

INSPECTION REPORT

Penn School

High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 133586

Headteacher: Mrs Mary-Nêst Richardson

Lead inspector: Alan Tattersall

Dates of inspection: 3rd - 6th May 2005

Inspection number: 272501

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:	Non-maintained special
Age range of pupils:	11-19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	48
School address:	Church Road Penn High Wycombe Buckinghamshire
Postcode:	HP10 8LZ
Telephone number:	01494 812139
Fax number:	01494 811400
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Gillian Harding
Date of previous inspection:	Not inspected previously.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Penn School is a non-maintained school for pupils aged 11 to 19 who have communication difficulties associated with hearing impairment or speech and language difficulties. Almost half of all pupils have associated autistic spectrum disorder (ASD), whilst a few have severe ASD. Fourteen of the 48 pupils on roll are girls. More than half the pupils are from ethnic minorities although English is their first language. Twelve of the fifteen pupils with hearing impairment have British Sign Language as their first language and are taught in separate classes from pupils with speech and language difficulties. Nearly a third of the pupils stay in the residence for varying periods from Monday to Friday. Five pupils require free school meals. Two pupils are in public care. All pupils are disapplied from studying a modern foreign language. Most pupils come currently from London and Southeast England.

The school became non-maintained in December 2001 when Camden local education authority sold it to the newly established Rayners Special Educational Trust, who assumed responsibility. The school has not been inspected previously as a non-maintained school. The Investors in People award was obtained in 2003. There are speech therapists, occupational therapists and physiotherapists based on site.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
20466	Alan Tattersall	Lead inspector	Physical education, music, design and technology, English as an additional language.
9173	Sarah McDermott	Lay inspector	
29452	Christine Emerson	Team inspector	Mathematics, geography, personal, social and health education and citizenship education.
14563	Graham Pirt	Team inspector	English, information and communication technology, art and design, special educational needs.
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Penn School is a **good** school. Pupils and post-16 students achieve well and develop very good attitudes to work. The quality of education, teaching and learning and leadership is **good**. Management and governance are satisfactory. The school provides **good** value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils achieve very well in art and design and music.
- Pupils pass examinations in a good range of subjects.
- Hearing impaired pupils receive very effective support and as a result they achieve very well.
- Staff encourage pupils to develop very good relationships and this ensures that they respect each other's values and beliefs, leading to racial harmony and a strong sense of community.
- The Young Business Enterprise scheme for post-16 students develops their business and social skills very well.
- The school has developed very good links with the community and a consequence is the very good range of visits and visitors to school to enrich pupils' learning.
- The school has a large budget deficit and this impacts on resources such as the computers available.
- The achievement of a few of the pupils with severe autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) is satisfactory rather than good because of weaknesses in teaching strategies and those pupils' learning environment.
- The school's systems to check its performance are not sufficient to gain an accurate picture of all of its strengths and weaknesses so that it can plan more effectively to make improvements.

The school has not been inspected since becoming a non-maintained school.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	In relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	Personal and social education
Year 9	Good	Good
Year 11	Good	Good
Year 13	Good	Good

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

The achievement of pupils and post-16 students is good. The strong support provided ensures that those with speech and language difficulties achieve well. Pupils achieve well in English overall, although achievement in writing is less well developed. Pupils make good progress in mathematics and science, personal, social and health education and citizenship education. Specialist teachers in art and music ensure that pupils achieve very well in these subjects. Achievement in information and communication technology is satisfactory overall but pupils do not have enough access to sufficient resources such as computers in lessons throughout the day to use their skills. Pupils and post-16 students with hearing impairment achieve very well because of the very good signing support that they receive to communicate. Effective careers education, college placements and participation in Young Business Enterprise ensures that pupils and post-16 students achieve well in work related learning and they are prepared well for life beyond the school. Most pupils achieve similarly well regardless of their special educational needs, but a few of the pupils who have severe ASD do not make the same progress because of a recognised need for more staff training and improvements to pupils' learning environment. Pupils have a very positive attitude to learning. They behave well in school and in the residence, although inconsistencies in the monitoring of pupils'

behaviour limit the effectiveness of measures to make further improvements. Relationships with each other and staff are very good. Pupils' personal, social, moral, spiritual and cultural development is good. Attendance is good and punctuality is satisfactory but systems to check and further improve attendance and punctuality require development.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning are **good** for pupils and post-16 students. Teachers are skilled at choosing activities and resources that encourage and enable pupils to learn well, although they are less successful in teaching the few pupils with severe ASD. The assessment of pupils' work and progress is satisfactory. Speech therapists, occupational therapists, and physiotherapists make strong contributions to pupils' learning. The curriculum is good and well organised to meet most pupils' special educational needs at each stage in their school career. Residential provision is good and pupils who stay, or those who join in with activities in the evening before they go home, benefit from a very good range of additional activities to enhance their learning. There are very good links with the community to enhance pupils' learning and local people have given generous support to help the school to improve facilities. The school provides satisfactory care for its pupils and good support for their personal development. Links with parents and local schools and colleges are good. The school considers the views of pupils well.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is good. The headteacher provides a strong lead to developments, ably supported by senior staff. Management is satisfactory but the school does not have sufficient effective systems to determine how well it is doing and this affects its ability to plan further improvements. Governance is satisfactory. Governors are beginning to be involved in more focussed visits to school and have a satisfactory understanding of the school's strength and weaknesses. The school inherited a large budget deficit on its formation. This is decreasing as the number of pupils attending increases. The purchase of the school from the local education authority involved a significant bank loan, which impacts on the budget significantly. This has affected the school's ability to make all the improvements it requires, including enabling subject leaders to have more opportunities to check on their subject and support their colleagues. However, financial management is satisfactory and the school is working diligently and closely with the Rayners Special Educational Trust, who are addressing the financial problem.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents hold the school in very high regard and are very supportive. Most are very positive about all aspects of the school. In particular, they are very happy that their children enjoy school and that they are taught well and treated fairly. Pupils like the school very much and are pleased to give their ideas of what improvements they wish to see.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Continue to work with the Rayners Special Educational Trust to eliminate the budget deficit.
- Improve staff training and the learning environment to improve the achievement of the few pupils who have severe ASD.
- Ensure that there are effective systems to monitor, evaluate and take action to improve the school's effectiveness.
- Increase opportunities for pupils to use ICT to support their learning throughout the day.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in subjects

Achievement is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good in art and design and music.
 - Pupils are successful in examination courses.
 - Hearing impaired pupils and students achieve very well.
 - Pupils in public care and those from minority ethnic groups achieve as well as others.
 - Progress for the few pupils with severe ASD is restricted by the need for improvements in their provision.
1. The standards ¹ that pupils and post-16 students in the school achieve are good overall. Since they achieve well in mathematics and communication and speaking and listening and reading, they are well prepared to use these skills in lessons in all subjects. However, they are less prepared to use information and communication technology (ICT) to help them with their work throughout the day because achievement in ICT is only satisfactory. Achievement in writing is satisfactory. They make good progress in acquiring skills in lessons in personal, social and health education (PSHE) and in developing understanding of their place in the community in citizenship lessons. Very good relationships with each other and staff lead to discussions that help pupils make good progress in personal development and develop a good understanding of social issues. In music and art and design, pupils' achievement is very good and in line with the quality of teaching in the subjects and the opportunities the school provides to enhance pupils' understanding of these aspects.
 2. Nearly all pupils were entered for Entry Level at the end of Year 11 last year and achieved good success in English, mathematics, science, geography, art and design, food studies, personal and social education and history. This is good in comparison with similar schools. A few post-16 students achieved success in Young Enterprise Business Studies and a few students, who were new to the school, achieved Entry level in most of the subjects available to younger pupils. The good provision for work related learning leads to students achieving well in life skills and college placements and being well prepared for leaving school.
 3. The pupils in the special classes for those with hearing difficulties achieve particularly well. This is because they benefit from especially skilful and knowledgeable teaching, which takes very good account of pupils' individual needs. The very good use of British Sign Language, ensures that pupils play as full a part as possible in lessons and activities. Often during lessons, such as when post-16 students were learning about the general election, they initially find the work difficult because they do not know vocabulary such as 'polling station'. However, staff are very skilled at linking the explanation with signs and concepts that pupils already know. Consequently, pupils learn quickly and move on to the next task and this reinforces their confidence in their ability to communicate. This boosting of their self-esteem is an important factor in the very good progress that they make in subjects.
 4. The school places a strong emphasis upon meeting the diverse needs of pupils in school through providing individual support. This means that the large number of pupils from ethnic minorities and the few pupils in public care receive the support that they require to achieve as well as other pupils. There is no difference in the achievement of boys and girls since the curriculum is suited to all pupils' needs.

¹ In a special school such as this, 'standards achieved' are judged in relation to pupils' individual targets and not to national standards.

5. Pupils show good progress towards the targets set for them in individual education plans in literacy and numeracy. All pupils who have speech and language difficulties receive the support they require including from speech therapists. This is because there is a strong emphasis in lessons and throughout the school day for all pupils to improve their communication skills. Most pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) receive effective support through the use of aids such as PECs² and this is a positive factor in ensuring that they achieve as well as other pupils. The school is building up skills and facilities to make improvements for the few pupils with severe ASD since their achievement is satisfactory because they need better support and guidance and the classroom environments do not fully meet their needs.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes to learning are **very good**. Their behaviour and personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is **good**. Pupils' attendance is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils like being at school and are keen to learn.
- The very good relationships in the school ensure that pupils co-operate very well together.
- Behaviour in and around the school is good although recording systems to provide information to make improvements to behaviour are not used consistently.
- The recording system for attendance and punctuality is not reliable and does not provide enough information to plan to make further improvements.

Commentary

6. Pupils are enthusiastic about school life and approach their learning in a positive manner. They enjoy coming to school and participate very well in the lessons, very often remaining interested and involved in the tasks for long periods. This means that they concentrate on their work, which helps them to make good progress in their learning. Very good attitudes are in evidence throughout the school regardless of pupils' special educational needs. For example, a group of older pupils with hearing impairment concentrated for extended periods in a very mature manner when they were looking at family relationships. Pupils respond particularly well to lively activities in class such as the 'brain gym', session which is used at the start of lessons.
7. Pupils welcome visitors into their classrooms and are polite to them. They are keen to give their ideas, for instance, pupils with speech and language difficulties make suggestions and volunteer to explain their work using the class whiteboard in a mathematics lesson, confident that their ideas will be accepted. Members of the school council are very enthusiastic to discuss their role in the school and have made a number of very salient points about the strengths of the school and what they would like to be improved. The school council helps pupils to develop understanding of democratic principles. This was enhanced further when the school held its own 'general election' at the time of the inspection.
8. Pupils throughout the school receive effective guidance and encouragement to relate and co-operate very well with each other and with adults. Older pupils show that they are capable of taking initiative and responsibility when they help each other. For example, a post-16 student offered to help another when he realised that help was needed to pour slip clay into a mould during an art lesson. Vocational opportunities such as visits to college and work experience help pupils and students to develop their independence.

² . *The Picture Exchange Communication System (PECs) is an augmentative communication system developed to help individuals acquire a functional means of communication*

9. There are clear procedures and expectations for the management of unwanted behaviour. These often work well and the behaviour of pupils is good overall. However, the recording of behaviour is not sufficiently precise in order to track difficulties and the outcomes of any intervention to make further improvements to reflect the school's high expectations for pupils to behave better. There have been no exclusions recorded.
10. The development of spiritual and cultural knowledge is supported well in religious education and through other subjects, such as science, music and art and design. Pupils care a great deal about each other and this means that there is a very high degree of tolerance in lessons when they wait patiently for staff who frequently provide individual explanations to pupils who have communication difficulties. Pupils develop a good sense of right and wrong and respect for the feelings and beliefs of others is very good. A significant factor in this is the positive role models provided by staff. Pupils and students with hearing impairment have positive experiences of meeting deaf adults and developing a good awareness of deaf culture to promote their confidence and self-esteem. The very positive relationships between everyone are evident in the very good racial harmony in the school. There is a strong sense of community and this has a very beneficial effect on pupils' social development.
11. The attendance of the pupils is good and compares well with broadly similar schools. Pupils are keen to come to school, encouraged by staff who are very welcoming and provide plenty of interesting activities. Absence is mainly due to illness and medical conditions. Most pupils arrive on time for the beginning of the school day. However, a few pupils are regularly late and miss the valuable settling in time and the important starts of lessons.
12. Current keeping of registers does not reflect good practice for registration and the school is planning to improve this through providing 'standard' registers rather than its own design. This will ensure that there is consistency and security for instance, in using symbols to record reasons for absence to provide a suitable means of improving attendance further. It is unsatisfactory that the school does not methodically record lateness. Although most pupils are late through no fault of their own, the school is not keeping a daily record of lateness to enable it to work with local education authorities (LEAs), taxi firms and parents to improve time keeping.

Attendance

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year 2003-2004(%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data:	6.3	School data :	0.2
National data:	7.0	National data:	1.2

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is **good**. Teaching and learning and the curriculum are **good**. Pupils receive **satisfactory** care and are guided and supported **well**. Partnerships with parents and other schools are **good** and links with the community are **very good**.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning are **good**. Assessment is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good in art and design and music.

- Very good relationships between staff and pupils ensure a very positive atmosphere for learning in lessons.
- Although there are very good examples of planning for teaching assistants to make significant contributions to lessons, this is not consistent throughout the school.
- The teaching of pupils who have hearing impairment is very effective.
- Very good and excellent teaching skills are not shared systematically with others.
- Teachers are skilled at providing support for most pupils' special educational needs but need to gain more skills to meet the needs of pupils with severe ASD.
- There are good systems of assessment but these are not always used to good effect.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 41 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (2%)	11 (27%)	21 (51%)	6 (15%)	2 (5%)	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages but care should be taken when interpreting the data since each lesson represents more than two per cent.

- Effective teaching ensures that pupils achieve well. Lessons in English and mathematics are taught well overall, aided by school initiatives to improve teaching methods that ensure that lessons are planned well. This good emphasis on literacy and numeracy has a positive impact upon pupils' learning in all subjects. There is a suitably strong emphasis upon encouraging pupils to communicate and this has enabled pupils to achieve well. Teachers are, however, less successful in promoting pupils' writing skills. For instance, they use worksheets too much. Teachers of art and design and music bring a very high level of expertise to their subjects and consequently this ensures that pupils make very good progress. A strength in these lessons is the teachers' enthusiasm and skill in motivating pupils to achieve.
- Staff encourage pupils to be relaxed, happy and responsive to learning in lessons and these are strong factors in the very good attitudes and relationships that pupils' develop. Teachers plan well to ensure that activities and resources for learning motivate pupils. They plan to ensure that teaching assistants make a good contribution to lessons overall. For example, there was exceptionally good planning for the teaching assistant in an excellent English lesson for pupils in Year 8 to support lower ability pupils and hence ensure that all pupils made equal progress. Several teaching assistants undertake specific responsibilities including providing communication support for hearing impaired pupils, supporting pupils with ASD and leading lessons in ICT. The high number of staff in lessons means that occasionally adults step in and help pupils rather than encourage the pupils to persevere themselves. Occasionally teaching assistants do not have sufficiently specific guidance on what they should do. This leads to pupils making less progress than they could in a lesson, for instance, through staff providing too much help so that pupils do not contribute as much as they should.
- Teachers have a good understanding of the special educational needs of pupils. There is very good provision for those with hearing impairment. Lessons are planned very effectively with a strong emphasis upon the language content and knowledge of pupils' level of communication skills. This was evident in a food technology lesson for pupils in Year 11. The teacher and 'deaf communicator' ensured that all pupils understood what the teacher was saying through directing signs to each pupil in line with their prior learning in the subject, acquisition of communication and use of British Sign Language. Speech and language therapists contribute well to the teaching of pupils with speech and language difficulties and this is a strong factor in supporting the progress that pupils and students make. Occupational therapists also make a valued contribution to supporting pupils' progress through their guidance for pupils and training for staff. Teaching for those pupils with ASD is as effective as with other pupils overall but the strategies for teaching the few with severe ASD are not always used effectively. This is an area that the school has identified for improvement.

16. There is a significant amount of teaching that is very good or excellent. In these lessons there are examples of exemplary practice such as the very effective use of technology, work that is planned to match each pupil's needs and changes of pace in the lesson to maintain pupils' interest. On occasions, teachers and assistants provide good 'time warnings' for pupils and this provides a spur for pupils to finish their work. However, there are few opportunities for teachers to share this very good or excellent practice through visits to each other's class, demonstration or drawing attention to effective practice. It is an appropriate school aim to improve the quality of teaching and learning further, for instance, through subject leaders supporting senior managers in checking the work of colleagues.
17. A good system for tracking the progress which pupils make in relation to P Levels³ and National Curriculum Levels has been introduced recently but it is not yet used consistently by teachers to plan for pupils to make further progress. This means that on occasions, lessons do not take full account of the wide range of pupils' ability to ensure for instance, that the work chosen is always closely matched pupils' assessed level of learning. Very good examples of marking provide guidance for pupils to improve. However, this effective practice is not used effectively throughout the school to ensure that all pupils benefit. The arrangements for pupils' work to be assessed through Entry Level are good and enables most pupils to receive accreditation at their appropriate level. The school recognises the need to extend the range of accreditation to a few pupils or students who need to have assessment matched to a lower level or to achieve in GCSE.

The curriculum

The curriculum is **good** with **very good** opportunities provided for enrichment. Accommodation, staffing and resources are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum provides a good range of subjects and courses, which are suitable for the age and interests of the pupils and students.
- Pupils and students are prepared well for moving on to the next stage of their lives.
- Learning time is lost occasionally because lessons do not start on time.
- Additional experiences provide interesting and motivating activities for pupils.
- The learning environment does not meet the needs of the few pupils with severe ASD.

Commentary

18. The school's effective curriculum places a good emphasis on the development of pupils' communication skills and the promotion their confidence and self-esteem. The National Curriculum is adapted well to meet the particular needs of the pupils. In order to give pupils a sense of security and continuity, most lessons are taught in pupils' base classrooms by the class teachers rather than by specialists. Although this leads to pupils in Year 11 achieving well in at Entry Level examinations, it reduces the school's ability to provide accredited GCSE courses in some subjects for the few pupils who need them for instance, in mathematics. Currently, there are also no accredited courses available for pupils and students with more complex needs. However, the school is planning appropriately to rectify this by the introduction of the ASDAN⁴ 'Towards Independence' award.

³ A set of measures for recording the achievement of pupils with special educational needs who are working towards the first level of the National Curriculum.

⁴ . *Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network*

19. There is a suitable emphasis throughout the school in promoting the key skills of communication, literacy and numeracy. Although pupils have satisfactory access to ICT overall, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to develop their skills in using ICT in the different subjects of the curriculum. The personal and social education programme and work related learning prepare pupils well for adult life. For example, post-16 students learn 'life skills', such as making snacks. They gain self-confidence and an understanding of business through participation in the Young Business Enterprise scheme. Pupils receive good support to make the transition to further education through regular attendance at several colleges of further education. Health education is enhanced well by the involvement of the school nurse who works closely with teachers to help pupils learn the importance of healthy living and to follow a course in sex and relationships education.
20. The timetable is planned to provide adequate time to enable pupils to follow the full range of subjects required. However, time is lost occasionally through lessons that start late or are disrupted as pupils arrive late. Although they are important areas of school life, activities such as assemblies may over run the scheduled time and on occasions, pupils are slow to return to classrooms after break. This means that teaching time is lost. Although a few pupils are also regularly withdrawn from the same subject lessons for therapy, this is largely balanced by the benefit that pupils gain from the support that they receive from therapists.
21. The curriculum is broadened and enriched by a very good range of stimulating activities such as horse riding, golf and sign-dance workshops. Pupils have many opportunities to participate in educational visits to museums, places of historical interest and art galleries. For example, this year they have been to the National Portrait and Tate Galleries and Warwick Castle. Pupils' understanding of world faiths is enhanced through visits to places of worship. These have included a visit to the Gurdwara in Southall, which enabled them to gain a good insight into the practices of the Sikh religion. Pupils benefit from visits arranged by the Variety Club. Fifteen pupils have been to the London Aquarium and further visits are planned to places of interest such as Hampton Court and the Tower of London. There is a weekly 'evening activity plan' in the residence where pupils are offered a good range of activities including art and design, sports, music, computer games, Internet access. These activities are supplemented by weekly shopping trips and judo. Pupils also have opportunities to visit the cinema and theatre. Valued speech and language therapy sessions take place during the evening. Day pupils are able to access the weekly youth club as part of an extended school day.
22. The curriculum for pupils with special educational needs is effective in meeting the needs of most pupils including the few in public care and the large number from ethnic minorities. Most pupils with speech and language difficulties and hearing impairment are in classes designated for those special educational needs and this is beneficial overall in ensuring that they have good access to the curriculum. Most pupils with ASD make the same progress as other pupils in the school because they receive the support they require for instance, through the use of PECs. However, the accommodation for pupils with severe ASD does not reduce the sensory stimulation they experience nor are resources used consistently to help them. For this small number of pupils, the curriculum is satisfactory overall.
23. The provision for pupils with hearing impairment is very good. Teachers and support staff are very well qualified to teach them and their classrooms are suitably sound treated to support their learning. The accommodation is satisfactory overall. In spite of budget restraints, the school has made some very good improvements to accommodation in a short time through generous support from the community and staff commitment. This has included the creation of very good science and food technology rooms and extensive improvements to comply with the requirements for residential pupils. Hearing impaired post-16 students have access to a refurbished suite of rooms including a small kitchen, however, the classroom is too small. The pupils benefit from access to large and attractive grounds, which include a pond and a nature trail. The gymnasium equipment is not currently in use because it requires updating. Although improvements are ongoing, the buildings are not fully accessible to pupils with physical disabilities. For example, the route to the ceramics room is difficult to traverse in a wheelchair and there is no disabled access to the kiln room.

Care, guidance and support

The care, welfare, health and safety of the pupils are **satisfactory**. The provision of support, advice and guidance is **good**. The school involves pupils **well** in its work and development.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils place great trust in adults in school and know they can turn to them if they are sad or worried.
- The school is welcoming and the staff provide high levels of personal support.
- More rigorous systems are required to improve the overall level of care that pupils receive.
- Pupils feel their views are valued and that they have a voice in the school.

Commentary

24. Pupils are confident that they are looked after well in school. They feel at home and have very good relationships with adults. If pupils have concerns, whether linked to school life or stemming from home or personal problems, they all have someone in whom they can confide. They can chat to adults informally or post a confidential note in the "Listen Up" letter box, knowing that their worry will be followed up. If pupils prefer to talk to an adult without school ties, the headteacher provides them with good opportunities via 'independent listeners' or 'Childline'. Pupils receive good care in the residence and the breakfast club is a valuable addition for day pupils to have breakfast after their journey to school.
25. Staff communicate effectively and ensure that pupils' personal and pastoral needs are met well. Regular staff meetings and close working between the boarding staff and the teachers mean that pupils receive high levels of individual support. Staff are sensitive to pupils' problems beyond the school and ensure that they work well with parents and carers for the benefit of pupils. Children in public care are well cared for and achieve just as positively as their peers. The school prepares students well for moving on to further education and life beyond Penn by means of well-planned activities linked to citizenship and social development. Through pupils' individual education plans and regular reviews, the staff maintain a good track of each pupil's personal development. However, the monitoring of the pupils' academic achievement is not consistently thorough. Targets for improvement are occasionally imprecise to enable staff to record the small but very important steps that pupils make in their progress.
26. The school has good procedures to ensure the pupils' medical and therapy needs are met. The school nurse and a team of staff with first aid qualifications oversee the administration of medicines effectively and treat minor accidents properly. A good range of therapies improves the pupils' quality of life and ability to learn. However, the restricted times when therapy is available invariably means that the school needs to balance pupils' needs for therapy with a few pupils missing important lessons at the same time each week. Staff know what to do should they have concerns regarding child protection. Teachers, teaching assistants and child care staff have received recent training in child protection but this has not yet been extended to all staff. Procedures for ensuring health and safety are satisfactory. The school needs to formalise more its systems for checking upon these, including those for recording behaviour, incidents and monitoring pupils' movements when they are in school. For instance, records regarding behaviour incidents and their management do not give an overall picture of trends over time or if required, the information the school needs to try a different approach. The school is working appropriately to meet the recommendations of the latest care standards report for pupils in the residence.
27. The suggestions and concerns of pupils matter to the school. Pupils have a good opportunity to be involved in the meetings to review their progress and voice their likes and dislikes. The school council provides a valuable forum for pupils to air their views and make democratic decisions. Nevertheless, there are insufficient opportunities for the older students to take on

more responsibilities for the good of the school community. There is scope for pupils to be more involved in their education targets and in understanding what they need to do to improve.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents are very appreciative of the education and guidance provided for their children.
- The school keeps parents well informed so that they can work effectively to support their children.
- The school makes the most of opportunities in the locality to extend the pupils' learning and personal development.
- Older pupils and students have very good opportunities to prepare for the next stage in their lives.

Commentary

28. Parents are strong supporters of Penn school. They are particularly grateful for the good attention given to their children's individual needs. Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school and know that the teachers are ready to follow up concerns and answer queries about their children. The headteacher and governors regularly ask for parents' views, but do not keep parents sufficiently up to date on the results of the surveys and how the school is implementing any suggestions. The 'Friends of Penn' raise good amounts of extra funds for the school and have run popular events attended by many local residents.
29. The school gives parents a good amount of information on how their children are getting on. Parents have a very good formal opportunity each term to speak to their child's teachers and therapists. The home-school book allows parents to communicate well with school. Annual reports give parents a satisfactory overview of what their children have been learning, but are not sufficiently consistent in giving a clear message on how the pupil has progressed in each subject. Special courses on sign language and access to 'Autism Bucks' based at the school are very useful for parents. The prospectus, 'induction pack' and website provide useful background information for parents. However, parents are not given enough information about the school's admission policy and the criteria for successful "trial" periods.
30. The school has very good relationships with the local community and this leads to arrangements for interesting activities and visits in the area to enliven the pupils' learning and help them in their social development. The local football team makes an important contribution to lessons in physical education. Pupils often go into Penn village for instance, to visit the church for religious education and to participate in local judo classes. The students completing the Young Business Enterprise award sold their ceramic pots in the village hall recently. The local community makes good use of the school football pitch and the school works with 'Wycombe Wildlife' to develop the nature areas within the school's grounds.
31. The school has established links with a good range of schools and colleges. Post-16 students attend courses matched well to their need at four different further education colleges and are successful. The link with the Connexions service provides the school with good advice in finding work experience placements. Particularly popular is a 'Skids' course for motor mechanics. There is valuable collaboration with other special schools for the music festival and a youth club, where pupils can meet weekly to develop their social skills.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership is **good**. Management of the school and governance are **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a clear vision of the way forward for the school and has initiated many improvements.
- Senior managers provide strong support for school leadership.
- The new governing body is developing its role and function.
- Methods to check on the school's performance are insufficiently precise to allow planning for improvement to be firmly rooted in accurate information.
- The large budget deficit has a negative impact on school improvement.

Commentary

32. The school is aware of the major challenges it faces. These are the potential and condition of some of the accommodation, the lack of finance since purchasing the school from Camden LEA, building up pupil numbers and obtaining support without the backup an LEA. However, the headteacher demonstrates total commitment to the schools' success and has galvanised much support among staff, governors, parents and local and national people. She is ably supported by the deputy headteacher and other senior staff to lead many improvements, particularly to the curriculum and organisation. Aspirations are shared by staff and governors to develop the school into a centre of excellence that will provide for pupils with speech and language difficulties, hearing impairment, and ASD. Subject leaders generally provide good leadership for their subjects, but shortage of funds impacts on aspects of management, particularly for subject development. For example, those teachers with a higher level of subject knowledge do not have sufficient opportunities to share this with colleagues because of the cost of providing the opportunities for them to do this. Subject leaders are required by the headteacher to devise a development plan. However, they are not always costed nor indicate when the plans will be completed and this reduces their effectiveness in a review or evaluation.
33. Governance is satisfactory. The recently reconstituted governing body is beginning to acquire formal methods to gather information about the day-to-day activities of the school. It is positive that all governors now have a link with a subject and are committed to regular arrangements to visit. Governors are developing the role of "critical friend" by questioning decisions made by the headteacher, for instance, about the recent school self-evaluation of all its activities. However, governors are unclear about the range and extent of their duties in order to evaluate procedures in school. The governors are planning appropriately to seek training from the LEA as a means of external support.
34. The headteacher and governors lack effective systems to be clear about current performance to plan precisely to improve the school further. In several areas, the information gathered is too imprecise to form the basis on which to make strategic decisions. The school's self-assessment of its performance prior to the inspection was extremely positive, reflecting the school's high aspirations. However, this was not helpful in demonstrating clearly the areas of the school's strengths and areas for development on which to base decisions. Methods to judge the school's success are developing. Assessment using P Levels has been introduced to provide information on which to base pupils' individual targets in the main subjects, track pupils' progress, determine trends and set whole school targets. This will be available in the future when record keeping, annotation and marking of pupils' work is more consistent across the school. Methods of registration, monitoring of punctuality and exclusion procedures are too imprecise to provide consistent information on which to base decisions for improvement. Governors are appropriately taking note of their responsibilities to meet the required improvements outlined in the recent Care Standards Report regarding the residence.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	1404080	Balance from previous year	-159431
Total expenditure	1429937	Balance carried forward to the next	-25857
Expenditure per pupil	30424		

35. Governors and the bursars, in association with an LEA and the trustees, maintain financial control satisfactorily. The school began operating with a budget deficit in order to meet the assessed needs for staffing and resources for the school. Although finance restricts a number of areas of the school's work, the measures that the school has taken have ensured that pupils' achievement is good. Strategic planning is hampered by uncertainty over the time-scale of plans to reduce significantly the school's deficit budget. However, many improvements have been made with generous support from the community. This has ensured improvements to classroom and residential accommodation that are beneficial to pupils' learning and personal development. This includes the provision of new science and ICT facilities. The school reports that pupil numbers have increased and continue to do so and this makes a significant improvement to the financial position. Trustees have plans to eliminate the budget deficit. This is important, since the lack of funds has an impact for instance, on the further development of ICT and staff training. The current budget deficit is much lower than in previous years and the projection is to eliminate it in the near future.

WORK RELATED LEARNING

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Post-16 students' participation in Young Business Enterprise is very good and contributes very well to their personal, social, health and citizenship education.
- Pupils have good opportunities to find out about the world of work.
- There are valuable opportunities to attend colleges of further education but there is little monitoring of placements.
- Although pupils and post-16 students undertake work experience placements in groups, they do not have sufficient opportunities to gain experience independently.

Commentary

36. The very good Young Business Enterprise scheme which is in place for post-16 students, enables them to develop social skills and understanding about how to produce and market goods to make money. The students have recently won three awards in competition with local mainstream and special schools. Their business, which makes and sells ceramics, is run very efficiently. Students participate in business meetings to decide prices and marketing strategies. They are very proud of their achievements and are working well to attain Entry Level qualifications in business studies and skills for work.

37. There are good links with the Connexions service and the local job centre to help pupils and students to learn about the world of work. Once a year, a special whole-school assembly takes place in conjunction with the Connexions advisor. This enables all pupils, including the youngest pupils in Year 7, to begin to think about what they might do when they finish school. Careers

education lessons build on this well by dealing with the issues at just the right level for the pupils. For example, pupils begin by looking at what is involved in jobs around the school, such as the duties of the school caretaker. As they progress through the school, pupils then consider work outside of school. Examples of this are the visits made by pupils in Years 10 and 11 and post-16 students to Sainsbury's and to 'hearing dogs for the deaf'. Pupils and students have good opportunities to develop and practise the skills necessary to gain employment. Pupils in Year 10 and 11 have visited the 'job centre' and followed the visit with tasks to help them to learn about the jobs available. Students have had good support to practise interview skills. Pupils have well organised careers files and there is a very good emphasis in lessons on promoting pupils' and students' self-confidence.

38. Post-16 students have good opportunities to attend courses at several local colleges of further education, which are well matched to their individual needs. For example, a student with hearing impairment attends Flackwell Heath College one day a week and receives individual support in signing and communication to undertake a course in independent living skills. There are good informal links with the colleges that students attend but procedures to monitor the placements are not developed sufficiently.
39. Pupils and students gain work experience in groups. For example, post-16 students with speech and language difficulties have weekly visits to the Skids motor project in High Wycombe and pupils in Years 9 and 10 with ASD do supervised gardening. The subject leader is hoping to extend the work experience programme by setting up 'work shadowing' in school. At present there are few opportunities for pupils and students to experience individual work placements, which are matched to their own skills and interests.

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

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 3 and 4 and POST-16

English

Seven full or part lessons were seen. Pupils' work was examined and discussions held with staff and pupils.

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are good links with speech and language therapists to support the improvement of pupils' communication.
- Although teaching is good for pupils in all parts of the school, there is insufficient use of ICT.
- There are insufficient systems for checking pupils' performance.
- Limited opportunities for pupils to write adversely affect achievement.

Commentary

40. Pupils' and post-16 students' achievement is good overall. They achieve well in speaking and listening and reading because of the school's strong emphasis on developing their communication skills. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school from Year 7 and a majority of the pupils achieve Entry Level certificate at the end of Year 11. The measurement of their progress through using targets in individual education plans shows that pupils make good progress overall.
41. Pupils with speech and language difficulties in Year 7 answer questions about factual texts that they have read. Pupils with ASD in Year 9 read with expression and can relate facts of the story when questioned while those with hearing impairment make good progress in learning to use adjectives. They start to identify ways of describing different fruits. Similar aged pupils with speech and language difficulties are making very good progress as they start to recognise different ways of joining phrases together to make sentences. Older pupils with ASD can report very precisely on what they have done over the weekend. They can sequence events with the assistance of photos taken at the time and recall what others have said as part of their listening tasks. Pupils and post-16 students with hearing impairment receive support through sign to ensure that they make the same progress as others. However, overall, pupils' speaking, listening, communication, and reading skills are more developed than their writing skills. There is an increasing emphasis on writing, but as yet it has not had sufficient time to make an impact in all classes and achievement in writing is satisfactory. There are some very good examples of writing in the school that serve as examples to others. Learning is better when the teacher plans specifically to improve writing skills. For instance, pupils in Year 8 are able, though carefully explained methods, to improve sentences through providing additional adjectives.
42. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good. Lesson planning guides all staff to ensure that pupils achieve what the teacher wants them to learn. For the most part, there is good teamwork between teachers, teaching assistants, and therapists. This helped a Year 10 group to achieve well when the speech and language therapist was part of the team to help pupils to succeed in the task to construct their responses in a logical sequence. The level of challenge for pupils is good and activities meet individual needs well. For instance, the teacher enabled a Year 11 pupil to form and understand an adjective so that he can use it in speech, as well as sign. Where lessons are very successful, teachers have high expectations that pupils will participate. There is also a very high expectation that pupils behave and this leads to very good attitudes and relationships between all of the people in the classroom. In most lessons there is very strong management and organisation of the adults, careful sequencing of the content and

the use of time so that all opportunities are taken to help pupils make progress. In a few lessons, teachers do not plan enough to make the best use of teaching assistants to help pupils. In others, the introduction takes too long to enable pupils to make better than satisfactory progress, particularly in writing.

43. Pupils and students follow a good curriculum overall. For the oldest pupils, lessons follow a syllabus based on Entry Level accreditation which is effective in providing a well-structured and balanced course. However, throughout the school, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use ICT for research and to help them to complete written tasks.
44. The systems that teachers use to assess and record pupils' work are good overall. These include the use of P levels and other nationally recognised tests including reading tests. However, the effectiveness of assessment is satisfactory. Ongoing assessment of classroom work is variable. In the best examples, work is marked to provide evidence of how targets have been achieved together with informative comments and the setting of further targets. The new tracking procedures are very positive but have not had sufficient time to become routine practice throughout the school. The results of assessments are not consistently analysed by the subject leaders. However, reports include clear descriptions of what pupils have achieved and indicate the good progress that they are making.
45. Leadership is good but management is satisfactory. The leaders' enthusiasm helps to make improvements to the subject and to motivate other staff well. Although there is some checking of lesson planning, there is insufficient monitoring of the subject through visits to lessons, a scrutiny of pupils' work, or identification of strengths and weaknesses. This reduces opportunities to make further improvements and the management of the subject is, therefore, only satisfactory.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

46. There is good use of vocabulary in specialist subjects across the school. This is particularly the case in mathematics and science where there is a high expectation for the correct use of terminology. Because of the importance of communication through signing and other augmented methods such as PECs, there is a major emphasis on the speaking and listening component of English. However, there is an inconsistent approach to providing opportunities for writing, where worksheets are often used. Opportunities for extended writing are restricted.

MATHEMATICS

Seven lessons or part lessons were seen in mathematics. A scrutiny was made of pupils' work and discussions held with teachers and pupils.

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Most pupils in Years 10 and 11 pass examinations in mathematics.
- There is a good emphasis on teaching pupils how to apply their mathematical skills to solve everyday problems.
- ICT is not used sufficiently to support pupils' learning.
- Recently introduced procedures to assess and monitor the progress which pupils make are beginning to provide useful information for the school to judge achievement.
- The subject leader is enthusiastic and committed to making improvements to the subject.
- Teachers miss opportunities to promote pupils' numeracy skills throughout other subjects.

Commentary

47. Because most teaching is good and pupils are keen to learn, they make good progress in mathematics and achieve well. The achievement of pupils in Year 11 was good last year and eight pupils achieved Entry level certificates in mathematics. Although one Year 10 pupil has started doing part of a GCSE course, the school does not currently enter pupils for the GCSE award in mathematics. This means that a small number of higher attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged. Similarly, there is also no externally accredited award to recognise the achievements of a few lower attaining pupils.
48. There is a good emphasis in lessons for pupils and students to follow practical activities to gain understanding of the application of their skills in mathematics. An example of this was in a lesson for post-16 students with hearing impairment. The teacher used a snakes and ladders game to teach counting on and back. This motivated the pupils very well and they made good progress in working with numbers. There are good examples of pupils applying mathematical skills to solve problems that prepare them well for independent living. For example, in a very good lesson for pupils in Year 8 with speech and language difficulties, the teacher was extremely skilled in teaching pupils to understand and use number language relating to money. Pupils made good progress learning about credit cards, cheques and how to handle cash.
49. Although the quality of teaching and learning is good overall, this is not consistent in all classes. Where teaching is less effective it is because the pace of the lesson is too slow so that pupils lose interest. In a few lessons the high number of support staff are not deployed effectively to support pupils' learning. Occasionally, for the few pupils with severe ASD, they do not receive the support that they require to make more than satisfactory progress. Overall, there is insufficient use of ICT to develop mathematical skills and present data.
50. The recently appointed subject leader is enthusiastic and provides good leadership. He has encouraged teachers to introduce a systematic way to prepare lessons and has introduced a new scheme of work in spite of the limited opportunities provided to check what other teachers are doing. A good system for tracking the progress which pupils make in relation to P Levels and National Curriculum assessments is being introduced although teachers do not use the system consistently yet to plan for pupils to make further progress. There is a recognition that teachers need to be consistent in their marking, for instance, through moderating marking together in order to improve the accuracy of assessment. Although the subject is developing well, it does not benefit from a subject development plan to provide a good framework for future developments and a means of assessing the success of developments.

Mathematics across the curriculum

51. Pupils have good opportunities to develop and apply their numeracy skills in other subjects of the curriculum. For example, in science, Year 7 pupils with speech and language difficulties numbered the parts of a diagram and linked this to a key of body parts of an insect. Year 9 pupils with ASD measure temperatures and decide which are higher by completing calculations using negative numbers. Teachers are aware of the importance of promoting pupils' and students' numeracy skills. However, this is not a consistent feature of lessons.

SCIENCE

Five lessons were seen in science. Evidence was also gathered from scrutinising pupils' work and holding discussions with pupils and staff.

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers plan well so that pupils find science lessons interesting.
- Resources and accommodation support learning well overall, but more ICT resources are required
- Pupils' work is not marked or annotated consistently.
- The science co-ordinator provides effective leadership but the role requires further development.
- Accreditation opportunities are good, but need to be extended for a few pupils.

Commentary

52. Pupils are well motivated in science because teachers plan interesting lessons. This has a positive effect upon pupils' success in learning and using correct scientific vocabulary to describe their work. For example, a group of pupils in Year 9 with speech and language difficulties enjoyed the success they achieved in comparing temperature readings for air, water, and soil using the pond and nature trail. Teaching and learning is good and this leads to pupils achieving well. Planning is usually good and ensures productive lessons. In a lesson for pupils in Year 8, the materials were well organised before the lesson and this allowed pupils to develop an interest quickly in designing an experiment to separate sand from salt using filtration. The presence of the speech therapist in the lesson was valuable in encouraging pupils to use appropriate language to meet their personal targets. Although pupils behave well overall, when required teachers intervene well to manage behaviour effectively. In one lesson for pupils in Year 9, this ensured that pupils worked safely in the environmental area and made good progress to predict and then measure pond and air temperatures.

53. The science co-ordinator is energetic and full of enthusiasm for the subject. She has been instrumental in setting up the new science laboratory, which is a major improvement to provision. The development plan for further improvements in science is suitable although it does not have costs and time estimates, without which it will be difficult to review and evaluate. She has correctly identified the importance of increasing support for non-specialist teachers and providing better ICT resources. The science specialist has also identified the need to provide more support for all colleagues who teach science. However, she is not able to observe lessons or work alongside other teachers to support them because of budget restrictions.

54. Although pupils follow a good range of work in the subject, their written work is not always marked consistently or annotated to record how much assistance was given to enable effective planning for pupils to learn more. Teachers know pupils well and rely on their knowledge of the pupils to assign assessment levels rather than using recognised assessments. This is not sufficiently precise to enable individual targets in science to be devised and shared with the pupils to build upon current good achievement.

55. Accreditation opportunities are good for current pupils and several gain Entry Level qualifications. A few pupils are forecast to be able to achieve GCSE in the coming years but the subject development plan does not specify that the examinations will be in place.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Three lessons of discrete ICT and several lessons where ICT was used to support other subjects were observed. Pupils' work and records were scrutinised and discussions held with staff.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils work purposefully and actively in lessons.
- The subject leader provides good support to staff who require guidance in the subject.
- Pupils do not have sufficient access to ICT throughout the day to support their learning.
- Staff require more training in teaching ICT skills.

Commentary

56. The quality of teaching and learning are satisfactory overall and this leads to satisfactory achievement. Within discrete lessons of ICT, effective strategies are in place to ensure that all ability groups maintain a good learning pace throughout the lessons. This is helped by the class teachers who support pupils when the teaching assistant leads lessons. There are strengths in the planning and management of lessons, resulting in pupils remaining interested in their tasks and activities at most times. When working in the computer suite the pupils are helpful and co-operative. The older pupils approach their tasks with confidence because they can build on the skills already acquired. Pupils behave very well in lessons because they know the rules and expectations, and they find the learning activities interesting. Pupils respond well to the lessons and they receive support to work in pairs or individually.
57. A few post-16 students are attaining close to nationally expected standards when they have regular use of equipment. Pupils in Year 8 with speech and language difficulties can establish a link with the Internet, copy data and paste it into a spreadsheet. They know how to use the functions of the programs and to follow instructions related to the task itself. Year 9 pupils with hearing impairment can use a word processing program, entering and changing text. Older pupils can use a publishing package to produce posters using 'clip art' and 'word art' as well as transforming text and fonts to create effects.
58. Statutory requirements are in place for the subject although some parts of the subject have limited coverage, partly because of the scarcity of resources. For example, pupils' use ICT to learn to control a device largely through using a computer screen version rather than a physical device. There are good examples of the benefit of the limited amount of equipment. For instance, in a Year 9 lesson, the demonstration by a teacher who used a white board projection provided pupils with good support to transfer what they had seen onto their own computers. However, the restricted opportunities to use ICT mean that pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning. There are few opportunities for them to develop skills of research, presentation or re-inforcement in other parts of the curriculum overall.
59. The management and leadership of the subject are satisfactory. The subject leader is new to the role but is appropriately seeking to make improvements. The resources for ICT are unsatisfactory. Despite the welcome introduction of a small computer suite, there are insufficient computers throughout the school of adequate quality and there is an overall shortage of programs and devices for ICT.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

60. Beyond the specialist teacher, overall, staff lack expertise in ICT. This, together with a shortage of resources and insufficient access to the computer suite means that there is limited use of computers to support learning in other subjects. A small amount of the use of ICT across the curriculum takes place in science with the use of a digital microscope. There is use of digital imaging in art and a small amount of Internet research on other occasions in different subjects. However, this is not planned for in a sustained way.

HUMANITIES

No lessons were observed in geography and two lessons in history. A judgement is not made about provision in the subjects. Three lessons were observed in religious education. Pupils' work was sampled, displays around the school noted, and a discussion was held with the co-ordinator for all subjects.

61. Pupils' work in **geography** indicates that they have good opportunities to study physical features, places and environments in different parts of the world. For example, pupils in Year 8 have contributed to a well-presented display of work about Mexico. With support, they can find Mexico on a map of North America and label it to show the main cities, seas and oceans around the country. Results in examinations last year were good; a Year 11 pupil achieved Entry Level 1 and three pupils achieved Entry Level 2 in geography.
62. In **history**, pupils follow a lively syllabus. The planning is adapted appropriately to meet the needs of the different age and ability groups in the school. For example, pupils in Year 7 with speech and language difficulties have been studying Norman castles, and will shortly visit Warwick Castle to re-inforce their understanding. They have used the Internet to research the Bayeux tapestry. Year 10 pupils with ASD are studying aspects of the Second World War. Imaginative teaching inspires pupils, for instance, the teacher explained the use of a Morrison shelter well and one pupil responded, imaginatively that it was, "like a big hamster cage without the wheel."
63. The subject leader has re-organised and improved available resources and ensures that there is a suitable curriculum for history, but is unable to support colleagues in other classes. Recently introduced assessment using P Levels needs further development in order to ensure that teachers implement them, to set appropriate expectations for individual pupils. A few pupils enter and achieve examination success in history.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use the community well to support pupils' learning.
- Teachers provide interesting lessons.
- Limited resources are used well.
- The subject leader lacks opportunities to help colleagues.
- Written guidance for what pupils should learn is at an early stage of development.

Commentary

64. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and pupils achieve well. Teachers plan lessons imaginatively to make good use of the limited resources. Visits to places of worship in the community play an important part in developing pupils' understanding of world religions. For instance, pupils have visited the Southall Gurdwara and a Synagogue and will visit a local church in the near future.
65. Teachers involve pupils well in lessons and encourage them to think, explain and make individual contributions. For instance, pupils in Year 7 with speech and language difficulties provided their own interpretation of The Lord's Prayer. Pupils' very good responses confirm that the teacher succeeded in making the original words meaningful to pupils' everyday lives and experiences, whilst the new prayer retained the poetry of the language.

66. The school has improved the subject recently through providing new resources, which are now satisfactory. However, there are areas where more resources are required for example for pupils to have more access to artefacts to help them to understand and recognise the range of religious symbols discussed in lessons.
67. Leadership is good and management is satisfactory. Although good overall, the quality of teaching varies between classes and a few teachers would benefit from more support for teaching the subject. However, budget constraints at present do not allow time for teachers to share their expertise or for the subject leader to oversee other lessons to help to make further improvements.
68. Assessment is satisfactory overall but does not enable teachers to define consistently accurately what pupils have learnt. Consequently, occasionally a few more able pupils do not receive sufficient challenge, for example, in the expectation for them to produce independent written work. Although pupils follow a suitable curriculum in the subject, each topic is not always taught in the correct sequence to ensure that pupils build upon what they have learned before.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Two lessons were seen in food technology and no lessons were seen in physical education. Judgements are not made about provision for these subjects. Four lessons were seen in art and design and two in music together with a whole school singing practice. For all of the subjects, pupils' work was scrutinised and discussions held with pupils and staff.

Art and design

Provision in art and design is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in examinations.
- The high level of teacher expertise inspires pupils to learn a wide range of techniques.
- Lessons in art and design introduce pupils to an interesting range of experiences.
- Leadership and management of the subject are effective and ensure that the department is run well.

Commentary

69. The quality of teaching and learning in art and design is very good. Consequently, achievement is also very good. Progress is very good. By the time that pupils complete Year 11, several are achieving levels near to that expected for their age. Last year all pupils in Year 11 and two post-16 students were entered for and achieved Entry Level.
70. The teacher has motivated pupils very well so that they develop very good attitudes to learning art and design and behave very well in response to the opportunities to work independently. The confidence they gain in their work means that they can talk with enthusiasm to visitors about their tasks when they might find this difficult at other times. Pupils in Year 7 who have severe ASD demonstrate good social improvement as they wait their turn and then follow the instructions to produce a print of spiral string patterns. Pupils with ASD in Year 9 work very thoughtfully to produce paintings in acrylic, taking great care with the composition and accuracy of their work.
71. Post-16 students work carefully in the pottery studio casting slip pots as part of the work related curriculum and a business project for their Young Business Enterprise. They show a very good understanding of the processes involved and can explain them whilst appreciating the need to consider designs that appeal to customers.

72. The very good curriculum covers a wide range of artistic experiences including drawing and painting, a range of printing techniques together with three-dimensional work involving sculptural forms and ceramics. There is a small but useful amount of digital imaging involved in pupils' work. For instance, when pupils take photographs of still life compositions they learn to manipulate them using a photographic program. This makes a limited but good contribution to their understanding of the value of ICT in art and design.
73. The leadership and management of the subject are good and have ensured a very well ordered and successful department. The teacher is very well informed about the subject and displays great enthusiasm that is transmitted to the pupils. She gives individual attention to all pupils' needs and helps them to become involved in what they are doing. This leads to them maintaining interesting and well-constructed sketchbooks and to taking great pride in their work. The subject leader has produced a development outline for the subject although this is not an action plan, which limits its use for subsequent evaluation of its success. She inspires and leads teaching assistants to support pupils well. The accommodation is spacious but the room's appearance and furniture need significant updating. Although art resources are generally good, there are insufficient ICT resources to build upon current success.

Design and technology

74. Pupils mostly learn design and technology through **food technology** lessons. These provide elements of designing, making, and evaluation and the development plan provides appropriately for the monitoring of all elements in each class. Several classes now learn how to work with materials such as wood, since this aspect of design and technology was introduced last year. The plans for development indicate that more classes will participate. In a lesson seen in food technology, pupils in Year 11 studying for Entry Level achieved very well, learning about organic food in the new and effective food technology room. A strong link with science ensured that words such as 'germ' learnt in science were applicable in the lesson. A striking feature of the lesson was the support provided for the hearing impaired pupils by the teacher and the teaching assistant who is also a 'Deaf Communicator'. This ensured that pupils understood words such as 'pesticide' through the teacher and communicator referring to words that pupils already knew such as 'pest' and building the new word on this. Consequently, pupils made very good gains in understanding the essential elements of organic farming and learning to evaluate constituents of food. The lesson was very successful in ensuring that the pupils fully understand the work and can give their individual judgements, confirming that they have full access to the course. Last Year, two pupils out of the five in Year 11 were entered for and achieved Entry Level together with two post-16 students.

Music

Provision in music is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The subject leader's enthusiasm leads to very high levels of participation.
- Sign language is used to support communal singing very well.
- Pupils develop an enjoyment of music and this boosts their self-esteem.
- Comprehensive planning ensures that pupils follow a varied course.
- The subject leader makes the best use of the facilities available.

Commentary

75. Very enthusiastic teaching and high expectations are rewarded by pupils' very high level of involvement in lessons. Support teachers and teaching assistants are well involved during lessons, participating in playing instruments and singing and this provides effective encouragement and examples for pupils to follow. There is no difference in the achievement of pupils with different special educational needs or ethnic background since all achieve very well and develop a liking for music.

76. The tasks in lessons are suitably challenging for pupils and consequently they smile with pride when they succeed. The teacher has established clear guidelines for pupils and they know that lessons start very promptly and that they are required to work hard. Pupils concentrate very hard so that they will know what is expected of them during the many times they need to perform during the lesson. This happened for instance, during the introduction to a lesson for pupils in Year 7. Since the teacher asks pupils different questions to enquire how they are feeling, pupils understand the notion of improvisation and all can provide an individual response in song.
77. There is a very high level of involvement from most pupils in the whole school song and hymn practice, held in the school hall. A strong feature is the signing led by the deputy headteacher to accompany the words to hymns and songs on large song sheets. This leads to very strong participation in signed singing by the whole school and ensured that all pupils are fully involved to add to their extensive song list. Music plays a strong part in the life of the school and parents, staff and pupils are very pleased to relate to visitors the success and enjoyment of the concerts held in school. This Year, pupils throughout the school participated in a performance of music from the cinema, written by the school.
78. The specialist teacher relates very well to individual pupils and consequently ensures that all are included fully regardless of their ability. Planning for lessons is very thorough and instruction systematic and this is a strong factor in pupils' great success. For instance, fifteen minutes of very careful teaching ensured that pupils in Year 8 recognised major and minor chords, learned to play chords in groups using chime bars until the groups combined to sing and play '*The Drunken Sailor*'. Although pupils were very pleased with their success, the teacher continued to build on this by adding electronic drum beats and for pupils to make choices. Consequently, pupils learn a considerable amount in the short lessons and look forward to the next lesson.
79. Leadership and management of the subject are very good and ensure effective planning to enable pupils to follow a good range of activities in the subject. Although the music room is small, particularly to provide for ICT equipment, and many of the instruments are old, the teacher has made good improvements and ensures that full use is made of the instruments available.

Physical education

80. The school has a very strong and productive link with the local football club and some of their members visit the school regularly to provide coaching. Pupils and staff value this highly. Although the gymnastic equipment is currently not in use because improvements are required, pupils follow a suitably wide and interesting curriculum to promote their physical development. Groups of pupils go riding regularly and pupils make very good use of facilities in the area to visit local swimming pools or hydrotherapy pools to learn and improve swimming through national accreditation. Effective links with physiotherapists and occupational therapists ensure that individual physical needs are met. The extensive school grounds lend themselves to outdoor activities and enable pupils to participate in athletics and golf. Recent improvements to the environment have provided a good hard surface for games and sport and the school plans to improve current changing and showering facilities.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Seven lessons or part lessons were seen in personal, social and health education and citizenship education. Other activities to promote pupils' personal development were also observed, pupils' work scrutinised and discussions held with staff and pupils.

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are prepared well for adult life.
- A good range of additional activities outside lessons promotes pupils' personal and social development well.
- Teachers and teaching assistants provide very good support for pupils with hearing impairment to enable them to join in fully in class discussions.
- The subject leader is developing the subject well and provides a very good role model for other staff to follow.

Commentary

81. Because teaching is good overall, pupils achieve well. Where teaching is very good, pupils and students receive very stimulating tasks, which help them to develop social skills. An example of this was in a very good lesson for pupils with hearing impairment in Years 10 and 11, which was taught by the subject leader. The topic, which was about helping the pupils to develop strategies to manage difficult situations in relationships, was highly relevant and very well matched to the pupils' ages and interests. Consequently, they were highly motivated and made sensible and thoughtful contributions to the class discussion. The quality of signing and interpreting provided by the teaching assistant was of a very high calibre and ensured that all pupils were successful in sharing their opinions and contributing to the discussion.
82. The school nurse supports teachers well. She is closely involved in teaching lessons to promote a healthy lifestyle such as the importance of healthy eating. The recently introduced system to track pupils' and students' progress against P Levels and National Curriculum Levels is a positive development but procedures need developing further to ensure that assessment is consistent and accurate.
83. Post-16 students have good opportunities to prepare for adult life. For example, they learn to make simple snacks in the kitchen in the post-16 suite. They go shopping and went to a large furniture retailer to choose and buy equipment for the new classroom. The subject leader plans to teach Internet shopping to support students' independent living skills but at present Internet access is not available in the post-16 classes. Students undertake responsibilities within the department such as cleaning and tidying the rooms. However, they have few opportunities to take responsibilities around the school. College placements and the Young Business Enterprise Award scheme support students' personal and social development well.
84. Activities in the residence, trips out of school and lessons such as 'sign-dance' and horse riding are effective in developing pupils' and students' self-confidence and ability to relate to others and manage new situations. The recently established school council enables pupils to learn to express their opinions and consider the needs of other pupils in the school. However, there is not much emphasis on promoting independence. For instance, mealtimes are very pleasant occasions but provide few opportunities for pupils and students to contribute or to undertake specific responsibilities. Pupils and students learn to help others through involvement in raising money for charities. For example, post-16 students organised and ran a coffee morning to support the work of Macmillan nurses.
85. Leadership and management of PSHE and citizenship education are good. The subject leader provides a very good role model in her teaching. However, a small budget and lack of opportunities to monitor colleagues' teaching and planning constrains the many ideas the enthusiastic and experienced subject leader has for developing the subject further. Pupils follow a good scheme of work, which includes a good emphasis on developing skills in citizenship. The recently introduced course for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and post-16 students enables several pupils and students to work towards achieving Entry Level in personal and social skills. The

subject leader is planning appropriately to introduce the ASDAN award. This will enable the achievements of the few lower attaining pupils and students to be recognised.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	8
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	3
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	4
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	4

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7). inapplicable (8).