils by all those who work at the school. Pupils make very good and often excellent progress in their learning because teaching is very good and frequently excellent. The school fulfils its aims extremely well and provides excellent value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- An excellent curriculum and exceptional teaching for children in the Foundation Stage enables them to make excellent progress in their learning.
- The headteacher's motivating leadership has ensured that the school continually develops and improves.
- The very high expectations for pupils and the excellent links with other schools are reflected in the exceptional opportunities they have to attend mainstream schools.
- Pupils throughout the school make excellent progress in developing their personal and social skills and their attitudes and behaviour are exemplary.
- The excellent use of communication aids enables all pupils to participate in lessons and make their views known.
- The outstanding relationships between adults and pupils and the excellent support and guidance pupils receive, result in an exceptionally positive and happy atmosphere in school.
- Parents consider the school to be very special because the support and information they receive is excellent.

Since the last inspection in 1999 the school has made very good improvements and has dealt with all the weaknesses identified at that time. The number of support staff is now very good and assessment has been improved considerably. Work for all pupils is challenging and subject co-ordinators are involved in improving their subject areas. Opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills are now excellent and all statutory requirements are met within the curriculum. The school has worked hard to develop further and teaching, learning and the curriculum have all improved.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Foundation Stage	Excellent	Excellent
Year 6	Very good	Excellent

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

Overall pupils make **very good** progress at Claremont. Children in the Foundation Stage make excellent progress in their learning because of excellent planning and teamwork. By the time pupils reach Year 6 they have made very good progress in their achievements. In information and communication technology and personal, social and health education pupils make excellent progress because there are many opportunities for them to develop their skills. Through very good links with the paediatric communication aid service (PCAS) and other professionals, pupils are provided with excellent support to enable them to communicate and as a result they make excellent progress in developing communication skills. In English, mathematics and science pupils make very good progress. Achievements in religious education are good. Pupils' personal development, including their spiritual, social, moral and cultural development is **excellent** because the school places such a great deal of importance on these areas. Pupils clearly enjoy school and their attitudes and behaviour are excellent. They work extremely hard and are very determined to achieve the tasks set for them. Attendance is very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **very good**. Teaching and learning are **very good**. All teachers are committed to the pupils and have an excellent understanding of how to get the best from them. Teaching and learning are excellent for pupils in the Foundation Stage and very good for pupils in the upper school. Support staff are extremely effective; the teamwork between teachers, support staff and other professionals is exceptional and ensures that the needs of all pupils are met very well. Assessment is very good overall – it is excellent for pupils in the Foundation Stage. Teachers assess pupils' progress on a regular basis and use the information very well to ensure that the work pupils do is matched to their ability. The curriculum is very good as are accommodation and resources. There are a good range of activities to enrich the curriculum. The care and welfare of pupils is very good whilst the support and guidance for pupils is excellent. Links with parents are exceptionally strong and the school's partnership with the community is good. Links with local schools are excellent and provide exceptional opportunities for pupils to attend mainstream schools.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **excellent** overall. The headteacher provides outstanding commitment and has very high aspirations for what pupils can achieve. He is very well supported by the two acting assistant headteachers. The leadership and management of subjects are very good. The school is very aware of its strengths and weaknesses and this is reflected in the improvement plan and its own assessment of its achievements. Governance is good - governors are very supportive and are developing their role in becoming critical friends.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are extremely positive about the school. They very much appreciate the support and help they get from staff. Pupils like their school very much and this is displayed by their smiles and laughter during the day.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

There are no key areas for improvement.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils' achievements and progress are **very good**. They are **excellent** for children in the Foundation Stage.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent expertise and planning enables children in the Foundation Stage to make outstanding progress in their learning.
- The very high expectations and very good use of other professionals enables all pupils to make excellent progress in developing their communication skills.
- The continual focus on developing pupils' personal and social skills and their information and communication technology skills ensures that pupils make excellent progress in these areas.
- Planning for pupils' individual needs enables them to make very good progress in English, mathematics and science.

Commentary

1. Pupils with physical impairments and those with more complex difficulties all make very good progress in their learning. There is no difference in the progress made by boys and girls or by the very small number of pupils with English as a second language. Although there are a number of reasons why pupils do so well at Claremont it is clear that the key strengths lie in the very good expertise of staff and the detailed planning of work. This is particularly so in the Foundation Stage. Children start school well below national expectations but because teachers know and understand their special needs extremely well they make continual and steady progress in their learning. This continues into the upper school where pupils make very good progress. The high expectations of all staff are reflected in the pupils' own approach to their work – they show considerable perseverance in order to achieve the tasks set for them.
2. Nearly all pupils have difficulties in communicating and the school works extremely hard together with a range of professionals to enable them to communicate. The very good links between staff, the speech and language therapists and PCAS supports pupils very well. Technology is used very effectively and the school ensures that pupils have the most up-to-date communicators. This enables all pupils to make themselves understood and be involved in lessons. Teachers sign well where appropriate and objects of reference are used to support pupils' understanding. Sound is used well across the school to encourage pupils to listen such as the sound beam which beats as pupils walk under the Chinese dragon or the communicator outside the kitchen that tells pupils what is for lunch.
3. Throughout the school all staff encourage pupils to develop their skills in personal, social and health education (PSHE). There are a number of formal opportunities in lessons and during the school year such as healthy eating week. Staff also create many opportunities during the day to develop pupils' skills and as a result pupils make excellent progress. Often this is in very small steps such as responding to a voice or making choices but despite this parents feel their children have made significant improvements in their skills. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used very effectively throughout the school by all staff so that pupils can learn. Teachers' confidence and expertise ensures that pupils have an excellent range of opportunities to use ICT. For example they use switches to make choices and computers for activities such as word processing their stories. Work on the interactive whiteboard enables all to participate in stories and there is excellent access to computers for all pupils.
4. Very good use is made of a commercial assessment programme to identify the progress that pupils make in English, mathematics, science, ICT and PSHE. Teachers use this information,

together with their knowledge of pupils, very well to ensure that the work is matched to their individual needs. Work reflects the often very small steps pupils make, but it is still clear that pupils make at least very good progress in these subjects. The work is interesting and, for example, pupils experience poetry and a wide range of stories. They develop skills in recognizing the written word and understand that marks have meaning. In mathematics those pupils with less complex needs are, by Year 6, able to add and subtract whilst those with more complex needs sort by colour and start to recognize that there is a cause and effect to their actions. In science the range of activities linked to work on the weather, for example, gives pupils an extensive variety of experiences that extends their knowledge. Pupils make good progress in religious education. Because it is not always taught on a regular basis, pupils do not make as good progress as they do in other subjects. The very effective use of assessment has enabled the school to set itself detailed targets that are suitably challenging, for example, that 40 per cent of pupils will improve two P levels in science in the school year.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are **excellent**. Their attendance and punctuality are **very good**. The school's provision for pupils' personal development is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff show immense respect for the pupils and as a consequence relationships between them and pupils are excellent.
- Staff are very skilled at getting the best out of the pupils and pupils work very hard in response.
- Pupils love coming to school and families ensure that they attend unless they are unwell.
- The school offers pupils excellent opportunities to develop their cultural awareness.

Commentary

5. Pupils have excellent attitudes to school. Their determination to achieve and to do the best they can is impressive. Staff are very sensitive to pupils' needs and encourage pupils to complete tasks and always give them sufficient time, repeating the instruction in a calm but purposeful manner. Pupils respond extremely well and try very hard with their work. This results in very good achievement.
6. The pupils' emotional and physical well-being is at the centre of all the staff's work and results in excellent provision for spiritual development. Staff value the pupils' feelings, showing them exceptional levels of respect. For example, before any medical care such as attaching a feeding tube or moving a pupil into a chair is undertaken, staff ask the pupils' permission and carefully explain what they are about to do. When appropriate, this is accompanied by humour; the laughter rubs off on the pupils and they often respond with delight. Class assemblies provide very good opportunities for pupils to reflect on their day. Pupils respond well to the calm atmosphere created by using a darkened room, candles and music.
7. Social development is exceptional and pupils develop excellent relationships with staff. Pupils are eager to welcome visitors into school and greet them warmly. Moral development is excellent and staff provide outstanding role models. Pupils' behaviour is exemplary and there have been no exclusions. Achievements are valued and celebrated both within classes and at whole school assemblies.
8. The joy on the pupils' faces and their eagerness to come into school at the start of the day show that they love school and this is reflected in their very good attendance. Families and staff ensure that pupils attend school whenever they are well enough. Nearly all absence is due to illness or the pupils' medical conditions and parents inform the school if their children are absent. The pupils arrive on school transport in good time for lessons. A number of pupils have long journeys to school, but they have excellent relationships with their drivers and escorts and arrive at school in good spirits.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%) 2003/4

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	16.6	School data	0
National data	11.0	National data	0.7

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

9. The school provides pupils with excellent opportunities to explore their own and other cultures. Around the school there are many stimulating displays showing the pupils' involvement in studying and emulating artists such as Van Gough and Jackson Pollock. This was seen in an art lesson when the teacher's skilful choice of 'The Snail' by Matisse enabled the pupils to create their own version of the work. Pupils connected with the artist when they learnt that he too was in a wheelchair during the picture's construction. Themed activities such as 'Italian Week' provide pupils with excellent opportunities to explore other cultures through food, opera and history. Pupils are given valuable insights into other world faiths through religious education lessons and major festivals such as Chinese New Year are celebrated in assemblies.
10. All areas of this aspect have improved since the last inspection. Attitudes were good, and behaviour was very good; now they are both excellent. Provision for personal development was good; it is now excellent. Attendance was satisfactory; it is now very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a **very good** education for its pupils. **Very good** and often excellent teaching, a **very good** curriculum and **good** opportunities for enrichment as well as **very good** resources and accommodation enable pupils to achieve very well. **Very good** procedures for the care and welfare of pupils together with **excellent** support and advice are much appreciated by parents. There are **excellent** links with parents and other schools. Links with the community are being developed and are **good**.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **very good**. They are **excellent** for pupils in the Foundation Stage. Assessment is **very good** overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent planning and an exceptional knowledge of children's needs enables children in the Foundation Stage to make excellent progress.
- Excellent team work between teachers and support staff supports pupils' learning very well throughout the school.
- There are high expectations of what pupils can achieve and as a result work is challenging.
- Staff expertise is used very well to support pupils' learning.
- Teachers assess pupils' progress very thoroughly and are very skilled in using the information to match the work set to the needs of individual pupils.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 32 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6(19 %)	12 (38%)	11(34%)	3(9%)	0	0	0

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

11. There is an exceptional ethos in the Foundation Stage that results from teachers' ability to get the best from the children. Lessons are imaginative and exciting because resources are used so well. The environment in each class is delightful being bright and cheerful throughout. Teachers work together and support each other very well so that there is a constant exchange of ideas. Work is planned carefully to ensure that all children gain from their experiences. For example a literacy lesson enables pupils to experience being by the sea – resources are well planned to include items such as sand, buckets and spades, sounds of the sea and sea gulls and a projector shows a beach scene. The range of tactile and sensory experiences and the hard work of staff allows all children to be involved. Humour is always evident and a child is very pleased with himself when he knocks the bucket on the floor.
12. Teaching and learning are very good in the upper school. The time teachers and support staff are given to plan lessons is used very well. As a result lessons run smoothly and without interruption. It is very evident that in many lessons all staff know their roles and responsibilities and what they should be doing. For example, in a Year 6 history lesson each member of staff worked with two pupils to enable them to feel and discuss old household artefacts. Staff knew their pupils very well and through sign and speech encouraged pupils to guess what they would have been used for. Equally, in a very good English lesson the division of the class into three clear ability groups ensured that all pupils developed a very good understanding of vocabulary linked to the weather because of their work with staff.
13. Staff have developed a very good understanding of the wide variety of medical and physical difficulties that pupils have. This enables them to work with the pupils as constructively as possible. Pupils are moved from standing frames to chairs when staff sense they are becoming uncomfortable. They change activities so that pupils, even though they are getting tired, can carry on learning. Staff look for and recognise the slightest movement as a response to a question. Pupils are given choices and although often these are only from a choice of two staff check that there is understanding and that the first choice wasn't just lucky! Good use of signing ensures that those pupils with hearing impairment are fully involved and a good understanding of objects of reference enables those pupils for example on the autistic spectrum to understand what will be happening next.
14. Teachers challenge pupils to make progress and learn well and this is reflected in the considerable efforts pupils make to achieve well. Teachers find as many ways as possible to get the best from pupils. For example, a pupil who cannot communicate verbally and has problems with hand and arm movements nevertheless is achieving very well in mathematics because his teacher knows he can calculate quickly. Problems are presented to him for which he finds solutions and the teacher provides him with a number of answers from which he has to select the right one. Parents commented on the patience of staff and this is very evident in the way that they wait for pupils to respond to questions – in this way pupils clearly know that their responses are valued and do not feel rushed.
15. There are exemplary procedures in place to assess pupils when they are admitted to the school. All pupils undergo an extremely thorough multidisciplinary assessment. This includes

assessments by the speech and language therapists, physiotherapists and a full assessment by the inclusion support worker to determine what technological aids are necessary. Information gained from the assessments is used to prepare detailed profiles, which describe the pupils' physical and communication needs. These are very much in evidence around the school and are very well used to ensure that teaching strategies and physical management of individual pupils is exactly right for their individual needs. A commercial assessment scheme is used in all subjects to measure the progress that pupils make over time. The school analyses information gained through assessments to monitor the progress which pupils make in different subjects and to check that groups of pupils, such as girls and boys, are progressing equally well. The newly introduced electronic form of record keeping will enable the school to access information more easily and carry out more sophisticated analyses of results. There are very good procedures in place to ensure that teachers' assessments are consistent throughout the school. These include the involvement of the Local Education Authority in checking assessments in the Reception Year and in Years 2 and 6. Although there are examples of very good ongoing assessment in lessons, strategies could be developed further in a few lessons. In particular, support assistants could be used to record the small steps which pupils make. Teachers prepare detailed reports of pupils' progress towards achieving the targets set in their individual education plans (IEPs) for discussion at their annual reviews. The school also recognises that it needs to develop more effective assessment procedures for those pupils who attend mainstream schools to ensure better feedback on the progress being made.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **very good** and it is well supported by the **good** opportunities for enrichment. Accommodation and resources are **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is very carefully planned and regularly checked.
- Children in the Foundation Stage have access to an excellent range of rich and varied learning experiences.
- Planning for "themed" activities is very good for pupils in the upper school and enables all areas of the National Curriculum to be taught.
- The introduction of the 'Key Skills' curriculum ensures that pupils with more complex difficulties have activities very well matched to their needs.
- There are excellent opportunities for pupils to learn alongside pupils from mainstream schools.
- The school provides pupils with a good range of activities to enrich their experiences.
- Very good resources and equipment and very detailed individual pupil plans and reviews mean that the additional special educational needs of pupils are very well met.
- Very good improvements in the accommodation and the number of support staff since the last inspection have had a very positive impact on the quality of education for pupils.

Commentary

16. The school provides a very good variety of stimulating learning opportunities for the pupils which cover all the relevant areas of the National Curriculum and are very well matched to the pupils' particular special educational needs. There is a very good emphasis on promoting pupils' skills in literacy, numeracy and ICT. Throughout the school day, there is a tremendous focus on developing pupils' communication through vocalisation or using communication aids. Consequently, pupils make excellent progress in developing and consolidating key skills and in communicating.
17. The curriculum is very well adapted so lessons and activities are at just the right level for pupils of different ages and for those who have more complex difficulties. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage is excellent. A very rich range of learning opportunities ensures that they thoroughly enjoy school and make an extremely strong start in their learning. The twice weekly "integrated learning activity" sessions when the three Foundation Stage classes are taught together are particularly effective. This is because of the emphasis on helping children to

make choices and the exceptional quality of the sensory experiences. Teachers have worked very hard to develop the 'Key Skills' curriculum for pupils with more complex needs. They have broken the early 'P Levels' for English, mathematics, science and ICT into very small steps and planned activities to teach those steps. This is a very effective strategy to promote the pupils' learning and the school is appropriately considering publishing the scheme.

18. The curriculum is very good for pupils in the upper school and is organised around termly 'themes' into which subjects are woven. This strategy works well, as it allows teachers to explore subjects in depth. The themes are very carefully planned in a four year cycle. This ensures that pupils do not repeat work as they progress up the school and that enough time is given to different subject areas such as science. There are exemplary procedures in place to monitor the curriculum which include a full review of each subject every two years.
19. The excellent opportunities for pupils to attend lessons with pupils from mainstream schools promote their confidence and personal and social development extremely well. There are many, very carefully planned, activities where pupils work with pupils from the mainstream infant and junior schools on the school campus. A number of pupils also attend lessons in their local mainstream schools. Inclusion opportunities are very well planned to match the needs of individual pupils. As the pupils become more confident, the school extends their success by increasing the number of activities in which they are included. For example, a child in the Foundation Stage has been attending 'patio play' sessions at Henleaze Infants School since June 2004 as well as integrated music sessions at Claremont. He has a clear plan to increase the amount of time he spends in mainstream with the eventual goal of a full time, supported, mainstream placement.
20. Pupils are provided with good experiences that support the curriculum well. These are often tailored to their individual needs. At lunchtime staff provide pupils with a choice of games, computer programmes and other activities often based within the classroom. Pupils also benefit from attending activities such as woodwork and computer club. They enjoy this time of recreation and relaxation. Visitors such as theatre groups and music specialists bring the performing arts to life and pupils travelled to Gloucestershire's cricket ground to take part in a tabletop cricket competition. The bi-annual residential visit offers pupils very good opportunities to develop their social skills as well as learning the varied experiences of pond dipping and travelling in a speedboat.
21. Pupils with additional special educational needs have their educational programmes carefully planned and reviewed through annual reviews. As with all other pupils, their individual needs are identified in detail and resources assigned to match those needs wherever possible. For example, although the school is not able to provide a profoundly deaf boy with the company of other profoundly deaf pupils, they do provide him with a highly trained and skilled signing support assistant. The presence of skilled, trained staff and very good resources enables the school to address a very wide range of complex needs, and it does so extremely well. There is also a very good range of specialist equipment and several specialist sensory areas designed to enhance the quality of provision for pupils with sensory impairments. The school's forward thinking policy on inclusion means that pupils with additional needs also have opportunities to experience mainstream provision and they achieve as well as the rest of the pupils do.
22. Accommodation is very good. Although situated in a very old building the school has made the very best of the space it has. Since the last inspection a superb new hydrotherapy centre has been built and a new ICT suite developed, which provide excellent opportunities for all pupils to experience an enhanced range of sensory and technological stimuli on site. In addition, the light and dark rooms and the development of sound and sensory areas in corridors and classrooms mean that the accommodation now offers an all-round educational environment which is very well suited to the complex needs of the pupils. Outside play space still needs developing further, but the school is aware of this, and plans exist for the imminent development of an outside sensory garden. Resources are very good. The very high level of support staff and the excellent provision of specialist equipment mean that teachers have very good resources at their disposal to deliver a high quality of education to the pupils.

Care, guidance and support

Provision for the care, welfare, health and safety of pupils is **very good**. The support and guidance offered to pupils is **excellent**. Pupils' views are taken into account **very well**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff provide an exceptional quality of support for pupils.
- The commitment of all staff to the daily care, health and welfare of pupils is excellent.
- The arrangements for child protection, and for pupils to work in a safe environment, are very good.
- New pupils receive excellent support when they start school.
- There are excellent opportunities for pupils to make decisions and choices about their lives at school.

Commentary

23. Staff show considerable respect for pupils and because of this there is considerable mutual trust and respect. Daily routines to support pupils' learning and personal development are consistent and of very high quality and the support pupils receive to achieve targets, for example, in their individual education plans, is excellent. The help and guidance they receive to develop their independence and communication skills is quite exceptional.

Exceptional team work between all professionals supports pupils extremely well.

All staff, the therapists and the medical and catering staff work together as an excellent multidisciplinary team. The care of pupils in the excellent hydrotherapy pool, for example, is admirable. In the preparation of resources for learning, and in the dining hall, staff demonstrate an excellent knowledge of pupils' dietary requirements. The preparation and use of gluten free materials for one pupil, for example, enabled her to take part fully in a pancake day lesson. Speech and language therapists produce detailed individual feeding programmes which guide the excellent support that pupils receive in the dining hall at lunch time. The cook and her team demonstrate excellent knowledge of pupils' individual dietary needs. They prepare highly nutritious and tasty lunches using organic foods. Physiotherapists train the staff very well to implement pupils' individual mobility programmes. There are meticulous care plans for pupils requiring medication. The efficiency and effectiveness with which pupils' many different medical and physical routines are administered are exceptional, and result from excellent support from the nursing and therapy staff.

24. Child protection is a high priority for the school. The governing body has recently revised its policy on Child Protection in line with new legislation. The school is now updating its procedures in line with these requirements to ensure that arrangements for child protection are fully comprehensive. The school is looking to improve its procedures with regards to the very high number of students who visit the school to ensure they are familiar with the school's policies.
25. Starting a new school is a very anxious time for pupils and their parents. They receive excellent guidance about what Claremont provides. Parents are encouraged to stay with their children on the first day until their child is settled.
26. Every effort is made by staff to encourage pupils to make their wishes known. Throughout the day there are opportunities for pupils to make choices, by gesture or eye-pointing, for example, or by use of electronic communication aids. Pupils choose activities after lunch. They also make choices about their drinks, snacks and lunches. They make their wishes known to their carers with regard to their personal care and positioning. The school has linked very

successfully with Bristol University and The Rowntree Trust to launch a project to investigate how to extend opportunities for pupils to make their views known, for example at their Annual Reviews, or through a school council.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents and other schools are **excellent**. Links with the community are **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's excellent partnership with neighbouring schools has a very positive impact on pupils' personal development as well their academic achievements.
- The school is very successful in involving parents in the life of the school and their children's learning.
- The school makes good use of visitors and specialists to enhance pupils' learning and well-being.

Commentary

Opportunities to attend lessons with mainstream pupils are excellent.

The school's vision of involving all its pupils in mainstream school lessons and activities is coming to fruition. This has been achieved by ensuring that inclusion is adequately funded, excellently managed and everyone is clear about his or her roles and responsibilities. An infant and a junior mainstream school share the site with Claremont and the joint funding of the campus inclusion manager has led to considerable benefits for both staff and pupils from all schools. The inclusion manager is also a governor of all three schools, which ensures very good communication. Inclusion works extremely well because of the time invested in ensuring that all staff have a very good understanding of the pupils' needs and how the curriculum is taught in all three schools. Pupils from Claremont are sensitively prepared and supported for lessons in the mainstream schools. Pupils from the mainstream schools also visit Claremont for joint activities such as music. Claremont pupils clearly gain much from their experiences. They emulate their mainstream peers in behaviour and social skills as well as striving to do their best in lessons. Mainstream teachers ensure that the tasks are suitably challenging yet achievable and mainstream pupils are very sensitive to the needs of Claremont pupils. There are regular meetings between Claremont staff and those from other mainstream and special schools to share expertise and provide mutual support.

27. Parents rightly hold the school in very high regard. The following parental comment typifies remarks made at pre-inspection parents' meeting and through the Ofsted questionnaires. '*Staff are more than helpful – we would recommend the school to any parents. We feel they treat all children as individuals and encourage the very best of the abilities and strengths our children possess*'. Arrangements for new parents are excellent. Staff make a series of beneficial home visits and parents are welcome to stay with their children in the classroom until they are confident that they are settled. The home-school books are a very valuable means of communication between parents and staff. The prospectus and annual governors' report contain all the required information, but the former is not easy to use and does not fully celebrate the strengths of the school. The Friends of Claremont work very hard to raise funds and organise social events such as trips and play schemes.
28. Partnership with parents has been a recent focus in the school improvement plan. The aims have been successfully achieved through consulting parents, working with parents at an in-service training day and forming a working party. This has resulted in improved communication by improving the newsletter, updating the website and experimenting with different formats for parental consultations. Parents are very well supported as they prepare for their child's annual review and nearly all parents attend. They are given very detailed information and have very

good opportunities to contribute both before and during the review process. Staff are also very supportive and helpful when parents are making decisions about their child's secondary school.

29. The school's links with the community are good. An outstanding feature is its links with the Drake music project, a national charity working in the fields of disability, music and technology. These visiting specialists work with groups and individual pupils to provide stimulation and very good opportunities to participate, control and compose music and sound. Pupils respond extremely well to the sensitive teaching and individual curriculum they receive. They are physically and emotionally moved by the experience, working with enthusiasm and sustaining concentration for considerable periods of time. The school invites visitors such as the local clergy to assemblies and makes good use of the visiting Life Skills bus. The pupils gain social and physical skills through the residential trips to an outdoor adventure centre and local groups use the school's swimming pool.
30. The use of Power Point presentation which is projected as a continuous display in the reception area gives visitors and parents a very effective insight into the life of the school. This is interesting and highly motivating for pupils and does much for their self-esteem.
31. The links with parents have improved considerably from the last inspection. They were satisfactory and are now excellent.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are excellent. The headteacher provides excellent leadership, and management is **very good**. Governance is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The inspirational headteacher ensures that his vision for the school drives its ethos and values and that these permeate into all aspects of the school's work.
- Very good communication between the senior management team and staff ensures high levels of staff commitment, high morale and clarity of role throughout the school.
- The vision for the school is well translated into practical policy and ensures that the pupils' needs are met through detailed and high quality planning.
- Governors are very committed to the school and are looking at ways of developing their role further.
- There are very good opportunities for staff training and development.

Commentary

32. The headteacher has established a working atmosphere in the school which reflects his total commitment to improving the educational, personal and social lives of the pupils. His caring, calm and open approach ensures an ethos which revolves around intensive and often profound interactions between pupils and staff, and staff are selected for their commitment to this approach. The headteacher and staff are continually looking at ways of developing and improving what they do for the pupils. This is very much reflected in the range of initiatives the school is involved with at present. Pupils are consistently praised and encouraged for their efforts to respond and communicate in whichever way they are able. This has created an outstandingly positive and happy atmosphere throughout the school.
33. The management of the school is very good. The recent internal appointment of two temporary assistant headteachers has ensured that the school runs smoothly until the appointment of a deputy headteacher. Clear and open lines of communication between the senior management team and staff ensure that everyone knows clearly what is expected of them and, if faced with a complex situation, who to ask for advice and guidance. Support staff commented that they find the management team open, supportive and accessible at all times and this enables their morale to remain high in the face of the profound difficulties that many of the pupils present. A

regular, well thought out meeting cycle ensures that staff have opportunities to raise issues, share in planning and discuss concerns. As a result there is an exemplary high level of staff commitment to and involvement in their work which has an outstanding impact on the quality of education experienced by the pupils.

34. The values and ethos of the school are underpinned and delivered through careful and detailed planning. A strength of planning lies in the way in which the school improvement plan is based upon the school's vision statement. In this way all areas for improvement can be linked to the statement and the school successfully shows how it meets its vision. There is a very good link with school's finances and these are managed very well. The headteacher and senior management team are very aware of the school's strengths and weaknesses and this is reflected in the high quality self-evaluation which reflects almost entirely the inspection's findings.
35. The governing body shows considerable support for the staff and pupils. They are a hard working group and have established appropriate committees to enable them to have a clear overview of the school. They very much recognise the strengths of the headteacher and his honesty and openness about the areas for improvement in the school. They are well informed about many aspects such as what P levels are but as yet do not have an independent view of teaching and learning. They recognize that they are very reliant on the headteacher for information about this and are considering ways of addressing this.
36. All staff have excellent opportunities for continuing professional development and training in a wide range of areas. The school has a staff development theme for the year and links most of its staff development priorities to the School Improvement Plan. However, staff are also encouraged to pursue their own development interests and the school supports this wherever possible, thereby establishing a sense of career and skill development, especially amongst support staff. Training relevant to the day to day needs of the job is available to all through staff who are qualified trainers and is part of the induction programme for all staff. The high level of expertise available within the school supports staff and imparts knowledge and confidence in their approach to working with children with physical and complex needs

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1,034,533
Total expenditure	1,105,909
Expenditure per pupil	16,028

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	102,286
Balance carried forward to the next	21,273

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Eight lessons were seen in the Foundation Stage. Evidence was also gathered from children's work, observation of a range of activities and discussion with staff.

The school makes **excellent** provision for children in the Foundation Stage. Teaching is excellent and as a result children achieve extremely well overall.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Because of excellent leadership there is an extremely positive and nurturing ethos that ensures that the children are very happy and highly motivated.
- Teachers are expert at adapting the work set so that it is at just the right level for individual children.
- Learning support assistants provide excellent support ensuring that all children achieve success.
- Children have access to a very rich and varied range of learning experiences.
- Excellent links with parents help newly admitted children to settle well and support children's learning.
- There are exceptional opportunities for children to be included in activities in mainstream schools.

Commentary

There are many strengths in the Foundation Stage that make it an excellent facility in which children make excellent progress in their learning.

The head of lower school, who co-ordinates the Foundation Stage, leads the department extremely well and provides an excellent role model for other staff. She is very aware of the strengths and weaknesses within her department and is extremely supportive of her staff. Excellent relationships and expertise of staff result in an extremely positive learning environment where the children thrive. Staff have vast experience and expert knowledge in working with children with very complex difficulties. They know the children very well and are highly sensitive to their individual needs. Virtually all support staff are qualified nursery nurses, and a number of teachers and support staff have additional qualifications in relevant areas such as working with children with multi-sensory impairment.

Teachers keep very detailed and carefully organised records which show clearly the excellent progress children make. These records include photographs which are labelled to show exactly what the child did and how much help was required to complete a task. Children are also assessed regularly, using the P levels to check how well they are achieving in all areas of development. In addition there is good ongoing assessment in lessons. For example teachers use dictaphones to note when a child learns a new skill. Evidence gained from assessment is used to plan work at exactly the right level and children are given extremely sensitive support in all activities by the learning support assistants. This means that they make excellent progress in extending existing skills and developing new ones. There has been very good improvement in provision for children in the Foundation Stage since the last inspection.

A strength of provision in the Foundation Stage is the 'integrated learning activities' sessions which take place twice a week. These are very carefully planned and organised and enable the three classes in the Foundation Stage to work together. Children are guided expertly in their own classrooms to choose from a variety of highly stimulating activities. They then move to a different area of the school where the activities have already been set up. In an excellent session which took place during the inspection, children could choose between a water play

activity, 'shopping' and a sensory 'touch' activity. The activities motivated the children extremely well and teachers, support staff and a speech and language therapist gave them all excellent individual support throughout the session.

There are excellent links with parents to ensure that children make a very good start at school and settle very well. Before admission, children are invited to the school with their parents and this is followed up by a home visit where the teacher and physiotherapist get to know the child better. When children start school, parents are encouraged to stay with them until they feel secure and confident to remain on their own. Teachers use every opportunity to involve parents in their children's learning and operate an 'open door' policy where parents are welcomed into the school. All children benefit from the excellent links with mainstream schools which enable them to socialise and work with children in other settings. This helps them to become more confident and supports their personal and social development extremely well. Children's behaviour is excellent throughout the school day and they try their very best in all activities.

37. Pupils' **communication, language and literacy** development is excellent because it is promoted throughout the day and staff use a variety of strategies which are very well matched to the needs of individual children. Exciting activities and attractive resources are used to stimulate children to vocalise and to make choices by reaching out or eye pointing. Symbols and picture cards help children to communicate and those children who need technological support have access to an excellent range of switches and communication devices. An example of this was during a very good 'news time' lesson for children in the nursery. One child, who does not have English as his first language, vocalised very well because he was highly motivated by the colourful learning environment that staff had created. As a consequence, he was intrigued by a new star mobile and spontaneously said 'I love the stars'. Staff were very skilled at immediately responding to this, and through praising his efforts, ensured that he kept on trying to communicate. In the same lesson, other children were supported extremely well to use switches to give their news. The switches had been sent home so that the children's parents could record what they had done. This was a very effective strategy as it enabled the teacher to fully involve children who are unable to vocalise. Children have plenty of very good opportunities to share stories and they enjoy looking at books. Younger children with more complex difficulties sustain interest and show clear preferences for their favourite books whilst some older children begin to retell simple stories in their own words. Children are given very skilled support to enable them to develop their pencil control and ability to make marks on paper. One child has produced recognisable pictures, for example of a boat on water, which the school has bound to make a lovely story book
38. Teachers and support staff are expert in using every opportunity to promote children's social and self-help skills. Consequently, they make excellent progress in **personal, social and emotional development**. Relationships are exceptional and because staff know the children very well they are very sensitive to their particular needs. For example, they are extremely careful in ensuring that children, including those with additional sensory difficulties, are always positioned correctly so that they can gain the most from activities. This means that the children feel very secure, enjoy being at school and begin to understand class routines. Because they have frequent, well-planned opportunities to make choices they make excellent progress in learning to select activities and resources. Staff are exceptionally skilled at ensuring that, although they have very high levels of support, children learn to be as independent as they are able. An example of this was when a child took the class register to the office. Although he was at first reluctant to try and step out, the learning support assistant was kind but firm and carefully guided him so that he made considerable efforts towards independent movements.
39. Teachers promote children's **mathematical development** extremely well through highly stimulating practical activities which are very well matched to their individual needs. In an excellent lesson to help children understand objects, planning was individualised and methods used reflected the teacher's understanding of each child's capability. For example, a child with severe visual impairment searched for beads in a bag, responding to touch and sound stimuli. Meanwhile, the darkroom was used very effectively to enable a child to feel for objects in

luminous tubes. A child with less complex difficulties was challenged very well to be aware of two rather than one object. Staff recognised the smallest of responses from the children and praised all their efforts. Because support was excellent, all the children achieved success in grasping objects and tracking movements.

40. Children make excellent progress in developing their **knowledge and understanding of the world**. There is a very good collection of toys which help children to learn and they have excellent individual support to enable them to use the computers in the ICT suite. One child was observed thoroughly enjoying using a large roller ball switch to control his favourite programme about Humpty Dumpty. The use of a large screen meant that the child could see the pictures very well; he was very well motivated and remained highly focused throughout the activity. Children explore the world around them through sensory experiences such as water play. They have great fun looking for minibeasts in the garden, exploring compost and planting flowers.
41. Children's **physical development** is promoted extremely effectively through excellent hydrotherapy and swimming lessons supported by the physiotherapists. These take place in the marvellous new 'Starfish' pool and children are calmed by the light and sound beams. Consequently, their achievement in relaxing and moving their bodies in the water is excellent. Teachers are expert at developing children's ability to use their hands. In an exemplary lesson for children with more complex difficulties, they made excellent progress in lifting their arms and moving their fingers because the teacher had an excellent understanding of their different needs and because support staff were extremely effective.
42. There are many rich experiences to promote children's **creative development** and their achievement is excellent. They have used their hands and feet to explore paint and made prints with fruit. There are lovely opportunities to dress up and engage in imaginative play such as playing 'hairdressers'. Music and singing is used extremely effectively throughout the day to signal activities and to make lessons interesting. Children respond very well to the sound beam which at present is activated by moving under a 'Chinese dragon' as part of the celebrations for Chinese New Year.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGE 2

ENGLISH

Four lessons were seen in the upper school. Additional evidence was gathered from looking at pupils' work and files as well as discussion with teachers.

Provision in English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The excellent use of communication aids and support from a range of professionals enables all pupils to develop their skills.
- Teachers have very good expertise and understanding of pupils' needs which ensures that work is matched to pupils' abilities very well.
- There is very good team work between all staff so that pupils are well supported in lessons.
- The subject has been developed very well since the last inspection and resources are very good.
- In all subject areas teachers ensure that pupils' skills in literacy are promoted very well.

Commentary

43. Pupils make very good progress in English. There is considerable attention paid to improving and extending pupils' skills in all aspects of the subject. This is particularly evident in the development of communication skills and as a result pupils make excellent progress. Teachers,

together with speech and language therapists and staff from PCAS, assess pupils' needs and look for the best method that will enable them to participate in lessons. A range of aids is used and pupils, slowly but surely, begin to make very good use of them. By the end of Year 6 many have made very good and often excellent progress and can express preferences and ideas using a variety of strategies. For example a Year 5 pupil is able to indicate through a move of his head whether the work shown to him is relevant to his project on rain or whether it belongs to another pupil. Younger pupils can identify days of the week using their communication aids whilst others "play hospitals". They respond to questions about the patient - "What is wrong with him?" "Does he need a plaster?" by using two switches to identify for example a bottle of medicine or a plaster. Equally pupils will use switches to indicate "yes" or "no" to a question. Signing is used well for those pupils who require it and, where appropriate, objects of reference are used to enable pupils to understand what is happening.

44. Pupils listen very well; they concentrate for quite long periods of time and listen out for their turn when for example answering questions. In reading pupils make very good progress. They enjoy listening to stories and pupils show good recall of events. A few are developing skills in word recognition and can pick out words from text and recognize words on flash cards. Others enjoy sensory stories and use their hands to feel different materials linked to the text. Pupils make good progress in writing, although many are at the very early stages of developing their skills. Those with more complex difficulties are learning that marks convey meaning. Where possible they hold pencils or crayons and make marks on paper. By Year 6 a small number can write independently whilst many, with support, can copy their name and individual letters. Pupils use computers very well for example writing letters to Father Christmas where they demonstrate the ability to set out their letters in the correct way.
45. Teaching and learning are very good. Teachers know their pupils very well, assessment is thorough and as a result the work pupils do enables them to extend their skills. Lessons start with a whole class session and questioning is used very effectively to enable all pupils to participate. Planning is very good and group activities are carefully structured so that all pupils benefit as much as possible. For example in a Year 5 lesson, the class was split into groups that enabled staff to match the work to pupils' abilities. One support assistant worked very well with a group encouraging them to recognise sounds and link them to objects. In another group an assistant worked with two pupils with more complex difficulties on grouping items connected to rain and sun. Teachers work very hard to capture pupils' attention and ensure lessons are interesting – good use is made of big books and in one lesson based on nursery rhymes the teacher used glove puppets to explain the story of Jack and Jill. Information and communication technology is used very well for example enabling pupils to be involved in telling the story of Humpty Dumpty using the interactive whiteboard. The team work between staff is excellent. There is very good preparation so that no time is wasted in explaining what needs to be done. On a few occasions the pace of lessons is slow and opportunities are missed to reinforce vocabulary. Pupils respond very well to all interactions with staff and the very good relationships ensure that they enjoy their work.
46. Leadership and management of the subject are very good and as a consequence a great deal has been done to improve standards since the last inspection. Resources are very good and used very effectively by all staff. The co-ordinator is aware of the strengths and weaknesses within the department and areas for improvement are addressed.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

47. Literacy across the curriculum is very good. All teachers ensure that pupils have opportunities to be involved in lessons and to respond to questions. Key vocabulary is repeated so that pupils develop a good understanding. For example in history pupils gained a good understanding of "old" and "new" through frequent reference to these words. In the morning sessions of PSHE pupils exchange news, showing real enjoyment when hearing their parents' voices explaining what they had done the evening before. During the day staff take every opportunity to talk to pupils both in formal and informal settings. Whatever is happening whether walking down the corridor, lifting a pupil into their wheelchair or changing them after

swimming, all adults chat to the pupils explaining what they are doing and engaging them in conversation. There are very good opportunities for pupils to listen. Communication aids around the school provide music or information. For example it is very impressive that pupils can press a communication aid outside the kitchen which will tell them what is for lunch.

MATHEMATICS

Seven lessons and part lessons were seen. Pupils' work and assessment records were analysed. Subject plans and other documents were reviewed. Discussions were held with staff.

Provision in mathematics is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils have a very positive attitude to learning mathematics and as a result achieve very well.
- Teachers make very good use of the National Curriculum programmes for mathematics when planning their lessons.
- Computers and electronic communication aids to help pupils achieve are very effectively used by teachers and support staff.
- There is not enough formal planning for the regular use of mathematics in other subjects.

Commentary

48. Pupils achieve very well because they are very well taught and supported in lessons, they have an exceptional determination to succeed, and they enjoy mathematics. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils with less complex needs learn to subtract by identifying objects that have been removed from a tray and by playing a modified game of bowls to knock down skittles. A pupil on the autistic spectrum achieves very well because he has very good individual support to practise subtraction problems and discuss his work. A small number of Year 6 pupils with less complex difficulties are challenged very well to write, or communicate by eye-pointing, answering mathematical problems, for example, by subtracting two digit from two digit numbers.
49. Pupils with the most complex difficulties become aware of objects when they are out of sight. Pupils begin to understand that their actions can have an effect. For example they are encouraged to find hidden objects. In a very good lesson in the computer room, pupils learn that they can control two events by using either a blue or a yellow switch to change pictures on a large interactive whiteboard. A Year 5 boy demonstrates exceptional perseverance to recognise numbers up to ninety-nine, from selections of five numbers on a computer screen. He uses small movements of his head to activate a switch embedded in the headrest of his wheelchair. This is quite exhausting for him but he does not give up. It is the sheer, and quite remarkable, perseverance of pupils, to use what little physical movement they have to operate switches that enables them to achieve so very well in mathematics.
50. The quality of teaching and learning is very good. Planning ensures that pupils' achievements cover the breadth of required skills in mathematics. Teachers also plan very effectively for pupils to learn about shape, space and measures and how to handle data. By Year 6, for example, pupils with fewer complex needs use eye-pointing to show how to re-build a Russian doll in the correct sequence. There is excellent team work between all staff and on-going assessments of what pupils are doing ensures that staff have a good understanding of what pupils can achieve.
51. Leadership and management are very good. The co-ordinator ensures that teachers follow the National Numeracy Strategy and there are very good systems for checking on the quality of teaching and learning in the school. Improvement since the last inspection is very good. This includes improvements in the progress pupils make, in the quality of teaching, and in the assessment of pupils' progress. Teachers make better use of electronic communication aids and computers to support learning in mathematics.

Mathematics across the curriculum

52. Numeracy across the curriculum is satisfactory. In their planning of other subjects, teachers do not, as a matter of routine, always make explicit enough how pupils might use and apply their mathematics skills. Despite this there are examples of very good use of mathematics to support work in other subjects. In science, for example, pupils in Years 3 to 6 collect data about the weather over several days. Depending on their levels of physical and learning difficulty, they present their findings as bar charts or as 'pictograms'. Pupils count how many are present at morning registration, they count in French, and they count the number of bounces on the trampoline.

SCIENCE

Two lessons were seen in science. Evidence was also gathered from pupils' work and discussions with teachers.

Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very good opportunities provided to investigate and explore enable pupils to learn very well.
- Pupils are assessed very thoroughly and the information obtained is used effectively to plan future work.
- Pupils enjoy learning science and make very good progress in their knowledge and understanding.
- Teachers make lessons interesting by their imaginative use of resources.
- Very good leadership and management by the subject leader is developing the subject very well.

Commentary

53. The emphasis in science is to give pupils 'hands on' tactile and exploratory experiences. This is a very suitable approach and consequently they enjoy lessons and make very good progress. The school has been particularly effective in breaking down pupils' learning targets into very small steps so that pupils with more complex difficulties can participate fully in lessons. An example of this was in a very good lesson about the weather for pupils with very complex difficulties in Years 3 to 6. The pupils were given a variety of carefully planned sensory experiences to help them distinguish between rain and sunshine. Because teachers and support staff know the pupils very well, they were expert at noting and interpreting their responses. For example, staff were aware that pupils understood that it was rainy by very careful observation of subtle eye movements. Teachers make lessons interesting by using resources very creatively. This was apparent when a pupil was able to experience and control 'wind' by using a switch connected to a floor standing fan. A line of 'washing' which had been hung over the pupil's wheelchair blew about when she operated the fan. This motivated her very well to try to make independent movements. Consequently, she made clear progress in learning that her actions could make something happen.
54. Science is taught through carefully planned themes which are followed by all pupils in Years 3 to 6. At the present time, pupils are learning about the weather and they have carried out a variety of investigations linked to this topic. For example, pupils in Years 4 and 5 have looked at the weather in the morning and predicted what it will be like in the afternoon. They have made very good progress in understanding the effects of the weather and know that thin pieces of wood will move in a moderate gale and thick pieces in a gale. Pupils are assessed very thoroughly using a commercial assessment package. Examples of pupils' work which have been carefully evaluated to show the level that they are achieving, are used to guide teachers' assessments to ensure that they are consistent. Assessment shows that pupils achieve very well, with most pupils progressing at least one P Level every year.

55. The subject leader is developing the subject very well. She carried out a major review of science during the summer term in 2004. This involved looking at all planning, checking that different aspects of science were properly covered in all classes and monitoring the quality of teaching in lessons. Following this exercise, she produced a written action plan to develop provision further. There has been very good improvement in science since the last inspection. In particular, there has been significant improvement in the leadership of the subject, teaching and learning and in the assessment and recording of the progress pupils make.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Five lessons and part lessons were observed. Discussions were held with staff and pupils' work considered.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The development of pupils' ICT skills is outstanding because of the excellent resources available.
- Teachers are very confident in their expertise and receive excellent support from the technician.
- Pupils' concentration and perseverance to use the ICT equipment is exceptional.
- The work of the subject leader has ensured that the subject has been developed very well.
- Information and communication technology is used extremely well across the curriculum.

Commentary

56. The computer room is a highly effective new facility that makes an excellent contribution to pupils' achievements. With its large interactive whiteboard, individual computer screens readily adjusted to pupils' eye-levels, broad range of switches, and software of excellent quality, the computer room provides excellent access and opportunity for all pupils to learn. Pupils with the most complex difficulties are highly receptive to the sensory stimuli provided in the light and dark rooms. For example they press switches to play music, and create visual effects with the bubble tube and infinity tunnel, for example. In the hydrotherapy pool, pupils are aware that they can activate the music system if they vocalise. In the computer room pupils make choices about which hand to use to operate a switch.
57. Tasks are matched well to pupils' abilities. For example a pupil who is unable to see clearly listens to stories on the computer and uses switches to make choices to change events in the story. By Year 6, pupils with less complex difficulties use software programmes to record their news and write stories. They become more adept at using a mouse to select and move items and the cursor round the computer screen. They are aware of the technical language of ICT, for example, keyboard, CD-ROM, delete, printer and space-bar and learn to enter simple text and delete text using back space editing. The effort that pupils put into to moving switches, grasping a mouse, holding a joy stick, and pointing to places on their communication boards is exceptional. They may tire but they do not give up. This huge, extreme determination to succeed is what helps pupils to make such excellent progress in the development of their ICT, communication and independence skills.
58. The quality of teaching and learning is excellent enabling pupils to develop their ICT skills to the best of their abilities. Staff gauge expertly how far to intervene and when to stand back. There is a high level of respect for pupils who are keen to work hard in this secure and supportive environment. The appointment since the last inspection, of a highly skilled technician ensures that lessons in the computer room flow without a hitch. The contribution made by the learning support assistants and the technician is exceptionally good. An excellent range of switches, electronic communication aids, concept keyboards, joy sticks and powered wheelchairs enable pupils to become as independent as possible. 'Talking' electronic

measuring jugs and weighing scales enable visually impaired pupils to measure cooking ingredients accurately.

59. Leadership and management are excellent. The subject leader has been instrumental in bringing about excellent improvement in this subject since the last inspection. At the time of the last inspection, progress by pupils in Years 3 to 6 was described as unsatisfactory. It is now excellent. Improvements in accommodation, resources and technical support are excellent. Teaching, learning support, and assessment procedures have also improved.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

60. Staff are extremely successful in taking every opportunity to provide a variety of switches, electronic communication aids, and electronic equipment to aid pupils' mobility programmes. Pupils have a personal profile of their information and communication technology needs. They are supported exceptionally well across all their learning to meet these needs and targets. In mathematics, for example, switches, the dark and light sensory rooms, and the computer room are all used to excellent effect to give pupils full access to mathematical activities. In English, there is software of excellent quality to help pupils compose their own stories. There is excellent whole class teaching of literature using a large interactive whiteboard and switches, so younger pupils with the most complex physical and learning difficulties can watch and listen to the events unfold in a story about fun and drama in the rain. Excellent software in the hydrotherapy pool provides highly effective, and spiritually uplifting, light and sound displays, that can be activated when pupils vocalise.

HUMANITIES

History and geography

Only one lesson of history was seen and no judgments about provision have been made in these subjects. Discussions were held with staff and pupils' work was scrutinised.

61. There is careful planning for what will be taught to ensure that pupils get a suitable range of experiences in both these subjects. In geography pupils study aspects linked to weather and there is a good focus on developing an understanding about the environment. Pupils learn about their local area and also about the Caribbean. In history pupils learn about the passage of time and have some understanding of periods in history such as the Victorians and the ancient Egyptians. They compare old and new when considering the way toys have changed. In a very good lesson Year 6 pupils looked at domestic items from Victorian times and tried to work out what they were used for. Staff worked very well together to ensure that pupils all had opportunities to look at and feel the objects and then match them to their modern day equivalent. There are good links with other subjects including ICT and PSHE in both geography and history and this promotes pupils' learning further. The subject is well organised and monitoring has ensured that strengths and weaknesses have been identified and improvements in the curriculum made.

Religious education

One lesson and parts of lessons were seen in religious education. Pupils' work was sampled and discussions held with staff.

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are many opportunities for pupils to develop an understanding of different faiths.
- A very good understanding of pupils' needs ensures that resources are used very well.

- Although leadership of the subject is good there needs to be a closer monitoring of when the subject is taught and for how long.

Commentary

62. Pupils make good progress in understanding about their own and others' beliefs. The school ensures that a range of festivals are celebrated such as the Jewish festival of Sukkoth, the Chinese New Year, harvest festival, Divali and Hanukkah. Stories from the Bible are used well to encourage pupils to think about aspects such as friendship and following rules. There are many opportunities for pupils to experience spirituality and photographic evidence shows pupils' clear delight and awe and wonder when they placed items in bags and these were hung up for others to choose and find out what was inside.
63. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers work hard to ensure that lessons are interesting and that pupils understand events and their meanings for example of the Last Supper or Hanukkah. To do this they use a good range of activities that enable pupils to experience stories from the Bible such as acting out the story of Moses or decorating pots to hold candles for Divali. Artefacts linked, for example, to the Muslim faith and visits to local churches are used well to support pupils' learning. Teachers make appropriate use of the end of the day as a time for prayer and reflection.
64. The subject is well led and managed. Effective monitoring has ensured that the strengths and weaknesses within the subject have been identified and good progress has been made since the last inspection. Most religious education lessons are held at the end of the day and are linked to PSHE. The school recognises that occasionally this means that insufficient time is given to the subject and is looking at ways of addressing this.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Design and technology

Not enough evidence was collected to make an overall judgement about provision in design and technology. Pupils' work was scrutinised and discussions held with staff. A special lesson for all the pupils in Years 3 to 6 was seen.

65. Pupils thoroughly enjoyed taking part in a 'Ready, Steady, Cook' lesson on pancake day. The resources were prepared very well and the occasion was very well organised. Exceptional care was taken in the preparation of resources. For example a pupil on a gluten free diet was able to play a full part in the lesson, and have some pancakes to enjoy at the end because staff ensured that food and flour were prepared beforehand. Over twenty pupils took part, and the level of staffing was very good. Pupils worked in mixed age groups providing an excellent opportunity for social development.
66. Design and technology alternates with art and design on the timetable. As a result, pupils do not have weekly access to design and technology throughout the year. There are special events, however, like the pancake day lesson and pizza making during Italian week. Pupils designed and made the toppings, then baked, their pizzas. Because there is no specialist accommodation for design and technology staff have to organise and wheel microwaves ovens round the school on trolleys for food technology, which is a far from ideal situation. Displays of the pupils' work in Years 4, 5 and 6 show that they have had a range of experiences including making model cars from boxes and evaluating how well each car moved.

Physical education

Not enough evidence was collected to make an overall judgement about provision in physical education. Pupils were observed in the hydrotherapy pool and hall, on a visit to a primary school, and doing their individual mobility exercises.

67. The new hydrotherapy pool, with its beautiful stained glass window, is an excellent facility. In swimming lessons pupils have very trusting relationships with staff, who take the utmost care to make these sessions a wonderful opportunity for pupils to flex their limbs and float. Teachers, learning assistants and physiotherapists work together exceptionally well as a multidisciplinary team. The sophisticated light and sound system in the pool can be voice, sound or manually activated to create a spiritually calm and relaxing ambience for pupils to enjoy.
68. Opportunities for pupils to attend mainstream schools are used well to develop pupils' skills. For example a Year 4 pupil visited a local primary school for a gymnastics lesson. He enjoys the opportunity to work with other pupils and remains fully involved throughout the lesson. He behaves very well and is very attentive. He achieves very well not only in the development of his gymnastic skills but also in his personal and social development. With the help of his learning support assistant, he learns how to balance on three body parts and crawl on hands and knees.
69. In a Years 3 to 6 lesson, pupils worked in three groups, to design and perform dances to music. They concentrate very well and were happy and spirited. In one group, pupils were very innovative and enjoyed the opportunity to demonstrate their dance to the rest of the class. They could each spin their chairs through 360 degrees in time to the music.
70. The physiotherapists are fully integrated into the life of the school. They design individual physiotherapy programmes and train the teaching and support staff very effectively to use these programmes. Pupils were observed at the start of the day doing their exercises. Staff have total respect for the pupils, and pupils enjoy wonderfully trusting relationships with the staff. Throughout the day pupils are encouraged to be as independent as possible. They have individual mobility programmes using excellent equipment, for example, to practise walking down a corridor. A Year 4 boy, in a powered wheelchair, is learning how to manoeuvre his chair independently through a series of obstacles in the hall, and learning how to move his head to activate a switch in his headrest.

Music

Only part of one lesson was seen, so a judgement was not made in this subject. Discussions were held with staff about planning and pupils' work.

71. In the lesson, pupils from a local primary school joined with pupils at Claremont to make music with percussion instruments. Pupils really enjoyed the activity and all pupils, including those with complex difficulties, remained alert. The opportunity to work with pupils from a mainstream school on a stimulating task promoted their personal and social skills extremely well. The 'Drake Music Project' in which highly skilled, professional musicians work with the pupils in school hugely enriches the curriculum in music. Sounds in electronic form are used to engage the pupils' interest and they are taught how to use switches to alter and control the sounds. In an excellent session, a pupil with very complex difficulties tried extremely hard and learned very quickly that she could change the sounds using a switch attached to her knee. She clearly enjoyed the session greatly and was very keen to contribute. A small number of pupils benefit from music therapy which promotes their communication very well.

Art and design

Only one lesson was seen in art and design so a judgement was not made about this subject. Discussions were held with staff about planning and pupils' work.

72. Art work on display shows that the pupils follow a rich curriculum with good opportunities to work in the style of famous artists. For example, pupils in Years 4 and 5 have researched the

work of Jackson Pollock using the internet and made lively 'splatter' paintings by dipping their brushes into different coloured paint and flicking them on to paper. Pupils enjoy opportunities to create art work and they have recorded that 'it was very messy but great fun'. In the lesson which was observed, pupils in Years 3 and 4 cut and ripped pieces of paper to make a collage copy of 'The Snail' by Matisse. Because pupils were given very good support and the lesson was very well planned, they made very good progress in exploring the use of colour and shape and in developing skills such as tracing over an outline, cutting and sticking.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

A range of opportunities were observed in which pupils' personal, social and health education were developed. Discussions were held with staff and pupils' targets and assessments were scrutinised.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Personal, social and health education is an integral part of the everyday life of the school and its pupils and as a result pupils make excellent progress.
- All staff encourage pupils to make choices and decisions for themselves at every appropriate opportunity.
- Methods for assessing and recording the progress pupils' make are excellent.
- Although there is a temporary co-ordinator in place the subject continues to be led and developed well.

Commentary

73. Personal, social and health education forms the core of the school's work and is taught implicitly throughout the school day. Every opportunity is taken by all staff whether at arrival and home times, lunch and break times, to reinforce and develop pupils' personal and social skills. Lunchtimes, for example, are used very well to convey to pupils the importance of taking turns, sharing, making decisions and positive social interactions with peers. Arrival times are used very well for meeting and greeting pupils and encouraging their awareness of others and the world around them. Pupils make excellent progress in their targets and parents are very positive about how the children's skills have developed. Formal opportunities such as health education take place through the year and support pupils' learning further.
74. Teaching by all staff is excellent because they take every opportunity to develop pupils' personal and social skills. In all lessons staff teams are guiding, praising and encouraging pupils, giving them feedback and eliciting responses. At all times staff work dynamically with pupils to ensure their engagement with the world around them and their awareness of others. Teachers and support staff are very aware of how to improve and develop pupils' skills. Pupils are not given answers and do not have choices made for them until they have been given an opportunity to respond for themselves, and this is a core school value which is reflected in the work of all the staff teams. When pupils do make choices they are rewarded with praise, thanks and encouragement and in this way the personal, social and health education programme ensures that interactions between staff and pupils are characterised by positive regard and mutual respect. The staff's awareness of what is expected of them in this respect is exemplary and the assuredness of their approach leads to some outstanding work in this area.
75. The commercial assessment programme enables staff to break down personal, social and health education objectives into small, incremental steps. The programme is very detailed and although only recently introduced for personal, social and health education it is already proving a very good tool for assessing pupils' personal, social and health education achievements and planning the next steps in their development. The school rightly places great emphasis on photographic recording in personal, social and health education. There are excellent photographic records around the school and in pupils' files of their involvement in various personal, social and health education and citizenship projects such as the Youth Parliament

Elections and the Life Skills Bus project. The use of photographs to show what pupils can do form an excellent record of achievement for pupils and are presented in their work files just as written work would be. The cumulative results show how important personal, social and health education is to the pupils and how central it is to the work of the school.

76. Leadership and management of the subject is at present shared between the senior management team and this has been very effective in maintaining the excellent standards that exist throughout the school. The subject has been closely monitored and the school is very aware of the strengths and areas for development within personal, social and health education.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	1
How inclusive the school is	1
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	2
Value for money provided by the school	1
Overall standards achieved	2
Pupils' achievement	2
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	1
Attendance	2
Attitudes	1
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	1
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1
The quality of education provided by the school	2
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	2
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	1
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	1
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	1
The leadership and management of the school	1
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	1
The effectiveness of management	2

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.