

INSPECTION REPORT

THE DALES SCHOOL

Northallerton

LEA area: North Yorkshire

Unique reference number: 121771

Headteacher: Mr W F Rab

Lead inspector: Mr Declan McCarthy

Dates of inspection: 10-13 January 2005

Inspection number: 272958

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:	2-19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	72
School address:	Morton-on-Swale Northallerton North Yorkshire
Postcode:	DL7 9QW
Telephone number:	01609 772932
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Gareth Jones
Date of previous inspection:	October 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

This is a small mixed community special school for pupils aged from 2 to 19 years, with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties. There are currently 72 pupils on roll and all pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. There has been an increase in the number of pupils since the last inspection and the school is operating to capacity. The proportion of pupils admitted with more complex needs, including profound and multiple learning difficulties, since the last inspection has also increased. Nearly all pupils are of white British heritage and a very small number of pupils are from other ethnic backgrounds. There are no travellers, no asylum seekers and no pupils for whom English is not their first language. The proportion of pupils who are eligible for free school meals is below average for this type of school. When leaving school, pupils either move on to continuing education or social services provision. The number of pupils joining and leaving the school at times other than usual is broadly average. A number of pupils attend neighbouring schools and colleges for part of their work. The school achieved Investors In People status in 2000 and retained this status in 2003. The school is due to be assessed for the Healthy Schools standard in 2005. It also achieved the Gold White Rose Award for innovation in careers in 2003 and again in 2004. The school has partnership links with Boroughbridge High School for performing arts, Allertonshire School for inclusion, Northallerton College for the Millennium Volunteers project and 2 local Riding for the Disabled groups.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
23886	Declan McCarthy	Lead inspector	Science Religious education Music Personal, social, health and citizenship education Work-related learning Post-16
9981	Saleem Hussein	Lay inspector	
28106	Michele Majid	Team inspector	Special educational needs Mathematics Information and communication technology Geography History
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school with very good features. The very good leadership of the headteacher has led to a very good ethos for learning and very good inclusion opportunities for pupils in mainstream schools and colleges. Pupils' achievements are good as a result of good teaching and learning. School management is good. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The purposeful leadership of the headteacher has led to the development of successful initiatives and stronger links with parents and other schools for the benefit of pupils.
- Teaching, learning and the curriculum are very good for Years 12-14 students, which results in their very good achievement.
- Very good provision for pupils with autism leads to their very good achievement.
- Although there are good arrangements in place to track pupils' progress against their individual education plan targets, systems for tracking progress within subjects are not fully developed.
- Although the accommodation is good in Years 12-14, it is inadequate for the numbers of pupils it serves: it is poor in the reception class, restricting the achievement of children.
- Very good provision for personal development and very good care arrangements contribute to pupils' very good attitudes to learning and very good behaviour.
- Very good links with the community and partnerships with other schools and colleges have led to the very good inclusion of pupils and students.
- Subject co-ordinators have yet to fully develop their monitoring role.

The school has made satisfactory improvement overall since it was last inspected in October 1998. Most of the key issues from the last inspection have been well addressed. The accommodation for students in Years 12 to 14 has improved and is now good, but accommodation and resources in the Foundation Stage remain poor. Good achievement has been sustained in all other year groups. Curriculum planning and learning opportunities have improved, particularly in ICT. There are now more opportunities for inclusion, and provision for pupils with autism is now very good.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Achievement is good for boys and girls. The achievement of children in the Foundation Stage is good in personal, emotional and social development, very good in communication, language and literacy, and satisfactory in all other areas of learning, largely because of weaknesses in accommodation restricting achievement. Pupils' achievement in English is

good, and in communication skills it is very good. Their achievements in mathematics, science and ICT are good. Pupils' achievements in personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) and in their individual education plan (IEP) targets are very good. Students' achievements in Years 12 to 14 are very good in PSHCE, in work-related learning and in the courses taken.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very good and result in their very good attitudes and behaviour. Attendance and punctuality are very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. Teaching is good. It is good in all year groups and in English, mathematics, science and ICT. It is very good in PSHCE. Consequently pupils' learning is also good. Teachers make very good use of signing and communication aids, including ICT to support pupils' learning and achievement. Very good teamwork between teachers, support staff and therapists ensures that all groups of pupils receive effective support and achieve equally well. The use of assessment to check and record pupils' progress against their individual targets is good. However teachers have yet to fully develop effective systems to track and monitor pupils' progress within subjects.

The curriculum is good with a strong emphasis on communication and personal development, and a very good work-related programme for older pupils and students. Accommodation is unsatisfactory overall. This has a negative impact on learning and achievement, although good teaching reduces this. Pupils are very well cared for. Links with parents, other schools, colleges and the community are very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The leadership of the headteacher is very good and he receives good support from senior managers. Management is good overall. Although financial management is very good and post-16 provision is very effectively managed, most subject co-ordinators are not yet formally monitoring their subjects. School governance is good. Governors are very supportive, ensure that statutory requirements are met and monitor the work of the school effectively.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very supportive of the school and hold very positive views of its work. However some parents are rightly concerned about aspects of the school's accommodation and resources. Pupils hold the school in extremely high regard and are exceptionally trusting of staff.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- To further develop the use of assessment information to track and monitor pupils' progress within subjects.
- To further develop the monitoring role of subject co-ordinators.
- To continue to work in partnership with the LEA to improve the accommodation.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement overall is good. Achievement is very good throughout the school in communication and PSHCE. It is good in Years 1 to 11, and in English, mathematics, science and ICT. Achievement is satisfactory in the Foundation Stage. Pupils also make very good progress towards their individual education plan targets. Students in Years 12 to 14 are achieving very well in their courses. There are no significant differences in the achievements of boys and girls. Pupils with more complex special educational needs achieve as well as other pupils, although those with autism achieve very well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is good because teaching and the curriculum are good.
- The achievement of pupils in communication skills and in personal development is very good because there are very good aspects to teaching in these areas.
- Pupils with autism make very good progress in communication and social interaction.
- The use of assessment information to track pupils' progress within subjects is not yet developed.
- The very good leadership of the headteacher has led to wide opportunities for inclusion that promote pupils' achievements.

Commentary

1. Pupils' enthusiasm for learning, as a result of good teaching, results in their good achievement. A well thought out curriculum, which is relevant to the range of all pupils' needs, also has a positive impact on pupils' achievements. Consequently teachers and support staff ensure that there are no significant differences between the achievements of boys and girls or of different groups of pupils. Children's achievements in the Foundation Stage are satisfactory overall in all areas of learning but they achieve well in personal social and emotional development and their achievements in communication and language are very good. Pupils in Years 1 to 11 are also achieving well and students in Years 12 to 14 are achieving very well in their 'Moving On' and unit awards. During the last academic year, all students left school with at least one qualification from an accredited course.
2. Pupils' achievements in communication skills and in PSHCE are very good across the school because there is a strong emphasis on teaching these skills in all subjects and clear targets are set and closely monitored in these areas within pupils' IEPs. All staff make very good use of signing and communication aids in their teaching so that pupils develop very good communication skills. Equal opportunities are provided for pupils to take responsibility in lessons, to work in pairs or small groups and to consider the needs of others, to share and take turns, and to be aware of the importance of working safely, all of which greatly enhances their achievements in personal development. The achievement of pupils has improved significantly in ICT as a result of good use of improved resources and a greater emphasis on supporting teaching and learning in lessons. The National Numeracy Strategy has been well adapted by teachers with an emphasis on the development of mathematical language and the use of mathematics in real life situations such as shopping or preparing a budget. This leads to effective learning and good achievement of pupils in mathematics

3. Very good and consistent use of nationally recognised structured teaching techniques enables pupils with autism to access the curriculum and to make very good progress in communication and social interaction skills. Parents are very pleased with the progress their children with autism are making. Support assistants are very well trained and make very good use of signing and communication aids to ensure pupils with autism have full access to learning. Pupils with other complex needs, such as visual and hearing impairments or profound and multiple learning difficulties, are fully included in lessons and also greatly benefit from the support provided by teaching assistants, who work very effectively with teachers to promote learning and achievement. As a result all pupils make very good progress towards their IEP targets.
4. Although pupils' progress is effectively tracked through IEP reviews, teachers do not make enough use of assessment information within subjects to raise pupils' achievements further. The school's own analysis of pupils' achievements against IEP targets throughout the school is very good. Teachers take full account of pupils' IEP targets in planning activities. However, target setting and the tracking of pupils' progress within subjects are not yet fully developed.
5. The very good leadership of the headteacher has ensured very good links with local schools and colleges which impact positively on pupils' achievement. He has fostered very good working relationships with mainstream colleagues so that pupils benefit from inclusion in the adjacent primary school, local secondary schools and colleges where students in Years 12 to 14 participate in a variety of courses and leisure activities. These very effective links promote pupils' very good progress in their personal development, particularly in their increased confidence and ability to relate to their mainstream peers. Very well conceived planned visits by students from a local mainstream school to work with pupils from the Dales greatly enhance the personal development of both Dales pupils and the students themselves.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance, punctuality, attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school monitors and promotes attendance very well.
- Very positive attitudes and behaviour help pupils to achieve well.
- Spiritual and moral development is very good.
- Social and cultural development is very good.

Commentary

6. Very good advice and support is given to families regarding attendance and punctuality. Parents play their part by informing the school regarding any problems. These factors have led to an improvement in overall rates of attendance in each of the last three school years. The great majority of absence is for medical reasons and there is no unexplained absence.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	7.0	School data	0.0
National data	5.4	National data	0.4

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

7. Enthusiasm for school is also reflected in pupils' attitudes in lessons and the range of activities provided. For example, during a mathematics lesson, Year 9 pupils could hardly contain their

excitement as they planned a trip to the supermarket and made sure they had enough money. Attitudes and behaviour in the Foundation Stage are very good. Learning is good because the children enjoy the experiences provided.

8. The school is an orderly community and behaviour is very good at all times. Staff frequently praise pupils for their effort and achievements and manage any challenging behaviour very well. Parents are very confident that their children are free from bullying. There were no exclusions at this school in the last school year.
9. The school promotes good relationships, including racial harmony, very well. Consequently, pupils play and work together very well. For example, in practical activities they always encourage and help each other.
10. Pupils marvel at the facts they learn about the world in assembly and in subjects such as science and literacy. They reflect on human achievement and issues such as coping with sadness. Pupils with profound learning difficulties respond very well to the sensory experiences provided, for instance, as they are introduced to unusual textures. Pupils have a very good sense of right and wrong. They often consider how people, animals and property ought to be treated.
11. Pupils respect their peers and others they come into contact with. They care for others and know that they have an important role to play in the community. For instance, they often fundraise for charities and good causes. Their efforts to raise money for the tsunami catastrophe are outstanding. Pupils' appreciation of their own cultural heritage is very good because they have many chances to visit historical and other places of interest. School trips include museums, theatres and churches. Pupils have developed a very good appreciation of other cultures through work in religious education, music and literacy.
12. The school has made good improvement to attendance, attitudes, behaviour and relationships since the last inspection. It has maintained spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and addressed the minor attendance issues well.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education provided by the school is good. There are very good opportunities for enrichment and inclusion of all pupils. Teaching and learning are good. Pupils are very well cared for and there are very good links with parents, the community and other schools.

Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are good. As a result, pupils' learning and achievement are good. Assessment is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers' high expectations for pupils' learning and their very good knowledge of developing communication skills result in pupils' good achievement in communication skills.
- Students in Years 12 to 14 and pupils with autism learn very well because teaching is consistently very good.
- Teachers' very good relationships with pupils and very good management of behaviour build high levels of confidence in pupils.

- Although the use of IEP assessment information is good, the use of assessment to promote learning and achievement within subjects is under-developed.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 35 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1 (3%)	15 (43%)	17 (48%)	1 (3%)	1 (3%)	0	0

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

13. Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection with fewer unsatisfactory lessons seen and a much higher proportion of good or better teaching. This has arisen, despite staffing difficulties in recent years, as a result of effective training and performance management by the headteacher. Teachers have effectively developed their skills in matching tasks and adapting methods to suit a variety of learning needs in the school. Training has ensured that all teachers and support staff are highly skilled and effective in promoting pupils' communication skills through signing and the consistent use of visual and communication aids, which ensures that pupils achieve very well in communication skills. There is also much greater use of ICT, since the previous inspection, to promote teaching and learning. In good teaching, expectations for learning are high and lessons are brisk. As a result pupils focus on their learning and achieve well. In very good lessons, very good use was made of a wide range of resources such as ICT and visual materials, together with signing, so that pupils gained rapidly in communication skills and were highly motivated. Where teaching was excellent, staff worked exceptionally well as a team throughout to ensure all pupils made excellent progress and the lesson was delivered enthusiastically so that pupils thoroughly enjoyed learning. In contrast, where teaching was satisfactory pace was lacking and a narrow range of strategies was used to develop learning. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, resources were not well prepared and some pupils were unoccupied for too long a period.
14. Students in Years 12 to 14 and pupils with autism learn very well because teaching is consistently very good. Teachers provide good support for pupils with more complex special educational needs, through the very good teamwork with well-trained support assistants. This includes thorough planning to accommodate the needs of all pupils, especially those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, and good use of wide ranging resources to stimulate pupils' learning. As a result all pupils have full and equal access to all areas of learning in all subjects throughout the school.
15. All staff have very good relationships with pupils who, as a result, develop high levels of trust towards adults. Pupils respect staff and listen carefully in lessons. Teachers and support staff encourage pupils in learning and manage the most challenging behaviour very effectively. As a result pupils feel secure and become confident learners. This is particularly true for pupils with autism, where all staff are highly effective in managing difficult behaviour.
16. Assessment systems are not yet fully developed in subjects and teachers have yet to develop their use for tracking pupils' progress and recording their achievements within subjects. Assessments include the setting of clear IEP targets for PSHCE, literacy and communication skills and numeracy. Pupils' achievements against these targets are reviewed and recorded using *P Scales*. Statutory requirements for the review of Statements of Special Educational Needs are fully met and annual review meetings also evaluate progress against the targets. The headteacher has developed a very

good system to generate numerical data of pupils' progress towards their IEP targets, which shows that progress is better than expected. However not all teachers nor senior managers use this system effectively enough to analyse pupils' performance against these targets. Furthermore, although *P levels* are assigned to various small steps within subjects, staff do not record these gains in pupil performance as they occur and therefore cannot use ongoing assessment information effectively enough to plan the next stage of learning. Despite this relative weakness in assessment, teachers and support staff have a very good knowledge of pupils and make good use of this information to support pupils' learning in lessons, although pupils are not yet fully involved in assessing their own performance in subjects. Consequently assessment is satisfactory overall.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good for pupils throughout the school. There are very good enrichment opportunities and activities for all pupils within and beyond the school. The teachers are well matched to the curriculum but there are insufficient teaching assistants in the lower end of the school. Overall, the accommodation and resources throughout the school are unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school includes all pupils very effectively and provides them all with equal access to activities.
- The personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) curriculum is very good and contributes significantly to the personal development of the pupils.
- There is a very good programme of external visits and residential programmes to enrich learning.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory overall, and it is poor in the Foundation Stage.
- Learning opportunities are very good for pupils on the autistic spectrum.
- In Years 10 and 11, opportunities for pupils to make subject choices, and for all to participate in work-related learning, are very good.

Commentary

17. The previous inspection report identified the curriculum as being broad and balanced, but lacking detail in some areas of the National Curriculum. There has been good improvement in the curriculum, and the identified weaknesses have been effectively addressed. For example, ICT is now used well throughout the curriculum. The curriculum now incorporates a wide range of experiences and subjects are well planned, with learning outcomes relevant to individual needs. The adoption of a commercial scheme for some subjects is ensuring continuity, while the school has successfully adapted and developed more appropriate programmes for English, mathematics and PE. At the end of Year 9, pupils are given the option of studying the arts or humanities. The school is aiming to facilitate transition by developing the Trans-active programme, which helps older pupils to make life choices about school, college, work, their social time and where they might live. There is extended work-related learning from Year 9; it is well thought out, the transition plans are well done and the school is fully involved with the Connexions careers service.
18. There is good provision for pupils with additional special educational needs, and very good provision for pupils on the autistic spectrum. The pupils in the special class are very well managed and are making very good progress. Pupils with profound and

multiple learning difficulties are very well included in all lessons, but limited resources and the lack of a sensory room in the main school result in insufficient sensory experiences. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties have supporting behaviour plans, which are followed very well by staff.

19. There is a very good programme of activities to enrich the curriculum and this is particularly appreciated by parents. There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to visit places that are linked to areas of the curriculum. For example, in humanities pupils have visited Nantwich museum and Ripon cathedral. There are impressive opportunities for pupils to take part in outdoor and residential education. Among other places, they have visited the Wingate Centre in Cheshire where they particularly enjoyed the large gymnasium with the floor level trampolines and soft play area. The curriculum is also enhanced by links with a local secondary school, where pupils have joined the mainstream pupils in musical performances. Very good use is made of a variety of visitors to the school, such as “real” musicians and a visiting performance group giving music, drama and sensory experiences for the pupils.
20. Although the school has in recent years experienced staffing difficulties there are good levels of well-qualified teachers to deliver the curriculum. There are high levels of well-qualified teaching assistants in the school, but not enough teaching assistants in the Foundation Stage. There are very good levels of well-qualified and very experienced teaching assistants for students in the post-16 department.
21. The overall unsatisfactory accommodation in the school and poor accommodation in the Foundation Stage result in a number of curricular limitations, although the school makes the best possible use of the areas available. The classrooms are too small for their purpose, especially lower down in the school. The physiotherapist has no designated work place and is based in a corridor and the speech and language therapist has to use a small storage room. The soft play facilities are situated in a log cabin in the grounds and there is no sensory room in the main school. Wheelchairs and other equipment have to be stored in a corridor. Resources are satisfactory overall: they are unsatisfactory in the Foundation Stage, but very good for students at post-16. A library resource is situated in the old hall, although there is no specific library area. The use of a computer suite could further enhance the development of ICT.

Care, guidance and support

The school makes very good provision for ensuring pupils' care, welfare, health and safety. It provides pupils with very good support and guidance and involves them very well in aspects of its development. These factors represent good improvements since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- New pupils settle into the school effectively.
- The school promotes health and safety very well.
- Pupils receive good advice and support, despite a lack of space in school.
- Guidance on further study and careers opportunities is very good.
- Very good, trusting relationships underpin the family ethos.

Commentary

22. New pupils are sensitively and gradually introduced into the school. Consequently, they settle into the school's learning routines quickly. Pupils are very confident in staff and enjoy very good relationships. They feel that they can turn to adults in school if they have any worries.
23. Arrangements for child protection are very good. Staff are very well informed about the policy and procedures and the designated officer deals with any issues effectively. General health and safety risk assessments are undertaken as required. Arrangements for first aid are very good. The school is attending to minor deficiencies in fire safety signage. The school nurse makes a very good contribution to ensuring health and welfare. For instance, she monitors health regularly and talks to pupils on matters such as washing and hygiene.
24. Staff know pupils well. School records are appropriately detailed about personal, academic and welfare matters. Information is well used to provide good advice, support and guidance. The school works very closely with other agencies. For instance, a specialist teacher works with the visually impaired once a fortnight. Primary Care Trust staff work very closely with the school in providing healthcare and therapy support on site. However, accommodation is an issue because there is no designated space for therapy treatment. Also, privacy cannot be guaranteed in the Foundation Stage.
25. The 'Connexions' agency attends the school frequently and works with older pupils and students. An officer gives very good guidance on further study and careers. Many students gain very good experience in a variety of careers including catering, retail and horticulture. The 'mini enterprises' at this school are thriving with excellent chances to gain work-related experiences.
26. The school council is firmly established and enables pupils to express their views as they learn about democracy and decision-making. It is pleasing to see how much the school values ideas from pupils. The school is currently considering what can be done to improve playground resources following pupils' concerns.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has a very effective partnership with parents. Links with other schools, colleges and the wider community are very good. The school has made good improvements since the last inspection.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents' suggestions and views are valued very highly by the school.
- Parents make a very good contribution to their children's learning.
- Very good links with the community help to enrich the curriculum.
- Inclusion opportunities in mainstream education are very good.

Commentary

27. The headteacher and staff are very approachable and they are always pleased to discuss parental concerns. The school welcomes parental involvement in annual

reviews and this is reflected in very good attendance rates at meetings. Parents are very well involved in target setting.

28. As at the time of the last inspection, information to parents about the school and their children's standards and progress is good. Bright and attractive newsletters give very good information about pupils' work and achievements. Annual review reports provide good information to parents about what their children know, understand and can do. Staff and parents use the home and school diaries well to exchange information on a day-to-day basis.
29. The 'Friends of Dales School' support the school positively by organizing many social and fundraising events. The group makes regular contributions towards improving accommodation and resources. Parents support their children's learning at home very well. For instance, they help their children to prepare for forthcoming work and support the school's efforts to improve literacy and communication skills. The school organizes workshops for parents regularly to advise them on how they can become even more involved in their children's learning.
30. School trips are carefully planned to link with topic work. Community venues include the town centre, theatres, a birds of prey centre, farms, museums and a cathedral. Visitors in school include musicians and theatre groups. An advocacy group plays an excellent role in developing the school council and working with members. Local businesses are also involved very well; for instance, they provide work experience placements for many students. The school puts much back into the community through, for instance, its excellent fundraising for charities and good causes.
31. Integration opportunities include primary schools, secondary schools and colleges. Many pupils and students benefit from inclusion. Senior managers at these establishments are quick to point out the benefits to them. For instance, they say that their pupils' personal and social education is enhanced. The adjacent primary school provides very convenient chances for inclusion. For instance, pupils from the two schools often play together in the 'shared adventure playground'.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good. The headteacher provides very good leadership and key staff fulfil their roles effectively. Management is good and school governance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The purposeful leadership of the headteacher has led to a very good ethos and very good opportunities for inclusion.
- Although senior managers provide good support for the headteacher, the role of subject co-ordinators is still developing.
- The governing body carries out its duties effectively.
- The school is managed effectively and as a result runs smoothly.

Commentary

32. The headteacher leads school developments very effectively and provides a very good model for developing the curriculum to other staff. This is confirmed not only by the number of awards the school has gained since the previous inspection, but also by the very good opportunities pupils now have for inclusion in a number of schools and colleges. He inspires trust and confidence not only with staff and governors but also with parents, who confirm his very good leadership skills and feel very welcomed in the school. The headteacher goes out of his way to waylay any concerns parents may have and is very effective in meeting these concerns, for example in continuing to address the barriers for learning which the accommodation presents, particularly in the Foundation Stage, and in driving the school's inclusion agenda forward. He has also created a strong welcoming and caring ethos within the school, which is also embedded in the highest expectations for pupils' learning and achievement. As a result teachers set high expectations for learning in lessons, compensating for the restrictions to learning, presented by unsatisfactory accommodation, as much as they can. As a result pupils are achieving well, particularly in communication skills and personal development.
33. Although the senior management team provide effective support for the headteacher in ensuring that initiatives are fully implemented, they have yet to fully develop their role as performance management team leaders. The newly appointed Foundation Stage co-ordinator is already providing strong leadership, carrying out a full audit of provision, and developing a very good action plan for improvements within a matter of days. Leadership of post-16 provision varies between good and satisfactory, as subject co-ordinators have yet to formalise arrangements for monitoring teaching and learning within subjects.
34. Governors ensure that statutory requirements are met and monitor the work of the school, through curriculum reviews. Governors are vigilant in ensuring health and safety and the well-being of pupils, especially within the limitations to the accommodation. To this effect they have ensured that detailed risk assessments are carried out and monitor this aspect carefully. Governors also know the school's strengths and weaknesses by visiting the school as often as they can. Governors are also involved in school improvement planning, holding staff accountable for the school's work.
35. The school operates efficiently and effectively on a day-to-day basis as a result of good management. The headteacher is very effective in monitoring the school's targets and the quality of teaching and learning but key staff have yet to fulfil this role formally. Good arrangements are in place for performance management with well-conceived objectives for all staff linked to well-chosen whole school priorities for development. Although the headteacher manages the performance of staff very effectively, the team leadership role has yet to be fully developed in order to continue to improve teaching, learning and pupils' achievements. The finance officer provides very good support for managing the budget. She ensures that finances are properly controlled and prepares detailed budget statements for the finance committee of the governing body to scrutinise. The school is effective in achieving the best value in its spending decisions.

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	886,766	Balance from previous year	24,643

Total expenditure	881,853
Expenditure per pupil	12,249

Balance carried forward to the next	29,956
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WORK-RELATED LEARNING

Provision for work-related learning (WRL) is very good; statutory requirements are fully met.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Opportunities for work experience have a very positive impact on pupils' confidence and self-esteem.
- Students are very effectively prepared for work experience in school.
- WRL is very well led and managed.

Commentary

36. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 and students in Years 12 to 14 have very good opportunities to participate in WRL. They acquire very good insight into the world of work through direct contact with local employers, who show great understanding of their needs and are very supportive of students. As a result pupils and students become more confident and greatly enjoy their work experience. For example, during the inspection, three students participated in work experience at a local motel and service station. One student was shown how to arrange packets of sweet according to their 'sell by date' in the shop and did this methodically and with minimal supervision. Another student with severe visual impairments replaced tea, coffee and milk sachets in the motel bedrooms with help from the support assistant, and another student worked independently and competently in the motel restaurant clearing away and washing breakfast plates and making tea and coffee. Motel staff praised and encouraged students throughout their work experience and as a result students gained in confidence and enjoyed the world of work.
37. Pupils and students are very effectively prepared for work in the school. School based work-related learning includes the preparation of a list of activities involved in a working routine, and running various stalls in the Scone Shop cafe to raise money for good causes, such as the tsunami appeal. For example, in a Year 10 lesson pupils learned about health and safety rules in the work place, how to interact with members of the public, and how to make lavender bags with lavender seeds for sale. Students from Northallerton College work alongside pupils and students from The Dales School as 'Millennium Volunteers' in a range of projects, such as making a mural for residents in a retirement home, making animal books to sell in aid of an African charity and in fund-raising for the school's Malawi project. Pupils and students also prepare very effectively for their mini-enterprise Scone Shop, both in school and in technology lessons at a local college of further education. Students in Years 12 to 14 also manage their own allotment, producing fresh vegetables for sale. The school also works very effectively with the Connexions service and all students are encouraged to make informed choices about careers opportunities. Students are also provided with their own work-experience record book so they have an increasing awareness of their achievements. They are provided with careers guidance lessons, problem solving activities, and work on self-awareness and decision-making. Students also follow the standards of the North Yorkshire Business Enterprise Partnership in promoting health and safety in the workplace. There are very good opportunities to examine work-

related topics such as dress code, punctuality and following instructions, all of which promote personal development very effectively. They are involved in very well planned design and technology projects, catering and horticultural courses at the local college of further education for one day per week.

38. WRL is very well led and managed by an enthusiastic coordinator, who has made good improvements to the curriculum since the last inspection and developed sharper monitoring procedures. There are now clearly identified cross-curricular links to PSHCE, language, communication and numeracy. She makes effective use of ICT to select appropriate businesses that could offer work experiences to pupils and students. The co-ordinator has also received very positive feedback from outside agencies on the quality of WRL.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

39. Provision in the foundation stage is satisfactory overall and improving rapidly. Although there are key weaknesses in provision, there are also some strengths. There are 6 children below the age when children normally enter Year 1. The school policy of placing children into classes that are most appropriate to meet their needs means that older children work alongside Foundation Stage children at different times. There is also provision for Foundation Stage children in classes for older children.
40. The Foundation Stage has been through an unsettled period, with staffing difficulties, low numbers of young children and consideration being given to possible, and as yet unresolved, changes to the nature of the school over the last two years. This means that provision is not as good as it was in the previous inspection. A new coordinator has very recently been appointed and is already adapting the curriculum to ensure that all children get their full entitlement where resources and accommodation permit. The curriculum is broad and balanced with a suitable emphasis placed on key developmental skills in personal and social development, communication and physical needs. It also carefully links areas of learning together so that the best use is made of each activity to improve children's learning.
41. In the Foundation Unit, teaching and learning in group activities are at least good, with excellent teaching in lessons in the hydrotherapy pool and some individual activities. Work in lessons is based on the classroom assistants' very good knowledge of the children, recently developed IEPs and a scheme of work that is in the early stages of development. Teaching for reception aged children elsewhere is more variable with good teaching in literacy and numeracy.
42. Although assessment during lessons and its use to adapt the activity provided is good, due to the high quality of care and concern shown by all the staff, records of attainment and achievement are incomplete and reflect the unsettled provision over recent times. The very good teamwork developing between Foundation teachers and assistants is also a key factor in the improving provision.
43. Accommodation is poor. The Foundation Stage area, including the toilet and changing facilities, is small and cramped, and unsuitable for many activities such as floor work and sensory activities requiring specialist equipment. There is only one sink in the classroom. This must be used for hand washing and general staff hygiene as well as preparation for lessons requiring water. These problems are managed very well in order to maintain the safety and wellbeing of the children. In order to access large soft play equipment children have to be taken across the school, or have to use equipment in an unsuitable area. The accommodation for children in classes for older children is also poor. There is also no suitable area that allows all children in the Foundation Stage constant and immediate access to outdoor activities and fresh air. Due to staffing changes there are insufficient classroom assistants for the numbers and needs of the children. Teachers and current assistants work very hard to compensate and there is a planned increase in staffing. Resources are unsatisfactory, and poor in the class containing older children although those available are used well.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in personal, social and emotional development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Personal and social education permeates all activities.
- Teaching and learning are good.
- Care shown for individuals is very good.

Commentary

44. Children enter school at both nursery and reception age with low standards. Personal and social development is given a suitable emphasis in all activities for young children. Children are happy, safe and secure and enjoy coming to school. They quickly learn to interact very well with adults in the classroom, including visitors.
45. Teaching, and therefore learning, is good in the Foundation Unit, although where individual attention is given it is always very good. Children are achieving well and respond well to the high expectations of the teacher and classroom assistants. Although there have been some very recent changes to classroom routines, these are already becoming an anticipated feature of the children's day.
46. Children are valued. This is very evident in the very good care shown to each child as an individual and the level of knowledge of the staff of their personal needs. Management of personal needs is done with as much dignity as the poor accommodation allows.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision in communication, language and literacy is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are very good in the Foundation Unit.
- Early communication and literacy skills are given a suitably strong emphasis.
- Teachers and support staff have very good subject expertise at the level required.

Commentary

47. Teaching and learning are very good in the Foundation Unit and good for children working among older pupils. As a result children's achievements are very good. Teaching focuses on the key skill of communication so that children are able to make their wishes known. Children are encouraged to make eye contact wherever possible. They initially learn to use facial expression or head movement to express likes and dislikes, and progress to using an electronically operated button. Teachers carefully and consistently reinforce key signs and symbols, both through daily routines and through the full range of activities provided. Language is carefully matched to the level of comprehension of the children.
48. A key to the very good learning in the Foundation Unit is the understanding of the teacher and support staff of the very small steps and stages of learning that are needed and of stages of development of very young children, as well as specific expertise in teaching those who learn more slowly.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

49. No focused activities were seen during the inspection as planning is in the early stages of development, therefore no overall judgement is made on teaching and learning. The development of spatial awareness permeates all activities and children begin to develop an understanding of positional and quantitative language. In these aspects, provision is good.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Well-planned, stimulating structured sensory activities extend children's awareness of the world around them.
- The poor accommodation restricts the experiences that can be provided.
- ICT contributes well to children's learning.

Commentary

50. Teaching, learning and children's achievements are satisfactory overall, but very good in specifically focussed sensory activities. These are carefully designed to make children more aware of their senses and frequently linked closely to creative experiences. Staff work patiently with children to involve them as much as possible. The smiles on children's faces and the extent of their attention span clearly indicate their enjoyment. A particularly successful activity using shaving foam caused children to stretch their limbs and move their hands, heads and arms to enjoy the sensation of foam on their skin. Careful attention was given to health and safety.
51. There is an unsatisfactory sensory room, and the lack of a suitable accessible outdoor activity area limits experiences that can be provided in the fresh air to raise children's awareness of the world around them. There are no easily accessible facilities for children to play with water or other tactile substances.
52. Children are taught to use battery operated switches and toys, and learn to operate the computer through simple communication aids so that they take responsibility for changing a picture on the screen themselves. The use of technology improves children's ability to communicate very well.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons in the hydrotherapy pool and specialist physiotherapy support make an excellent contribution to children's development.
- A suitable emphasis is placed on the development of key physical skills.
- The poor accommodation restricts the experiences that can be provided and the physical care that can be given.

Commentary

53. Although provision overall is judged satisfactory there are some very good and excellent features and some poor features. Teaching and learning in focussed activities are at least good and sometimes excellent, for example in lessons in the hydrotherapy pool. Specialist physiotherapy support contributes excellently to children's physical development although the accommodation arrangements for these activities are poor. As a result children's achievements in this area of learning are only satisfactory overall.
54. Teachers place a strong emphasis on key physical skills such as head control and development of hand and arm movement as a precursor to communication that is more effective, and in this aspect of physical development, achievement is good. In the Foundation Unit many good sensory experiences are provided to increase children's awareness and use

of all physical senses. There, is however, no suitable sensory room or area, which limits children's achievements.

55. The cramped accommodation restricts the full range of experiences that can be provided, as the classroom is small, there is no ready access to large soft play equipment, and no outdoor activity area suitable for these children. The small classroom also means that too much time has to be taken moving equipment round when specific tasks are planned in order to manage the support frames required by the children and make sure that all children can take part. The lack of space also means that children requiring walkers, particularly those with limited control of direction and who move very quickly, cannot access their walkers for much of the day as this would be a safety risk. This clearly limits achievement. Toilet, changing and sluicing facilities are also unsatisfactory.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching in focussed tasks is at least good.
- Well-illustrated stories stimulate children's imagination.
- The poor accommodation and unsatisfactory resources impede learning.

Commentary

56. Teaching, learning and children's achievements are satisfactory overall. In focussed tasks they are good and lead to a good response from children. They demonstrate their enjoyment by laughing and trying to communicate with adults, and each other. Activities are carefully planned and structured to have the greatest impact on learning, and are linked well to all other areas of learning.
57. Stories are presented dramatically, and carefully so that there is a sense of anticipation. Practical resources are used to make the story come to life. Stories are carefully simplified, and sections repeated to each child to ensure all are involved.
58. The poor accommodation and lack of resources mean that staff have to work exceedingly hard to provide a stimulating curriculum. Time is lost moving equipment round to make a suitable space for group activities.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1, 2, 3 and 4

ENGLISH

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievements in communication skills are very good.
- Teaching and learning are good and pupils achieve well.
- A suitably strong emphasis is placed on basic communication skills and the use of ICT aids.
- The development of literacy skills through other subjects is good.

Commentary

59. In all aspects of language, communication and literacy standards on entry are low and remain low throughout the school, although achievement is good. Achievement in early communication skills is very good.
60. Teaching and learning are good. Teaching in about two thirds of lessons is very good. Teachers plan well, and have clear targets for their lessons. They know their pupils well and work hard to ensure all pupils are involved. Activities are carefully matched to pupils' individual needs and IEPs. Progress towards these plans is carefully assessed. Teachers also adapt work well during lessons as a result of pupils' responses. The National Literacy Strategy is adapted to the maturity and developmental stage of pupils with different types of special educational need. For example, lessons for autistic children are carefully matched to the life skills they need, such as being able to identify their address if they get lost. Practical materials are used well to stimulate interest, particularly for those with the lowest attainment and those with physical and multiple learning difficulties. Pupils are well managed, and classroom boundaries well established. This means that behaviour and attitudes are very good, pupils are very attentive, and little time is wasted in lessons.
61. In all classes, a strong emphasis is rightly placed on basic communication skills. Pupils are taught to listen carefully and engage with the teacher from the time they start school. Most pupils quickly develop a repertoire of simple hand signs to communicate their immediate needs. Where pupils have the ability to vocalise this is developed well alongside signing. Simple battery operated switches are used effectively to enable those with the most severe physical difficulties to respond to questions requiring a one-word answer. Pupils learn different symbols that enable them to read and write simple text. Teachers prepare excellent reading materials in symbolic language that enable the older pupils to enjoy books that have a storyline that matches their level of maturity. The older pupils that are able to grasp the meaning of different symbols, and that cannot vocalise, use keyboards and voice production equipment to 'talk' to others in the class. Their pride in achievement is very evident. Pupils are introduced to different types of writing such as lists, letters, descriptive and narrative. A small number of pupils have sufficient hand control to learn to write sentences by the time they reach Year 11. Computers with adapted keyboards and interactive whiteboards are also used effectively to promote learning. Links with other schools and establishments, including contributions made by pupils from secondary schools, make a very good contribution to the development of communication skills.

62. Achievement in reading is also very good. By Year 2 most pupils enjoy sharing books, stories and rhymes and learn to focus on objects, pictures and sounds associated with the story. Older pupils in Years 5 and 6 make very good progress in naming letters of the alphabet and in understanding that words have meaning. Pupils in Year 9 use symbols to help them read books from the reading scheme, and respond well to questions. Careful expert individual coaching in reading enables pupils to achieve their individual targets and make very good progress. Higher attaining pupils begin to understand how books are organised and to appreciate poetry. Most pupils can identify pictures, symbols and words within a text.
63. By Year 11 pupils recognise a wide range of words when accompanied by symbols. Higher attaining pupils can identify authors of known books and are able to retell familiar stories. They work on computer programs to increase their word attack skills and continue to develop their ability to use initial letter sounds and contextual and picture clues to help them understand unfamiliar words. Teachers use a range of strategies, including good questioning, direct teaching, and age-appropriate carefully chosen books to develop pupils' comprehension skills. They place great importance on checking that pupils understand the main elements in their texts. In a lesson exploring part of the text from *A Passage To India* which started with a short recap on work previously covered, the teacher's very good questions and prompts showed that all pupils had understood meaning and the pupils who shared their views on the story showed perception and empathy. Some pupils read, together with staff and at a simple level, age-appropriate texts. Although work is carefully tailored to individual needs, teachers' expectations are high and the work and texts presented are challenging. Staff bring these texts to life for the pupils and students through very good resources which are used very well. For example, puppets and story bags with excellent sensory props are used throughout the school together with interactive communication aids, the interactive whiteboard, video clips and well-chosen books, and extracts from plays, poems and news articles bring the texts to life to promote achievement. Carefully selected visits to the theatre and participation in drama enhance the curriculum and give pupils and students great pleasure in live performance. The English co-ordinators pay good attention to the national Key Stage 3 strategy and framework for teaching English and lessons in English are active and engaging.
64. Most pupils enter the school with very limited writing ability, often because of their complex physical disabilities, but they achieve well because of very well planned, skilled and effective teaching, which is well matched to individual needs. Younger pupils in Year 1 and 2 move their hands to make marks or patterns and some show curiosity in making marks on paper and do so deliberately. A few older pupils use different media to make marks that have meaning and higher attaining pupils can write their own 'news' in a simple sentence with limited help. Pupils in Year 9 create imaginative stories and poems using symbols and pictures and they communicate meaning well. They are able to indicate the purpose of their writing and show awareness of the sequence of familiar letters, words or symbols to communicate meaning. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 write their names with appropriate use of upper and lower case or symbols. They write for a variety of audiences and purposes, for example lists, menus, letters and instructions.
65. The quality of teaching in writing is very good and in one lesson it was outstanding. Highly effective planning leads to a very clear focus in lessons and pupils know exactly what they are going to learn. A good balance of praise and challenge motivates and encourages pupils and the very high quality of relationships between pupils and staff ensures that pupils have very good attitudes towards their learning and grow in self-

confidence and maturity. Where teaching is at its best, pupils are thoroughly involved, teamwork amongst staff is excellent and expectations are high. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, the powerful and highly imaginative direction of the teaching staff enabled pupils to develop a clear picture of a challenging text. Very good opportunities are provided for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

66. The co-ordination of English is very good and there has been very good improvement in the subject since the last inspection. Very effective monitoring of planning and teaching has supported consistency in the quality of teaching, which is now very good. Assessment is thorough and extremely effective with close reference to the National Curriculum Attainment Targets in recording progress. Pupils' progress is systematically recorded on a day-to-day basis as well as through end-of-module assignments, teacher assessment and moderated assignments. National Curriculum *P scales* are well embedded and so teachers record more accurately the small steps of progress of pupils and their performance can be precisely tracked. Individual targets are more precisely set, particularly for lower attaining pupils. Pupils are also involved in their own assessment and that of their peers so that, given the nature of their difficulties, they have a very good understanding of how well they are doing.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

67. Language and literacy skills are promoted effectively in other subjects, particularly through speaking and listening and the use of key subject specific words in reading and writing. The school also pays excellent attention to promoting pupils' skills in communication. Teachers are consistent in creating a total communication environment that incorporates speaking and listening skills, signs, symbols, tactile and object clues as well as technological aids to help pupils become independent and develop in all areas.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are well planned and prepared so learning is continuous and pupils of all abilities achieve well.
- Pupils have very good opportunities to consolidate key skills, particularly in basic number and using money.
- Pupils' attitudes towards mathematics are very positive.
- The subject is well led with a clear vision for development.
- Numeracy is used well in other subjects but these opportunities are not clearly planned.

Commentary

68. Pupils make good progress in their understanding of the different aspects of mathematics. Younger pupils are able to engage in number activities such as counting objects in number songs. They use the computers for early mathematics related activities. They have experienced simple 2D shapes and are helped to feel and count the sides of a triangle. Pupils in Years 2 to 6 are able to say how many "teeth" are left in a number rhyme. They can recognize numbers up to 7 and a more able pupil can use a computer program to match a set of spots with the corresponding number. By Year 6, they can count up to 10 using number

rhymes. Pupils with different special needs all make good progress and as a result, pupils on the autistic spectrum are able to identify numbers up to 9 and more able pupils in this group are able to do simple subtraction sums up to 10.

69. By Year 9, most pupils are learning how to handle money and a class of pupils made very good progress on a trip to a local supermarket, where the very good planning ensured that all pupils were able to behave appropriately in the shop and a few pupils could give the correct money to the cashier and wait for change. The pupils understand the routine of looking for prices of goods, going to the checkout and waiting for a receipt. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are enthusiastic about their mathematics lesson and respond very well to the varied activities. One pupil was very proud when he could write the answer to a simple addition sum on the whiteboard.
70. The quality of teaching and learning throughout the school is good. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and seek to ensure that pupils enjoy learning and that they can take an active part. Because of the high expectations, pupils show very positive attitudes to their work and behave very well. All staff work hard to add to the resources with homemade items and these are used imaginatively and encourage pupils' involvement. However, there are limited sensory experiences for younger pupils. Teachers make good use of ICT and communication aids to ensure that all pupils are included in the lessons.
71. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinators have thought carefully about an appropriate curriculum, which ensures progression and continuity. All pupils have individual targets in using and applying mathematics; in number; in shape, space and measures; and in handling data. They have considered a selection of annual reviews with the associated IEPs and have written a useful report identifying good practice and making suitable recommendations for improvement. They monitor all planning for the subject and teachers act on their advice.

Mathematics across the curriculum

72. In many subjects, there are good opportunities for pupils to practise their number skills, particularly in counting where teachers frequently encourage pupils to count out items. An example is in work-related learning, where pupils counted the number of jobs they had to do. However, although staff refer frequently to the IEPs giving targets in mathematics, there is no formal planning for the use of numeracy in other subjects.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils learn and achieve well because teaching is good.
- Science makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development.
- There are very good opportunities for enriching learning.
- The subject is well led and managed, with good improvement since the last inspection.

Commentary

73. Pupils' achievements are good because they are learning effectively due to good and often very good teaching. Teachers focus on pupils' learning from investigations and in this way pupils begin to develop ideas of fair testing and develop their problem solving skills. Very good teamwork with support staff and very good use of practical resources deepen pupils' understanding of scientific ideas. There is also a good focus on the development of pupils'

scientific vocabulary through the good use of communication aids and signing. For example, in a Year 2 lesson, pupils were investigating water and developed a good understanding of 'empty' and 'full' as teachers gave them good opportunities to fill and empty a variety of vessels while repeating and reinforcing this key vocabulary. Teachers used real life objects in a mixed age class of pupils in Years 3 to 6, to increase their understanding of man-made materials. In another Year 6 lesson the teacher developed pupils' literacy skills effectively by prompting a pupil to read a poem about re-cycling, which also increased pupils' awareness of protecting the environment. By Year 11, pupils know how to construct simple electric circuits, they understand the differences between solids, liquids and gases and they know about life cycles of different animals.

74. Pupils' personal development is very effectively promoted in science. Pupils learn to work safely and to handle equipment with care, for example the safe use of electrical appliances. They are encouraged to act responsibly and concentrate on what they are doing when carrying out investigations. Pupils also learn about healthy foods and the importance of keeping the body healthy by washing, cleaning and brushing teeth.
75. The very good opportunities for enriching the curriculum include visits to Chester Zoo and the Aquarium, which further develops pupils' awareness of living things. Year 2 pupils also visited the garden centre to buy seeds for planting in their topic on growth. Pupils in Year 10 visited Hartlepool Power Station, where they learned how electricity is produced and also deepened their understanding of how electricity is transported from the power station into people's homes by means of underground cables or pylons. The school organises regular visits to coastal areas such as Whitby, where pupils learn more about living things on the shoreline. Very good links with a local secondary school enable very good inclusion of The Dales pupils to work on such projects such as healthy foods with mainstream pupils. These arrangements ensure that learning is enhanced for all pupils.
76. The science co-ordinator manages and develops the subject effectively. There has been good improvement in the curriculum since the last inspection, with improved resources, a greater emphasis on investigative science and more opportunities for inclusion. Science is now monitored more closely through annual reviews and pupils' Records of Achievement and the co-ordinator rightly intends to formally monitor teaching and learning. Although *P Scales* are used to record attainment levels, there are no individual pupil targets for science and teachers do not always use assessment information sufficiently to track pupils' progress in the subject.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision for ICT is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are making good progress and attitudes to ICT are very good.
- There is very effective use of communication aids throughout the school.
- There is a commitment by all teachers to use ICT, particularly in supporting literacy.
- There are few opportunities for pupils to have discrete lessons in ICT.
- There is no on-going assessment of pupils' progress.
- The reporting of pupils' progress in ICT in annual reviews is unsatisfactory.
- The interactive whiteboards are used effectively and digital photographs are used very well to record achievement.

Commentary

77. The school gives very high priority to ensuring that all pupils use ICT to the full, to help them to learn. The use of communication aids is particularly effective and enables pupils, especially

those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, to fully participate in lessons. Most ICT is delivered through other subjects, although on occasions small groups of two or three will be timetabled to use the computers. Teaching is good overall and there is some very effective individual teaching. Staff have received appropriate training and are increasingly confident in the use of ICT to support their subjects.

78. Younger pupils in Years 1 and 2 are able to use the touch screen independently and are learning early mouse skills with an art program. By Year 6, more able pupils can use the mouse to interact with a program. One pupil was delighted with her new communication aid and was able to use it to say hello to visitors. A more able pupil was making good progress in word processing and was able to use the backspace to correct a mistake. A pupil on the autistic spectrum was able to log on to the internet and locate a specific website with help. By Year 9, pupils use the computer confidently for literacy and numeracy activities. More able pupils in Years 10 and 11 can save work to a folder and retrieve it. They can alter the size, style and colour of fonts and enhance their writing using word art. They are able to insert pictures from clipart and can alter their size and position. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are given opportunities to use a switch to operate a slide show on the interactive whiteboard.
79. Leadership and management of ICT are good. The subject has been regularly audited through the DfES audit form and there have been some observations of teaching, although not during the past year. There has been an "ICT Organiser" produced for staff which includes a scheme of work based on the ICT strands with activities levelled according to *P scales*. The co-ordinators have ensured that all staff have received the training available, resulting in increased use of ICT throughout the curriculum. However, there is only medium term planning available for one class and there is no evidence of how individual progress is assessed, as there are no procedures for tracking progress throughout the school other than through annual reviews and records of achievement. Further, the recording of ICT in annual reviews is inadequate as it gives limited information as to what individual pupils know, understand and can do. Resources are satisfactory, although the number of computers per pupil could be increased. The hardware is maintained in good order by a technician and there is a reliable network. There is no computer room or suite of laptops to enable discrete ICT lessons to take place.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

80. ICT is used very well across the curriculum to enrich learning. Staff training has been effective and teachers show confidence and enthusiasm. ICT supports literacy very well to develop communication skills. In a good food technology lesson, a pupil with profound and multiple difficulties was able, with help, to use the computer to identify different food types and to communicate this later to the rest of the class on the interactive whiteboard. Lights and sounds are used very well in music, and during work-related learning, pupils were helped to scan in pictures of pressed flowers, paste these into a suitable program and print them out onto cards. The two interactive whiteboards in the main school are used very well and the digital camera is very effectively used throughout the school to record achievement. However, the use of ICT is not regularly identified in subject planning.

HUMANITIES

Religious education was inspected in full and is reported in detail below. History and geography were sampled.

81. Pupils are following a commercially produced curriculum, in **geography** and history, which results in continuity and progression. Pupils receive very good opportunities to learn about their school and its locality. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, who have chosen the option to study humanities, have studied deserts and mountain ranges and can

remember specific geographical vocabulary associated with these locations. All pupils, including those with additional special needs, are fully included in lessons and other experiences.

82. In **history** teachers ensure that pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties have opportunities to develop an understanding of chronology by experiencing daily routines. They reinforce these learning experiences through photographs to provide a pictorial indication of the order of events. Pupils undertake many visits in the locality and this helps them to appreciate their environment and culture. For example, pupils in Year 9 were very interested in the toys from the past when they visited Nantwich museum. All pupils, including those with additional special needs, are fully included in lessons and other experiences.

Religious education

Provision in religious education (RE) is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teamwork with support staff is very good and ensures very good inclusion of all pupils.
- Assessment is not used sufficiently to track pupils' progress.
- RE makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development.
- The subject co-ordinator does not yet formally monitor teaching and learning.

Commentary

83. Teaching and learning are satisfactory and as a result pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall. A particular strength of teaching is the very good teamwork with support staff, which ensures that all pupils are fully engaged in learning and achieve equally well. Pupils learn about RE through the preparation for and the celebration of festivals. Therefore the subject is planned so that religious education teaching takes place in a blocked period of two weeks per term, instead of discrete teaching time each week, as at the previous inspection.
84. Pupils in Years 2 and 6 are achieving satisfactorily. Year 2 pupils attend to and respond to stories and poems about various festivals such as Diwali, and Year 6 pupils make special cards, with help, to celebrate the festival of Holi and show an interest in garlands and saris. By Year 6 pupils show appropriate awareness of Buddhism and the Jewish festival of Sukhat. They learn about the creation story and know that God created night and day. Pupils throughout the school take part in the celebrations of Christian festivals at Christmas and Easter and learn about the significance of the Christian events which these celebrations represent. By Year 9 pupils discuss what they would see in a Christian church and they begin to become aware of Buddhism, by looking at images and the statue of Buddha. Pupils in Year 10 were helped to make a multi-media slideshow presentation of the story of Rama and Sita and know that Rama was good and Ravana was bad. Although *P-Scales* are used to indicate pupils' attainments in religious education, teachers are not yet sufficiently tracking progress in the subject.
85. Through the celebration of world faiths, pupils increase their awareness of multi-cultural beliefs and traditions and pupils' spirituality effectively, as they have opportunities to explore and reflect on different faiths. Visits to churches also contribute to pupils' personal development, particularly their spirituality. For example, photographs show that pupils In Year 10 visited Ripon Cathedral and gazed in wonder at the stained glass window.
86. Leadership and management of RE are satisfactory. The subject co-ordinator has improved resources since the last inspection, developed a clear action plan and rightly adapted the RE syllabus to take account of pupils' experiences. He is currently reviewing how RE is taught within the context of implementing the newly agreed local syllabus. However the co-ordinator has not yet assured that skills and knowledge in RE build systematically from year to year in planning learning experiences for different year groups.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

Art and design, design and technology, music and physical education were sampled.

87. Teaching and learning in the **art and design** lesson seen were very good, and very well managed. It catered for pupils with all levels of learning difficulties and also provided pupils from another mainstream school with good opportunities for personal development. Pupils achieved very well. Classroom assistants were very involved throughout and made a very good contribution to pupils' learning. Younger pupils in the school and those at the beginning of their secondary education achieve well. Photographs show that pupils with all levels of attainment learn to express themselves in different ways including through 2D and 3D work and modelling. They have the opportunity to experience a wide range of different media and work collaboratively on

some displays. There is less evidence of provision for the oldest pupils and therefore no judgement can be made. A suitable scheme of work is in place, though records of attainment are inconsistent. Although there are some displays around the school, some classrooms lack the stimulation and evidence that pupils' work is valued that displays of pupils' work would provide.

88. Teaching and learning in the **design and technology** lesson seen were good and pupils achieved well. A broad range of activities is provided throughout the school, including the safe use of tools. Emphasis is rightly placed on food technology, including health and hygiene, and skills for life. Food technology activities are also used well to encourage pupils to make choices for themselves. Photographic evidence shows that many opportunities are taken to develop manipulative skills, particularly for those with specific physical learning difficulties. All pupils are fully included in design and technology activities. Resources and activities are adapted as required. The unsatisfactory accommodation and storage means that activities are not readily accessible for younger pupils and need careful and time consuming organisation on the part of teachers.
89. In a good **music** lesson for pupils in Year 1 to 6, pupils achieved well, performing with a variety of percussions instruments and playing a guitar with help. The teacher and support assistants worked very effectively together to develop pupils' social interaction by grouping them in pairs and in developing their language and communication through signing to enable pupils to join in with singing. The teacher made good use of ICT so that pupils with more complex needs were able to join in by changing the music with slight movements. In another music lesson for pupils in Years 7 to 10 good use was made of technology to promote learning and playing of music as pupils used switches and midi systems. The teacher developed pupils' language skills effectively by rehearsing the lyrics of action songs before pupils joined in with singing. Good use was also made of a drum to replicate the sound of an elephant. Pupils develop their performing skills and develop musical ideas through singing and playing musical instruments. Pupils' work shows that opportunities for enriching pupils' learning in music are very good. A group of six pupils performed two pieces of music as part of a performing arts evening at a local high school. Pupils also watched a performance of a percussion group. Music makes a very good contribution to cultural development through, for example, playing bells in a class composition of Peter and The Wolf, playing an African Lullaby and appreciation of a South African dance performance. Music also contributes to learning in other subjects, such as singing the 'Hello' song in lessons, singing carols at the Christmas assembly and the use of music in physical education to stimulate movement. This contribution takes place through cross-curricular themes as well as discrete music lessons.
90. Provision for **physical education** rightly has a high profile in the school. Activities are used, not only to develop pupils physically but also to give them greater confidence and independence. This is very evident in, for example, riding for the disabled, where pupils develop poise and confidence in guiding a horse and achieve very well. This activity, provided and carefully monitored by specialist stables, challenges and extends pupils. An excellent and very well planned lesson was seen in the hydrotherapy pool where the pupils' dignity was carefully considered, the development of language and communication skills was inherent in all tasks including dressing, and pupils developed confidence in the water as well as meeting demanding targets for physical development. Health and safety requirements were met. Activities in the hall were unsatisfactory because the lack of accommodation meant that the hall was so cluttered with other resources, including physiotherapy activities, that the teacher had difficulty

observing and managing all children effectively. Good use is made of local leisure centres for swimming and other activities. Photographic evidence also shows that a very wide range of adventurous activities is provided on residential holidays, that pupils clearly enjoy. Although not all pupils take part in all activities, everything is done to adapt them and give access wherever possible. In other subjects, teachers and classroom assistants constantly try to extend pupils' physical skills such as hand movement, arm extension, grip, and posture. Although these are not planned for systematically, this aspect of provision, and therefore the achievement of all pupils in this aspect, is good. External support such as that from physiotherapists is used very well, despite the unsatisfactory accommodation.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good aspects of teaching ensure pupils' achievements are very good.
- There are very good opportunities to enrich pupils' learning.
- Very good leadership and management have led to good improvement since the last inspection.

Commentary

91. Provision for PSHCE permeates throughout subjects and other aspects of the school's work. Pupils' achievements are very good as a result of the very good aspects of teaching and learning seen in lessons. By Year 2 pupils are beginning to take turns and learning to live as part of the classroom community. For example, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties sometimes move, look towards or gently reach out towards other pupils, showing very good progress in their interaction skills. By Year 6 pupils learn more about themselves, their families and others and are beginning to accept that people are different. By Year 9 pupils cope well with being in a different environment with different routines and expectations. For example, they get dressed quickly and carefully after swimming. By Year 10 pupils become more tolerant with unforeseen events. For example when the minibus broke down, pupils remained calm until it was ready to continue on its journey. Teachers' very good relationships with pupils ensure that pupils become more confident and show respect for staff. The very good teamwork between teachers and support assistants ensures that activities are carefully matched to individual needs, enabling all pupils were to be fully included in activities. Teachers also provide very good opportunities for group work so that pupils learn to take turns, share and show consideration and empathy for others.
92. The very good opportunities for enriching learning include the Healthy Schools initiative, where pupils learn about health and hygiene issues such as keeping their environment clean and what constitutes healthy food. Strong inclusive links with other schools and colleges enable pupils to learn alongside their mainstream peers and develop greater confidence as learners. For example, younger pupils share playground facilities with the neighbouring primary school and as a result both sets of pupils improve their social interaction skills. The Millennium Volunteers project is mutually beneficial in bringing mainstream secondary aged pupils together with pupils from The Dales School. As a result all pupils greatly improve their interpersonal skills. A wide

range of educational visits, for example to cafes and shops, enable pupils to apply their learning to everyday life. For example, they increase their awareness of road safety when walking together. Pupils' participation in fund-raising activities, through for example the scone café and the Tsunami appeal, also develop a greater awareness of the needs of others, promoting citizenship very effectively. Pupils also learn about democracy and decision-making through the school council. Older pupils also learn to be responsible citizens through very good opportunities to help younger pupils. Very good opportunities for inclusion in mainstream schools and colleges also promote pupils' confidence and personal development very effectively. The scheme of work for PSHCE includes essential elements to develop independence skills such as personal hygiene, friendships, relationships, drugs awareness and sex education. Pupils are given opportunities to think about themselves, friendships, and relationships, sharing their feelings in lessons.

93. The headteacher is providing very good leadership and has ensured good improvement since the last inspection. He has developed wider learning opportunities to develop pupils' PSHCE and citizenship skills, such as 5 residential trips and the implementation of a school council. The headteacher has also ensured that targets in individual education plans are highly relevant and linked directly to *P-Scales*, with more participation of parents in the annual review process. He also closely monitors teaching and learning so that teachers provide opportunities to promote PSHCE in their lessons. Governors also carefully monitor provision for PSHCE, for example in reviewing how well staff and pupils relate to one another, how pupils are supported and whether pupils are feeling safe and secure in school.

POST-16 PROVISION

Provision for post-16 students is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Students' achievements are very good because their learning is very good as a result of very good teaching.
- The curriculum is very well planned with very good opportunities to enrich learning.
- Very good leadership and management have ensured high standards, with further improvements in provision since the previous inspection.

Commentary

94. Teaching and learning are very good and as a result all students achieve very well, particularly in English and communication skills, mathematics, ICT and in personal development. All students gain accredited awards in a variety of subjects such as World Studies and in the 'Moving On' curriculum. Teachers set weekly targets for each student and provide them with student diaries so that they have a clear idea of how well they are achieving. Support staff and teacher work seamlessly together in order to support individual learning. For example, in one lesson a support assistant worked very effectively with a student using a braille to produce vocabulary lists relating to work experience routines.
95. Careers education, work-related learning and life skills are given a strong emphasis within the curriculum. The school has developed accreditation using the Equals 'Moving On' scheme and has established very good links with local colleges to

promote learning further, through for example technology, catering and horticulture. The provision is enriched by cultural, sporting and recreational activities, such as visits to London, participation in archery at Bendrigg Lodge, sitting inside an RAF helicopter and the use of Bedale Leisure Centre for sport and swimming. Personal development is also greatly enhanced through a range of planned trips such as dining out in a local restaurant and in preparing for whole school religious festivals as part of their World Studies curriculum. Students also benefit from a range of visitors in schools, such as a local music band and a theatre group.

96. Very good educational links and arrangements for transfer for work, particularly through very good links with the Connexions service and local businesses, make a very good contribution to students' personal development. Students look forward to such visits and placements, and are highly motivated and particularly keen to take on responsibility. Students attend local colleges, leisure centres and community facilities learning to become fully contributing members of society. They raise money for the school and national charities such as MENCAP, through mini-enterprise activities and other fund-raising events.
97. The co-ordinator provides very good leadership and management, not only by maintaining the high quality provision identified at the previous inspection but also developing it further. Teamwork remains very strong and the co-ordinator has developed very good resources to support teaching and learning, such as ICT through student access to lap-top computers. Although there are very good assessment systems in place the co-ordinator has yet to fully analyse information to develop provision further. The school makes very good use of facilities beyond the school, and accommodation has greatly improved since the last inspection and is now good. The recently improved post-16 accommodation for students greatly enhances learning.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7). In a special school such as this standards achieved are judged against individual targets and not national standards.