

INSPECTION REPORT

COLUMBIA GRANGE SCHOOL

Washington

LEA area: Sunderland

Unique reference number: 134184

Headteacher: Katherine Elliott

Lead inspector: Katharine Halifax

Dates of inspection: 6th – 10th June 2005

Inspection number: 273122

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

© Crown copyright 2005

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	2 to 11 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	70
School address:	Oxclose Road Washington Tyne and Wear
Postcode:	NE38 7NY
Telephone number:	0191 2193860
Fax number:	0191 2193865
Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Kenneth Moore
Date of previous inspection:	First inspection

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Columbia Grange is a new purpose built school for pupils aged 2 to 11 years. It opened September 2003 and has successfully incorporated pupils from two very diverse schools. This is the first inspection. The school can take up to 75 pupils and currently has 70 on roll, of which 51 are boys and 19 girls. Almost all pupils are white British with a small number of Asian and Chinese. Pupils come from a range of socio-economic backgrounds. All have English as their main language. All pupils have special educational needs. Sixty-eight pupils have a statement to meet their need; the other two pupils are undergoing assessment. Of the special needs, 53 pupils have autism and 17 severe learning difficulties. Attainment on entry to the school is below that expected of pupils of this age. The school provides an outreach service, assessing and advising mainstream schools on their provision for pupils with autism. In the eighteen months the school has been open, 172 such pupils have received or are receiving support. The school is taking part in numerous local and national initiatives including the Leadership Development Strategy, Out of School Charter Mark, Healthy Schools and Early Bird training. On leaving Columbia Grange, pupils with autism generally transfer to Barbara Priestman School and those with severe learning difficulties to Portland School.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
25439	Katharine Halifax	Lead inspector	Foundation Stage History Physical education Religious education
10329	Brian Sampson	Lay inspector	
19386	Dr Trevor Watts	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology
8810	Sue Aldridge	Team inspector	Science Geography Special educational needs
27429	Margaret Smith	Team Inspector	English Personal, social and health education Music

The inspection contractor was:

Penta International
Upperton House
The Avenue
Eastbourne
BN21 3YB

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website (www.ofsted.gov.uk).

REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	6
PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS	
STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS	8
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL	10
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT	15
OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES - Outreach	16
PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	18
AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE	
SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2	
PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS	30

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is an effective school with many very good features. Much has been achieved in the eighteen months it has been open. Good teaching and good learning opportunities have resulted in good achievement and in pupils' very good personal development. The cost of educating each pupil is relatively low for a school of this type. The excellent outreach work done with mainstream schools has enabled an impressive number of pupils to stay in their neighbourhood school. The school provides very good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Dynamic leadership, staff expertise and a shared commitment to high standards have resulted in a school which is rapidly moving forward and which is held in high esteem by parents, pupils, other professionals and the local education authority.
- The good teaching in the foundation stage and Years 3 to 6 and the very good teaching in Years 1 and 2 are reflected in pupils' learning and achievements.
- The excellent outreach service is particularly successful in enabling mainstream schools to provide effectively for pupils with autism.
- The very good support and guidance pupils receive alongside very strong links with other professionals and with parents contribute significantly to pupils' well being and achievement.
- A broad and innovative curriculum makes learning exciting and meaningful.
- Very good links with mainstream schools and the community contribute significantly to pupils' learning.
- On occasion, planning and the curriculum are insufficiently adapted for pupils of differing capabilities in Years 3 to 6.

This is the first time the school has been inspected.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Students' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	Personal and social education
Year 2	Very good	Very good
Year 6	Good	Very good

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

Achievement is good overall. The achievement of children in the foundation stage is good in mathematical development, physical development, and in knowledge and understanding of the world. Children achieve very well in communication, language and literacy and in their personal, social and emotional development. The majority of pupils in Years 1 and 2 have autism. They make very good progress towards the targets in their individual education plans. Furthermore, their achievement is very good in English and communication. It is good in mathematics, science, and religious education and in information and communication technology. The achievement of pupils in Years 3 to 6 is good in English, mathematics, information and communication technology and in religious education. Achievement in science for this age group is, overall, satisfactory. Pupils in both age groups achieve very well in personal, social and health education. End of year testing shows 85 percent of pupils have exceeded their challenging targets.

Pupils' **personal development, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, is very good.** Pupils have a very good **attitude** to school, they enjoy learning and are **very well behaved.** **Attendance is satisfactory.** Punctuality at the start of the day and in lessons is good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. Teaching and learning are good overall, being very good in Years 1 and 2. Very good lessons were also taught in the other two age groups. Particular strengths are staff knowledge of how pupils with autism learn and in the way teachers and support assistants work closely as a team. The way teachers assess pupils' achievements is good. The curriculum is good. Pupils' learning is enriched by participation in sport, the arts, after school clubs and through very good opportunities to work alongside pupils in mainstream schools. Very good links have been established with a wide range of other professionals, all of which contribute to pupils' well being and achievement. **The partnership with parents and carers is very good.** The excellent accommodation and very good resources are used effectively as a learning resource. The building and grounds are maintained to a very high standard.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are good; the leadership of the headteacher is very good. Her passion and enthusiasm for education are infectious. She and her talented senior management team are excellent role models for staff and pupils. Suitable management systems are in place to monitor classroom practice and measure the effectiveness of the school, though the school has not been open long enough for much data to be available. Governance is satisfactory. Governors know the strengths of the school and are beginning to be involved in setting the direction of the school. In the short time they have been operating, they have ensured all legal requirements are met.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents and carers speak highly of the school. They particularly like the friendly atmosphere and the dedication of the staff. They appreciate the social events and training programme laid on for them. Parents have suggested changes to the home to school diary which staff are currently responding to. **Pupils enjoy school life.** They especially like numeracy, music, working in mainstream schools and the after school clubs.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Improve the quality of planning for pupils of differing capabilities in Years 3 to 6.

The school has already included this in its development plan. Staff and governors have the enthusiasm, commitment and capacity to carry this and the other targets in their improvement plan through.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Achievement is good overall, being very good in Years 1 and 2.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because of good teaching.
- Pupils in Years 1 and 2 achieve very well because of very good teaching.
- Achievement in personal, social, health and citizenship education is very good in all age groups.
- On occasion, there are noticeable differences in the achievement of pupils of differing needs in some classes in Years 3 to 6.

Commentary

1. The achievement of children in the foundation stage is good because of good teaching, because children enjoy school and because of the very close links established with parents and other professionals. Achievement in mathematics, physical development, and in knowledge and understanding of the world is good because of the well-planned programme and the wide range of activities. Achievement in communication, language and literacy is very good because adults use every opportunity to extend children's understanding of signs, symbols and the spoken word. Equally, children achieve very well in their personal and social development because of the very good relationships, high expectations that children will make choices, and the range of experiences offered to them. Detailed assessment when children first arrive at the school is used very effectively to plan individual programmes tailored to specific needs.

2. Pupils in all Years 1 to 6 make very good progress and achieve very well in personal, social health and citizenship education because the planned programme is very well supported by daily routines and by the nurturing programme. Pupils make very good gains in their awareness of the need to be safe, in their personal hygiene and in their understanding of belonging to a community. Pupils achieve well in other subjects because teachers plan their lessons well, have good subject knowledge and manage their classrooms and lessons well. Achievement is very good in Years 1 and 2 because work is accurately matched to individual capabilities, and in the case of science, a better understanding of how to adapt topics for lower attaining pupils.

3. All adults are very aware of pupils' special educational needs. Pupils in all age groups with speech and language needs achieve very well in communication because of skilled teaching using the method that is most appropriate to their need be it symbols, signs or picture exchange. Pupils with autism achieve well because teachers follow routines, are consistent in their approach and break new tasks into easy manageable steps. Most pupils with severe learning difficulties achieve well and all teachers are very aware of their needs. However, a small number of lessons in Years 3 to 6 were observed in English, science, and information and communication technology where though satisfactory, the achievement of these pupils did not meet that of their peers. This was because the activities provided were not of a match to pupils' capabilities. Managers are aware of this and have planned further professional development. There is no policy to identify and provide for pupils with a particular gift or talent, but staff have identified talented pupils, for example in physical education, and referred them to appropriate organisations in the locality.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are very good. Attendance is satisfactory and punctuality good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' very positive attitude and very good behaviour contribute significantly to the climate for learning.
- Pupils' personal development is very good because very good provision is made to foster it.
- Worship and assemblies successfully contribute to pupils' very good spiritual and cultural development.

Commentary

4. For the first year the school was open, pupils' behaviour presented a challenge to staff. Pupils from the two former schools had great difficulty working alongside each other and accepting each other's differences. Nevertheless, because of the very good relationships between staff and pupils, the very effective behaviour policy and a consistent approach to managing behaviour, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are now very good. The one exclusion in the time the school has been open was a pupil who had been incorrectly placed. Evidence shows this was sensitively dealt with.

5. Pupils now enjoy their school life. They know their teachers want them to succeed. All adults are good models of how to behave appropriately, projecting their enthusiasm for their work to their pupils. As a result, pupils enjoy learning and their delight, for example when identifying the spices and foods the Tudors brought back from the New World, was infectious. Pupils grow in confidence and self esteem through their success in lessons and through the very effective nurturing programme. Pupils are keen to join the numerous school clubs, with a waiting list to join these. Recognising that pupils love to help each other and that they care for each other, a *buddy bench*, has been placed in each playground. New or less confident pupils sit patiently, knowing full well that within a few moments someone will come up and ask them to play.

6. Pupils make very good gains in their personal development through daily routines, lessons and assemblies. They consider how to be a good citizen and think about important issues that affect their lives and the lives of others. Teachers provide well for pupils to talk about their feelings and understand the feelings of others, particularly during personal and social education and through the nurturing programme. Work in music, geography, history, and art and design gives pupils an insight into aspects of European and non-European cultures and especially the cultural heritage of the Sunderland area. Through studying faiths such as Christianity, Buddhism, Judaism and Islam pupils learn to respect other people's beliefs. For example, they have met an Imam, and have visited the Christian churches. Staff are conscious that the school has an almost all white population and endeavour to provide experiences which reflect the richness and diversity of society. Staff have ensured there are numerous displays to support pupils' social, moral and cultural development and that these influence their teaching, but subject leaders have yet to audit their curriculum for its contribution to this aspect.

7. Assemblies and acts of worship are used very successfully to promote pupils' personal development. During one occasion the headteacher showed excerpts from a video sent by a teacher in the link school of Busumbala in Africa. Pupils listened carefully as children in Busumbala answered their curiosity about how they travelled to school and aspects of school life. During a moment of silence pupils contemplated how fortunate they are with resources such as computers, sporting equipment and the magnificent grounds while in Africa, children have to make do with a few desks and a chalkboard. Singing in worship is enthusiastic as pupils sing the school song they have written with gusto. A second act of worship had an equal impact when pupils thought about their *wormery* and gasped with delight when they were shown two types of earthworms prior to having a quiet time to thank their God for the wonders of the natural world.

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

Authorised absence	
School data	6.07
National data	9.1*

Unauthorised absence	
School data	0.68
National data	0.6*

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

- Figures for pupils from similar schools.
- Both authorised and unauthorised absences have been reduced this year because of intervention by the school. To date this school year authorised absence is 7.6 and unauthorised absence 0.23

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
Asian or Asian British - Bangladeshi
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background
Chinese

No of pupils on roll
67
1
1
1

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
0	1
0	0
0	0
0	0

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. Pupils learn and achieve well because of good teaching and a good curriculum. A very wide range of out of school activities, very good resources and the excellent accommodation enriches their learning. Very good care and support allows pupils to gain maximum benefit from their learning.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It is good in Years 3 to 6, and in the foundation stage. In Years 1 and 2 it is very good. The way teachers assess and record pupils' work is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff are skilled at teaching pupils with autism.
- Teachers and support assistants work closely together for the benefit of all pupils.
- Teachers reinforce learning in several subjects in each lesson, with some very good links between them.
- Teachers assess pupils' progress well and use the information effectively when planning further work.
- Assessment procedures for pupils with autism are very good.

Commentary

8. Staff have been very well trained in how to teach pupils with autism. As a result, they plan activities and use approaches that are very well suited to the learning needs of autistic pupils. They manage behaviours very well, and are able to keep the attention of most pupils

for most of the time. Pupils learn well because the teaching is challenging, motivating, interesting, and is geared to their way of learning; perhaps in small groups, or in very short periods, or with lots of practical activities, or in small areas with few distractions. Some of the best teaching is seen in the dramatic telling of stories, in the use of a very good selection of mathematics resources, in using images from the Internet to illustrate a geography, history or religious education lesson. Teachers often have very good knowledge of the subjects they are teaching, and of the pupils in their classes. Where a minority of lessons were less successful, including those that were less than satisfactory, was because teachers were uncertain exactly how some equipment worked, or how to involve the least able pupils in a whole-class activity. Even so, teachers who taught lessons that were satisfactory, or less than satisfactory, all taught good and very good lessons as well. The school has already identified this as an area for training.

9. Teachers and support assistants work very well together. Teachers having planned the lessons originally, and work closely with their support staff in adapting activities to the needs of individual pupils. They all carry out assessments of how well each pupil is doing. In regular discussions, staff bring their findings together and decide how they need to change in the next lesson. More particularly, support staff give good encouragement and guidance to one or two pupils who need extra help while the teacher is leading the main activity. When pupils are doing their work in groups, support staff generally have a group themselves, sometimes with the most able pupils, sometimes the less able pupils. Always, they work very capably with their pupils, not helping too much, giving sincere praise, keeping a close eye on behaviour, and asking probing questions that prompt pupils to think for themselves. As a result, pupils learn at a good rate.

10. Teachers successfully make links between subjects so learning is not isolated. They speak clearly, use the correct vocabulary, and use cards with symbols to help the learning of pupils whose listening and speaking are at an early stage. Often, computers are used for pupils to draw graphs, for instance, or to organise the results of a survey they have done in mathematics or to record their findings in science. Teachers are good at using the electronic whiteboards to make their lessons more interesting and increase pupils' concentration. The method of teaching lessons in three parts - with an introduction, a main activity in groups, and finishing with a whole class review - has spread well from English and mathematics to other subjects. Pupils understand the routine and enjoy the structure. They feel secure when they know what to expect and so learn at a good rate.

11. Teachers assess pupils' progress accurately and thoroughly, both in the long term, and on a daily basis. In lessons, staff are good at giving praise, or explaining what they need to do next. Teachers make notes during each week, sometimes after individual lessons, to remember small improvements in pupils' learning, or areas in which, perhaps a lesson did not achieve all of its aims. They then adjust what they will do differently in the next lessons. Furthermore, they make frequent alterations to their planning for the next half-term, or for the length of a topic, based on how they have seen pupils progressing to date. Teachers track pupils' long term progress through a national system, although the system has not been in place long enough to identify trends in pupils' performance.

12. Pupils with autism are assessed through the school's own profile which has been especially designed for autistic pupils. This very promising system clearly identifies pupils' progress, and showing ways forward for their teaching and learning. Teachers base good targets on this system, and on their annual assessments. For all pupils, targets are drawn up for the major subjects in an individual plan. Pupils are fully involved in setting these targets which are recorded in language the pupil understands. However, pupils' versions are not always closely related to the teachers' versions, and they do not always follow from one to the next in an obvious way. This is something that the school is aware of, and has already begun to change.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 57 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (4%)	25 (44%)	21 (36%)	7 (12%)	1 (2%)	1 (2%)	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.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good and enrichment opportunities are very good. Pupils benefit from excellent accommodation and very good resources.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because of a curriculum that is broad, balanced and mostly relevant to their needs, but there is the need for further adaptation in some instances.
- Pupils' learning is enriched by a wealth of additional experiences.
- Curriculum innovation contributes considerably to pupils' enjoyment and achievement.
- The accommodation and resources are used well to improve learning.

Commentary

13. The curriculum each child receives is considered carefully. Where appropriate, pupils move to other classes for numeracy and literacy for greater challenge or more support as required so all are working at a suitable level. The successful adoption of the Primary Strategy is contributing to achievement in English, communication and mathematics. Overall, provision for pupils with additional special educational needs is good. It is particularly good for children under five and pupils in Years 1 and 2. In most cases, the programmes have been adapted to meet the needs of lower attaining pupils, but on occasion, a small minority of programmes in Years 3 to 6 need further adaptation to suit pupils of differing capabilities. The school is fortunate in having good levels of educational psychology, speech and language therapy and physiotherapy support. Additional support such as music therapy is provided where needed and care is taken to ensure pupils do not miss the same lesson every week. Almost three-quarters of pupils spend some part of each week working alongside pupils in mainstream education. This is a very effective part of the provision because it allows for pupils to make progress in their academic work as well as in their personal development. The activities pupils take part in are carefully matched to individual needs and skills.

14. Pupils of all ages take advantage of the numerous clubs at lunchtime and after school. Parents and pupils are consulted about their preferences and the clubs are organised so pupils from different classes have the opportunity to meet. Clubs are designed to appeal to a variety of interests such as sport, the arts, gardening, construction, computers and communication. Each session is planned carefully, taking account of the ability of each club member and with a clear understanding of what each pupil will achieve during the session. For example during a food technology club, some pupils were expected to chop mushrooms and grate cheese whilst others had to whisk eggs. In addition to providing enjoyment, the clubs enable pupils to have a positive attitude about themselves and others, and contribute significantly to pupils acquisition of knowledge and skills. Achievement in sport is further enhanced by links with other schools and the community for dance festivals, cricket matches and gymnastics amongst others.

15. Staff are constantly seeking to provide a rich and varied programme. Work with the *Creative Partnerships* is one such initiative. In the initial phase, pupils in all year groups worked with an actor and a writer using simple props such as a hat to create characters and to make writing imaginative. In the second phase, working with other educationalists, a dancer and an ICT specialist pioneering work using sound and light is being used to break obsessive behaviours and aid the learning of pupils with more severe autism.

16. Staff plan for pupils to enjoy their learning and endeavour to make learning fun. Teachers plan links between subjects, which reinforce learning in other areas, making this more meaningful. For example, when learning about Joseph in religious education, pupils designed and made a huge multi-coloured coat in design and technology. Staff make very good use of the outstanding accommodation for class, small group and individual work. For example, in science for investigations into pulling and pushing. Equally, in physical education the grounds are used for games and for orienteering. The extremely hard working site manager maintains the grounds and building to a high standard. In addition he has taken part in training and provides a very good role model, especially for the boys. The environment is enhanced by attractive, meaningful displays of pupils' work, artefacts and texts, which are used to support learning and celebrate achievement.

Care, guidance and support

The care, welfare, health and safety of pupils and the support, advice and guidance available to them are very good whilst the involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting upon their views is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Staff ensure pupils work in a healthy and safe environment.
- Pupils have access to very good support and guidance.
- Very good relationships between pupils and adults ensure each pupil has an adult who they can turn to and trust.
- Induction arrangements for pupils are very good.

COMMENTARY

17. The school provides a very good standard of care for its pupils. The health and safety of pupils and staff is regarded as high priority. Staff and governors responsible for the implementation of the health and safety policy undertake their duties conscientiously. Assessments of potential risks in and out of school have been undertaken both for activities and for individual pupils. A number of staff are trained in first aid and are readily available in case of an emergency. The caretaker makes regular inspections of the premises and any necessary repairs are dealt with immediately. School meals are cooked and consumed in hygienic conditions. A suitable, up to date Internet safety policy is in place and has been approved of by parents. Very good procedures for child protection are in place. The designated teachers have followed the recommended training programme. All staff, including lunchtime supervisors, are conscious of how vulnerable the pupils are, and are aware of the procedures should they have any concerns.

18. Throughout the school day, pupils benefit from the high quality support of their class teachers, support assistants, psychologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, the school nurse and other adults working in the school. Medical clinics are held on site to reduce disruption to pupils' education through hospital appointments. The well thought-out nurturing programme permeates all that the school hopes to achieve, making pupils feel welcome and safe, promoting a healthy life-style, and developing social skills. Personal care, where needed, is carried out sensitively protecting the pupils' dignity. Academically and socially pupils are constantly being observed and assessed with a view to improving their performance and their quality of life.

19. From the pupil questionnaires and from talking with, and observing, pupils, it is clear that all have several adults to whom to turn. Adults know their pupils very well and deal efficiently and perceptively with any problems and queries that may arise. Pupils appreciate being consulted on their views. Though there is no school council, adults talk to pupils about their likes and dislikes. As a result of such conversations, *buddy benches* have been introduced, and the portion size at lunchtimes has increased.

20. Well before pupils start at the school every eventuality of their induction is covered. Nothing is left to chance. Each pupil is fully assessed by a host of very well qualified professional people with parents present. Parents are fully consulted at all times from initial contact through to entry into the school. Staff visit every prospective pupil in their own home prior to a phased entry to the school. Visits by other specialist health workers for pupils with autism, and professionals such as the educational psychologist, the physiotherapist and the speech and language therapists ensure the school is well briefed for the reception of all pupils. The continued close liaison between parents, the school, and other professionals contributes considerably to the well being of pupils and to their achievement.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

Links with parents, other schools and the community are all very good and contribute significantly to pupils' achievements.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good information for parents enables them to contribute very well to their child's learning.
- Very good links with the community contribute significantly to learning.
- Very good links with other schools contribute to pupils' achievements.

Commentary

21. Parents appreciate the support they receive in helping their child to learn at home. In addition to helpful guidance in the school prospectus, they find the training sessions particularly useful. Parents have found information on *Colourful Semantics* valuable in improving their child's language and literacy. Similarly, following advice on the use of a picture exchange system, parents and staff are working together improving the communication of pupils with autism. Discussions and strategies for managing behaviour have led to parents and staff having a consistent approach resulting in very good behaviour and personal development. Parents are encouraged to help in school and contribute to the quality of provision through art, computers, sport, and educational visits. The anxieties of parents of young children starting at the school are eased, as parents are able to watch their child at work and play from the special observation room or through closed circuit television. Skilled staff take time to sit with parents coaching them in how to aid their child's learning. All parents are expected to contribute to their child's individual education plan and to work on targets at home. This accelerates pupils' progress.

22. Links with the community are very productive. Several representatives of local churches come in and regularly take assemblies. Local industry provides tours of their sites so pupils improve their knowledge and understanding of the world. A branch of a national super store has provided money towards the school gardens and funded creative writing and painting initiatives. The police have set up a greenhouse for pupils to improve their knowledge and understanding of life process. Links with the nearby allotment owners have allowed pupils to experience horticulture and inspired writing. Work with craftsmen such as an animator and a visit to a glass centre have resulted in artwork which greatly enhances the environment. For example, following a visit to the Baltic Centre, pupils worked with an architect and a weaver to produce a colourful wall hanging of the view from the top of the centre. Equally, numerous visits and visitors contribute significantly to learning and achievement in drama, history, geography, physical education and religious education.

23. All pupils benefit from close links with other special schools and over three-quarters from links with mainstream education. Staff consider pupils who need a social or academic challenge and match this carefully to what is provided in nursery and primary schools, where pupils work individually or as part of a small group alongside their peers in mainstream schools for example in science or art. In addition to fostering academic achievement, this enables pupils to learn to work in larger groups and to form trusting relationships with different adults. Other pupils make similar gains through linking as a class for physical education or music. In addition to pupil links, staff provide training for mainstream schools, and work experience and student placement for local schools and

colleges. A very well planned induction programme allows for smooth transition of pupils from Columbia Grange to secondary education.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The school's leadership and management are good. The leadership of the headteacher and other key staff is very good. Management is effective. Governance of the school is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher and other key staff provide leadership which inspires and motivates staff.
- Governors have ensured that all statutory requirements are met.
- There are good arrangements for managing staff, who work very well as a team.
- Financial management is good.

Commentary

24. The headteacher leads with great vision, enthusiasm and professionalism. Local education authority personnel, staff and governors respect her for her skill and progressive outlook, and all share her vision for a school that is a centre of excellence for pupils with autism. She has skilfully recruited and welded together the staff from the two former schools, and sensitively managed the change associated with this. For instance, classroom teams were made up of personnel from each school; staff found that the shared challenge of working with a new group of pupils, several with very challenging behaviour, quickly brought them together. The sense of loss experienced by many staff at the closing of their former schools was not ignored either. The new building features a courtyard in which a time capsule containing selected artefacts from each school is buried, and pupils were taken to see the demolished buildings of the old schools, thus helping them to acknowledge and accept the end of their existence. The head teacher's vision is clearly articulated in the good quality school improvement plan. It is also fully reflected in the local education authority's plan for the development of autism provision.

25. The head and deputy have a most constructive partnership. Their skills and expertise are complementary, and they lead most effectively by example. The headteacher sets the tone and direction for the school, and shows respect in her dealings with staff and pupils. In her turn, the deputy, as a former Advanced Skills teacher, is able to share her skills when she takes demonstration lessons. Alongside other members of the senior management team, they set an excellent example in their commitment, enthusiasm and hard work. The quality of teaching and learning, and that of the curriculum, in this relatively new school testify to the successful leadership of the headteacher, deputy and the subject leaders.

26. Teamwork in the school is most effective. For instance the outreach team, led by the headteacher, is already widely valued and respected by its mainstream partners who find themselves better able to retain pupils with special needs who previously would have been referred to special schools. All staff have clear roles and responsibilities, and they are managed well. There are good opportunities for professional development, and these have contributed well to the success of teaching. For example, the training of staff in the management of pupils with behaviour difficulties has had a marked impact, and the disruption of classes in the first year of the school's life is now a distant memory.

27. All staff with management responsibilities carry out monitoring activities, and the headteacher has a good grasp of how well teachers teach. They all receive written feedback on observations and know what they need to do to improve. The systems are in place for the school to collect data to enable it to evaluate its work, and in the interim, staff are reflective and ensure that where areas for improvement are spotted, the appropriate action is taken. As a result, the school is continually improving. A good range of clear policies guides staff in their work. However, none of these reflect the current practice in monitoring and evaluating the work of the school.

28. The governors are a skilled and supportive group, who have worked hard to ensure that the school has all the necessary policies, and that statutory requirements are met. They have a suitable committee structure, and have begun to develop a strategic role by putting in place a system of focused visits. For instance, one visited to talk to pupils in order to validate the results of a questionnaire given to pupils. They are not yet well involved in setting the direction of the school, although they are strongly committed to the vision articulated by the headteacher.

Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	938,976	Balance from previous year	59,246.61
Total expenditure	941,538.37	Balance carried forward to the next	56,269.24
Expenditure per pupil	13,082.68		

29. Arrangements for managing finances are good. The school’s improvement plan is carefully costed and the governors’ finance committee is given good information to enable it to monitor expenditure of the budget. Administrative staff, who provide a warm welcome for visitors, are well trained so that they can easily take over one another’s responsibilities including those related to the collection of monies. There has been no audit yet of the school’s financial procedures, but the school fund is audited each year and no weaknesses have been identified. The administrative staff play a significant role in achieving smooth running of the school, and staff are very well supported by the caretaker who goes well beyond the call of duty to help in many ways.

Outreach

The provision for outreach is **excellent**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The combination of skills, experience and enthusiasm of the outreach team is outstanding.
- Courses provided for other schools and professionals are valued especially for the ease of transition from theory to practical classroom application.
- The support provided by the outreach teacher and the special teaching assistant is excellent.
- Management of the outreach provision is excellent.

Commentary

30. The shared vision of the outreach team is matched by the knowledge, expertise, experience and commitment of its members. Comprising of a speech and language therapist, an educational psychologist, a teacher and a support assistant, their multi-disciplinary approach makes a significant contribution to the outstanding support offered to schools, parents, children, and young people. Though based in a primary school, the team offers support and advice from pre-school to Year 11. Members are involved and proactive from the point of diagnosis, and now often participate in the diagnostic process. Their approach is child centred and based on individual need rather than a “one size fits all” approach to autism. They are totally accessible, teachers say they are only a phone call away. Sensitive planning avoids the need for crisis management. Mainstream schools are well prepared long before the pupil arrives. For example, one parent expressed concern that her child, currently in mainstream but probably moving to special provision for secondary education, would not know anyone in the new school. Immediately plans were made to bring the pupil, now in Year 4, to the after school activities in Year 5, and selected lessons in Year 6, in Columbia Grange, so that he could form friendships with his future classmates.

31. The team offers high quality training supported by very good, jargon-free printed material. The range of courses is extensive, and adapted to meet the needs of different groups, including

parents, teachers, support staff, dinner supervisors, and health visitors. Full advantage is taken of the training on offer so all those in contact with the pupil have a shared understanding leading to a consistent approach. The written evaluations of course participants emphasise the practical nature of the information received, and the excellent provision of resources. Teachers say that what they learn can be applied immediately in their own situation.

32. In addition to the courses, advice and support is offered on an individual basis to a large number of schools. In discussion with members of the inspection team, teachers receiving this support were unanimous in their praise of the teacher and teaching assistant. The general consensus was that in conjunction with the training, they were responsible for enabling the inclusion in mainstream education of a large number of pupils with autism, Asperger's syndrome, and related difficulties. They were very clear in their belief that without the support they received from the outreach team, most of these pupils would not survive in mainstream education. The qualities shown by the outreach team include very good listening and communication skills, and impressive sensitivity. They give advice and impart specialised knowledge while at the same time affirming the teacher's abilities and strengths. Teachers report they are never made to feel de-skilled.

33. The clear vision of the headteacher and her ability to inspire others are clearly demonstrated in the management of the provision. Pathways have been created for pupils which provide evaluation and options at every stage from three to post-sixteen. Transitions are planned and prepared for well in advance. Intervention placements are offered at Columbia Grange, with well-supported gradual re-integration into their mainstream schools. Personal passports not only help others to understand, but are created to allow pupils to reflect on their own situation and develop coping strategies. The team is building a resource pack for pupils diagnosed with Asperger's syndrome. They are currently working on creating a database which will give better information on which to build authority wide provision. The outreach provision is very well thought of and receives the full support of the Local Education Authority.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the foundation stage is **good** overall, being very good in communication, language and literacy, and for children's personal, social and emotional development.

34. Children are admitted from the age of two. At the time of the inspection, there were two three-year olds and the remaining children were four. One of the three-year olds attends part-time. One of the four-year olds spends half of the week in Columbia Grange and the other half in a nursery in a mainstream school. Two of the children are on short-term assessment places. All children in the foundation stage have autism.

35. A carefully planned programme helps children settle into school life. Children quickly become familiar with routines through the daily singing of well known songs, and symbols of the activities they will be undertaking. Staff have invested time and energy establishing close links with parents. They take time to work with parents, for example, in the observation room adjacent to the foundation stage. This enables parents to see that their child is happy, how their child interacts with others when they are not around, and helps them plan ways to support their child's learning at home. Parents are encouraged to contribute to their child's development, for example, by agreeing targets for the next stage of their child's learning. This increases progress.

36. The co-ordinator leads and manages the foundation stage very well. Her enthusiasm and commitment are instrumental in the very good teamwork between herself and well-briefed nursery assistants and health professionals. Staff understand the needs of young children and how they learn best. Good use is made of the accommodation and of the skilled nursery nurses for small group work. They provide a very caring environment in which young children feel safe, enjoy learning and work hard. There is a good balance between activities provided by adults and opportunities for children to find things out for themselves.

37. The quality of teaching is good, with some very good teaching observed. Assessment when children first join the school gives a clear picture of each child's level of attainment. Understanding and skills are recorded and the information is used to plan individual programmes, carefully tailored to each child's specific needs. Planning is detailed and activities are meaningful and challenging. As a result, children make good progress towards their personal targets.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching is reflected in very good learning and achievement.
- Children make very good progress in their personal development because of the very wide range of experiences offered to them.
- Children discover about themselves through the well-planned nurturing programme.
- Links with mainstream nurseries are beneficial to higher attaining children.

Commentary

38. On arrival, children are greeted warmly by staff and all are expected to make some response either by vocalising or by eye contact. Higher attaining children quickly take the photograph from their coat peg and place it in the designated place to let their teacher know they are present. Adults are close by to prompt those who are less confident. Children make very good gains in their personal development because all have social targets in their individual education plan. Children

are expected to make choices in lessons and in their free time. Adults treat children and each other with respect. As a result children care for each other, take turns and are not afraid to signal when they need help. Children behave well because adults have high expectations of behaviour. They learn new skills at a good rate because they are given just the right amount of help, for example, when learning to use scissors.

39. Daily activities based on the nurturing programme help children to understand their feelings and to be sensitive to the needs of others. Through creative activities, games and time to talk and listen to others, children learn to take risks, to cope with winning and losing, and to learn from their mistakes because they feel safe and supported. They begin to form trusting relationships with adults and each other and learn the value of honesty. Children improve their confidence and develop positive attitudes because of the praise and encouragement that they receive.

40. Very good links have been established with a number of mainstream nurseries. Following a sensible phased integration, higher attaining children visibly grow in confidence as they spend time in nurseries in mainstream schools, rising to the challenge of working in a large group, making new friends and coping with different routines.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement is very good because of very good teaching.
- Activities are carefully matched to children's needs.
- Adults provide good opportunities for children to communicate and listen.
- Children are interested in books and developing writing because of the good opportunities provided.

Commentary

41. Children make very good progress because of focused targets in individual education plans. Adults are skilled and provide challenging and enjoyable activities. All children have autism, so the spoken word is well supported by signs and symbols so all understand and are able to make their needs known. Adults expect all children to make a response, though this varies according to their capabilities. Activities such as snack time are used particularly successfully to encourage children to vocalise, sign or exchange pictures for their chosen drink and food. Staff listen respectfully to children so children follow the example set by adults, for example waiting their turn to communicate. Work with the speech and language therapist contributes significantly to achievement in speaking, listening and alternative means of communication.

42. Children are successfully encouraged to take an interest in books and words. Stories such as *Old MacDonald's Farm* are read with expression so children listen with interest, joining in the familiar chorus. Higher attaining children hold books correctly and turn pages, and are beginning to recognise initial letter sounds. Some select their name from a choice of two. An attractive, comfortable reading corner has been established where children share books with adults. Prominent signs label different areas of the classroom so some children begin to recognise text has meaning. Children enjoy making marks and some are beginning to hold a pencil correctly and form recognisable letters.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children achieve well because of a good range of activities and good teaching.
- Games and rhymes are used well to develop children's understanding of numbers.
- Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to learn new vocabulary.

Commentary

43. Achievement is good because staff draw attention to number, shape and size not just in mathematics lessons, but in other subjects as well. For example, in literacy children count the number of animals on the farm. Their awareness of numbers increases through listening to adults counting. For example how many children are present. Children participate happily in games and rhymes such as *Two Little Ducks* motivated by the use of a puppet. Higher attaining children match simple shapes, count to ten and complete very simple puzzles.

44. Adults extend children's mathematical vocabulary in all areas of learning and through daily routines. For example when lining up to go out to play, children are requested to stand *in front* or *behind* a particular child. Activities such as sand and water play enable children to develop and awareness of *empty, full, big and little*. When playing imaginatively in the home corner, adults talk to children naming the shape and colour of crockery and questioning, for example, how many plates would be left if there was *one less*.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A good range of first hand experiences successfully extends children's knowledge and understanding of the world.
- Good opportunities are provided for children to use computers.

Commentary

45. Teaching, learning and achievement are good in this area of learning. Children enjoy their work because teachers plan a good range of activities and visits, which stimulate their curiosity and help them to understand more about the world around them. Photographic evidence shows children's delight as they experienced different forms of transport. Children experience the wider environment and, through visits to the beach, for example, begin to be aware of different geographical features. Higher children use photographs to locate different areas of the school. Through investigations such as melting chocolate, children become aware of materials and the changes that can take place.

46. Children are becoming familiar with computers because of the good opportunities provided. They increase in confidence as they use programs to practise early reading, mathematical skills, and to paint. Higher attaining children use a mouse independently. Children treat the equipment with respect and take turns when working with others on the machines.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching, learning and achievement are good.
- Resources are used successfully to boost children's physical development.

- Good use is made of a sports coach to enrich learning.

Commentary

47. Children in the foundation stage have the advantage of a very good outdoor play area and a hall. Activities for these resources are planned in detail providing not only for physical development but also for other areas of learning. For example, for children to take turns and share rides as they manoeuvre scooters and bicycles around the grounds. Though children are sometimes reluctant, they grow in confidence as they climb, balance and move around using the large equipment. Furthermore, they increase their mathematical understanding by counting and responding to positional instructions such as *behind* or *to the side*. Adults provide suitable opportunities for pupils to develop skills such as cutting and manipulating materials. As a result, children use scissors, art materials and construction equipment well.

48. Each week, children spend time working with a movement specialist. In the lesson observed, children enjoyed the rousing music, the story and the movement. Pictures, signs, symbols and demonstration were used well so children modelled, for example, being on an aeroplane and travelling to another country. However, children were not so successful imitating the movement and expression of jungle animals. The teacher recognised it may have been better to imitate farm animals which were in the children's experience. The expectation that children will undress and dress with minimum assistance contributes well to their personal development.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

49. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement on provision in creative development. Only one short lesson was seen. Nevertheless, it is clear from displays that good opportunities are provided for children to develop their imagination. Children explore a range of media and choose the colours and materials which appeal most to them. In addition to investigating paint and exploring textures, they learn how to mix colours. In the *home corner*, children are beginning to play together and take responsibility for *baking buns*. Others take part in imaginative play with animals on the farm. Children work well together on a large scale, for example using thick paint to produce a four-foot high Humpty Dumpty perched on his wall. With adult help, children use a computer programme to produce patterns.

50. Children enjoy music, though some with more severe autism need coaxing to take part. They especially enjoy action songs such as *heads and shoulders* or *wibble-wobble*. Children's mathematical understanding is promoted well. For example through using a numberline when singing *three wonky bicycles*.

SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 and 2

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Individual communication needs are very well met using the most appropriate mode of communication.
- Achievement is good overall, being very good in Years 1 and 2.
- Teaching is good overall, but inconsistent in Years 3 to 6.

Commentary

51. A very good understanding of pupils with autism and related difficulties results in an appropriate emphasis on communication and contributes considerably pupils' progress in their ability to communicate. Alternative means of communication such as picture exchange or signing are supported very well by teachers and teaching assistants. Symbol timetables and communication books are used well. Speech therapists make a significant contribution to learning through lessons and through individual communication programmes.

52. There is a wide range of ability in each year group so achievement must be judged on an individual basis. In Years 1 and 2 teaching and learning are very good and lead to very good achievement. The structured approach, which allows pupils to recognise daily routines and anticipate the next activity, gives them the security to learn very well. Work is very well matched to ability because teachers have very good subject knowledge and understanding of pupils' individual needs. The emphasis on phonics contributes very well to listening and to reading and writing. Pupils find the shared reading exciting and join in very well. Writing activities are well differentiated and range from mark making and tracking to overwriting, underwriting and copying. Higher attaining pupils match pictures to initial letters or text and arrange words, phrases or symbols in sentences. The very high expectations of enthusiastic teachers mean that pupils in Years 1 and 2 are being given a very firm foundation on which to build their literacy skills.

53. For pupils in Years 3 to 6, teaching ranged from very good to satisfactory in quality. However, most lessons seen were good or better and an examination of pupils' work showed that pupils achieve well. Listening and communicating is well promoted, and pupils enjoy shared reading. Individual guided reading progress is well monitored and a home reading scheme is used throughout the school. The most able pupils produce very good written work, drafting, re-drafting and word processing to produce well presented compositions. Information technology is used in most lessons to enhance teaching and learning. In the less successful lessons, lack of subject knowledge, and insufficient understanding of the needs of the least able pupils led to work, which was not always matched to ability. Subject leadership and management is good. The subject leader has ensured that a suitable curriculum is in place, but is right in her assessment that more rigorous monitoring of planning and teaching would ensure that the needs of the lowest attaining pupils are fully understood and met through well differentiated work.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

54. Good promotion of language and literacy skills was seen in many subjects other than English. Big books were used effectively in science, and opportunities for writing were well differentiated. Literacy being promoted well in history, geography, religious education, mathematics, PSHE, religious education and physical education

MATHEMATICS

The provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in all aspects of mathematics.
- Teachers use the resources and support staff very effectively.
- The quality of teaching is good, but teachers are not consistent in their use of assessment information.
- The subject is very well led and organised.

Commentary

55. Pupils achieve well in counting and general number skills. They learn how to apply what they have learned in many practical lessons and activities, with teachers and support staff planning many good opportunities for them to practise and develop their skills. Many of the higher attaining pupils add and subtract numbers, and divide large numbers into smaller, equal, parts such as *tens*. They understand how to split numbers and objects into halves or quarters. In all age groups, pupils make good progress in learning the properties of the basic shapes and solids, how to take simple measurements, and how to use money in shopping activities. The progress of lower attaining pupils is just as good in recognising numerals to ten, copying them, and joining in with number songs and rhymes.

56. Teaching is good overall, and many aspects are very good. Lesson planning is mainly good, though it sometimes lacks detail for helping and involving the most and least able pupils in a class. Teachers have good knowledge of the subject and of how to teach pupils with autism and other learning difficulties. Teachers are imaginative and capture pupils' interest with very good tabletop equipment and games. Electronic whiteboards and other computer programs suitably extend pupils' concentration. Support staff are very capable helpers for individual pupils, for groups, or for a whole class as the activity demands. They work very well with teachers as a team in all classes, with all staff communicating clearly with pupils, perhaps using symbol cards as well as clear speech and frequent repetition of the most important words. Pupils' behaviour is managed very well. Relationships are very good and pupils are well motivated by the enthusiastic staff. Teachers use a very good range of challenging activities, and they keep up a good pace throughout most lessons. One especially imaginative lesson with Year 2 pupils, for example, used a *Teddy Bears' Picnic* to promote counting, ideas of positions, matching items, bigger and smaller, too many, fewer, adding, subtracting and sharing; all in a fast-paced and very enjoyable activity.

57. The co-ordinator has developed the subject very well, with a very good scheme of what should be taught in the long term. The methods of assessing how well pupils are making progress are mainly good, and are used well by teachers when planning further lessons. Currently, staff use several different ways of carrying out the assessments. All of them work well for short-term changes to what will be taught. To date staff do not analyse the information they collect to see, for instance, if pupils are making better progress in one area of mathematics than another but this is planned to follow annual testing in the near future. Mostly, teachers involve pupils well in setting clear targets for their learning in the coming weeks. The co-ordinator has observed teachers in their lessons, has demonstrated some good teaching methods, and frequently checks teachers' planning. These have contributed very well to the high standard of teaching in the school. With a very clear view of this subject, she has produced a clear set of plans which put the subject in a good position to develop further.

Mathematics across the curriculum

58. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of mathematics is promoted well in other subjects. For example, estimating and measuring in science and in design and technology. In history, pupils use timelines and work out how long, for example, King Henry VIII was on the throne. Counting, positional vocabulary and colour recognition are suitably reinforced in physical education.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is consistently good in Years 1 and 2 and so pupils achieve well.
- The accommodation is very good and supports practical approaches to teaching and learning, and so do the good learning resources.
- Pupils' personal development is well supported.
- The curriculum is insufficiently adapted to make it relevant to pupils of different abilities.
- The subject is well led.

Commentary

59. Achievement in science is satisfactory overall, although achievement is better in Years 1 and 2 than in Years 3 to 6. Subject leadership is good. The co-ordinator has worked hard to put in place a curriculum that has good breadth and that emphasises equally well all aspects of science. There are high expectations of what pupils should learn; though these are not always modified well enough in some lesson plans. As a result, learning objectives in Years 3 to 6 are occasionally too ambitious.

60. Teachers have a good grasp of the subject, and a particular strength is their use of practical approaches to develop pupils' skills and to extend their knowledge and understanding. The accommodation supports this approach very well. Classrooms are well designed to incorporate areas where messy or wet activities can be carried out away from tables where pupils can keep out their work books, so that they can record results as they go along. Pupils' work over the past year shows that they steadily increase their skills of recording in a variety of ways. For instance younger pupils record what they see by making simple observational drawings; they also write about what they have done. Teachers devise ways of helping lower attaining pupils to do the same; they prepare pictures for them to stick into simple tables, for instance. By Year 6, pupils record results in tables and bar graphs; they also make use of photography to show findings. For instance, they took a picture of dough every five minutes, to record how it rose when yeast was added. By Year 6, pupils have a clear understanding of how to plan a fair test.

61. Good learning resources are used effectively to support the development of pupils' knowledge and understanding. For instance, teachers make use of the *push* and *pull* signs on doors, and the playground equipment, to enable pupils to experience these forces. In a very good lesson for pupils in Years 1 and 2, pupils were taken into the school's light and sound room, where they experienced dark and light. By gradually increasing the amount of available light with torches, the teacher enabled pupils to recognise that colour cannot be seen without a certain amount of light. Group work that followed this was well planned to cater for the range of pupils' abilities. There was extension work for higher attaining pupils, and symbols were used well to enable those with communication needs to identify sources of light.

62. Teaching and learning is good overall. However, in Years 3 to 6, whilst there are good features of teaching, not all teachers include pupils of all abilities well enough in discussions. Occasionally, planning is not implemented well. For instance, in a lesson intended to develop an understanding of a fair test, pupils played no part in the design of the investigation, so valuable learning opportunities were missed.

63. Pupils' have good opportunities to develop personally in science. Staff encourage a sense of awe and wonder – this was much in evidence in the lesson in the light room. There are also opportunities for pupils to grow and care for plants. The gardening club, run by a member of the support staff, provides a wonderful opportunity for pupils to contribute to the school community by growing and selling produce. They also learn about plants and animals, because support staff are careful to point out facts, ask pupils questions, and ensure that they know why they should do things a certain way.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in all age groups.
- The good teaching in ICT lessons is well reinforced by extensive use of the technology in other subjects.
- This subject is managed and led well, with especially good resources and accommodation.

Commentary

64. The good progress that pupils make is seen throughout all the expected areas of the subject. Pupils of all capabilities are learning well. Lower attaining pupils learn to use simple switches for their communication needs, to produce voices, activate screen displays and make toys move. Higher attaining pupils achieve equally well putting text into a screen document; changing the print style, size and colour; and correcting mistakes. They know how to search for information on the Internet, and bring it into their own work, with pictures and text. The most able pupils make PowerPoint slide shows of their work, such as about the River Wear past and present.

65. Teaching and learning are good. Teachers generally plan their lessons well, and use the equipment well. In the best lessons, their preparation is thorough, often in the classroom doing introductory activities such as a survey, or research in books, before moving to the ICT suite to use the computers themselves. These lessons are conducted at a good and challenging pace, with support staff as well as teachers able to give individual pupils very good support, guidance and encouragement. Pupils learn well because they are so motivated by the staff's approach and very positive relationships, as well as by the excitement of using the technology in so many challenging and imaginative ways. In the lessons that were satisfactory, there were problems with equipment or software, sometimes because teachers were not as familiar with them as they could be. Occasionally aspects of planning were unclear. Teachers and pupils often use the technology well in lessons in other subjects, especially the electronic whiteboards.

66. Leadership and management are good. A lot has been achieved in a short time, particularly the setting up of excellent accommodation and very good equipment. In addition to the suite, each classroom is very well equipped, including an interactive white board. The assessment that is used to track pupils' progress is good, and is constantly under review. The co-ordinator has observed teaching around the school, and has checked teachers' planning. A technician one-day each week is a great help to the smooth running of the equipment. Many staff have had effective training, but a few still lack confidence in some aspects.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

67. The use of ICT in other subjects is very good. Teachers bring the technology into many lessons in good ways, such as allowing pupils to re-write their letters to friends; analysing the data in surveys and making graphs. Good use is made of suitable Internet sites to find out about, for example, historical events on the Internet. Digital photographs of local landmarks enhance learning in geography, as does the use of commercial packages to produce bright patterns and pictures in art, and for designs in design and technology. These all make a good contribution to pupils' learning and reinforcing their skills. Where appropriate, staff use communication aids well with pupils, such as in greetings activities, or looking at a book together in a literacy lesson.

HUMANITIES

68. There was insufficient evidence to make a judgement on teaching, learning and achievement in **history**. However, it is clear from the high quality displays, from teachers' planning and from discussions, that pupils have access to a wide and interesting programme. The scheme of work has been carefully planned to ensure progression in the knowledge and skills pupils acquire and to make learning meaningful. Very good use is made of the locality to ensure pupils are aware of local history and of their cultural heritage. For example, pupils in Years 1 and 2 have visited a local living museum to experience life in the past. Those in Years 5 and 6 have a growing understanding of changes in Sunderland through comparing, for example, how the Wearmouth Bridge has changed over time and that the Sunderland Football Club Stadium of Light has been built on the site of Monkwearmouth Colliery. Pupils have increased their understanding of chronology through observing the progress of the building of their new school, taking photographs of the bare site through to completion.

69. Of the two lessons observed, one was good and one very good. Both teachers were enthusiastic, confident and provided challenging activities using a wide range of resources so pupils understand they can find information from different sources such as photographs, text and interesting objects. One teacher made very good use of a colourful display of pupils' work to check their knowledge and to motivate them by *hiding* pictures of historical figures behind doors. Pupils were intrigued as they tried to predict whether a *king*, *jester* or *knight* would be behind their castle door. Teaching and learning would have been improved in the good lesson with more pace and urgency.

70. **Geography** was not a particular focus for the inspection and too little evidence was gathered for secure judgements to be made on provision and standards. Nevertheless, lively and stimulating displays around the school show the breadth of learning experiences that pupils have, many of these as part of visits that combine well both history and geography.

71. A good lesson was observed in a class for Year 3 pupils. Here, the teacher used a good range of appealing resources to enable pupils to understand and talk about seaside holidays. The lesson began with pupils unpacking a suitcase of items that might be taken on a holiday in the sun, such as hats, sun cream, and swimsuits. A big book story about a holiday was used well to stimulate further discussion. In the illustrations, pupils recognised and identified features such as cliffs and rocks, they also spotted seagulls. An enjoyable session followed where pupils were able to play collaboratively in a large sand tray, making sandcastles and finding buried seashells, for instance. Playing together was a challenge for some of them, so the activity supported their personal development well.

Religious Education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well because of good, and sometimes, very good teaching.
- The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Subject leadership is good.

Commentary

72. Teaching and learning are good overall, though lessons ranged from very good to unsatisfactory. Where teaching is most successful, teachers have a suitable knowledge and understanding. They make lessons relevant by using interesting objects and computers. For example, pupils in Year 4 increased their understanding of Judaism through exploring an interactive synagogue and through investigating a Torah scroll. The very good lessons were conducted with urgency so pupils concentrated well. These lessons were supported well by the use of signs and symbols. Where teaching was unsatisfactory, a lack of preparation, limited knowledge on this aspect of the subject and a slow pace resulted in unsatisfactory learning. Nevertheless, pupils were managed well and all capabilities were included in the discussions and activities. However, pupils' work, planning and discussions show teaching and learning in this class in religious education is often good.

73. This subject very well supports pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils increase their knowledge of the beliefs and celebrations of the major world faiths. Through sensitive teaching, they speak with respect about what each faith holds sacred and about festivals. In lessons, for example, in Year 2, pupils appreciate *belonging* and become aware of difference and diversity. Thoughtful displays around the school and the use of visits and visitors make learning meaningful and contribute to pupils' understanding. Very good links are made to other subjects. For example, when learning about Joseph, pupils designed and produced a multi-coloured coat. Pupils in Years 6 recognise that creative arts are used to express faith and religious feelings and have used computers to create Islamic art, and following, a visit to a local church, have produced stained glass windows. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on things that are important to them, such as after looking at their flourishing garden, considering how people sometimes spoil God's beautiful world.

74. Subject leadership is good; the co-ordinator is knowledgeable and has been part of a group working on the Locally Agreed Syllabus. In addition, she has given good support to staff and increased their confidence in a subject that some find difficult to teach. Management is satisfactory.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

75. No lessons were observed in **art and design** during the inspection, and so it is not possible to judge the overall provision in this subject. There is, however, a lot of other evidence in the form of many bright and imaginative displays around the school, and samples of pupils' artwork. Combined with discussions with staff and pupils, it is evident that pupils achieve well using a wide range of techniques and materials. Pupils have worked well in the style of other cultures and famous artists. They have benefited greatly from many very good links with outside artists coming into school to help, as well as many very positive visits out of school. This subject is well, and enthusiastically, led and managed, with a very good curriculum, an art club out of school time, and clear plans which place the subject in a good position to develop further.

76. It is not possible to judge the overall quality of provision in **design and technology** because only two lessons were seen. One of these was good; the other was very good because it was especially practical, and used an electronic whiteboard imaginatively. The activities encouraged very good co-operation among pupils with autism as they built shelters

in which to spend a night in imaginary desert and rain forest environments. An analysis of pupils' work, many displays around the school, and discussions with pupils and staff, indicate good design work as well as good achievement in pupils' skills in making items. Pupils have completed many good major projects, often very well linked with other subjects such as history and English, in which pupils have produced very good work about Britain since 1948, and the story of *The Little Red Hen*, for instance. In other topics, pupils have produced good work in projects such as making mechanical toys, lighthouses and a play park. Information technology is well used in many projects. This subject is well organised, with a very good curriculum that is well supported by visits out of school, such as to the Baltic Centre. There are also good clubs such as the food technology and construction clubs out of school hours that add greatly to pupils' learning.

77. Insufficient lessons were observed to make a judgement on the provision in **music**. Nevertheless, pupils enjoyed the two music lessons seen, and showed considerable skill in recognising sound patterns and musical instruments. Lessons were practical, fun as well as instructive, and pupils responded with enthusiasm. In the brief observation of music therapy, pupils recognised the mood of the music, lively or relaxing, and responded appropriately, obviously familiar with the routine. There is a good music club but this does not appear to be well supported, perhaps because of competition from the other club activities on offer.

78. There was insufficient evidence to form a judgement on teaching, learning and standards in **physical education**. Nevertheless, it is evident pupils have access to a wide range of challenging activities during and after school. The time allocated to communication and language means that the taught time for physical education does not meet the two hours recommended. To remedy this, and to ensure pupils are physically active and fit, play mentors are being trained and equipment has been purchased to use the excellent outdoor area for games and skills during lunchtime. In addition, pupils in all age groups have access to coaching after school and at lunchtimes for swimming and football. Furthermore, through very good links with the local secondary school Sport Co-ordinator programme, pupils have taken part in additional activities such as cricket coaching, dance festivals and gymnastics.

79. Of the two lessons seen, one was very good and one good. A sports coach taught the very good lesson. Her enthusiasm and skill motivated pupils and adults alike to be physically active throughout the whole session and to improve their ability to catch. Pupils responded eagerly to being clowns, juggling their ball, moving in time to the music and improving their listening as they followed increasingly complex instructions. In addition to improving their physical skills, pupils improved their personal development as they waited to take their turn and had to cope with winning and losing. In the good lesson, the teacher made very good use of the school grounds for orienteering. By the end of the lesson, pupils used a simple plan and orientated themselves successfully following letter clues around the school garden.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP (PSHCE)

Provision in PSHCE is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is broad, balanced and very well supported by the nurturing programme and by daily routines.
- Pupils achieve very well because of very good teaching and resources.
- The subject is well led and managed.
- The ethos of the school promotes independence, consideration for others and a respect for the feelings of others.

Commentary

80. Good leadership and management of the subject have resulted in a good curriculum that covers relationships, growing up, and safety - including people we trust, bullying, and what we put in or on our bodies. Good support for staff by the co-ordinator and very good relationships between all adults and pupils enable teachers to teach sensitive subjects at a level which pupils of all capabilities understand. Preparation for puberty is done individually and supported well by the school nurse. Staff monitor pupils closely and judge when is the most appropriate time for each pupil. Hygiene, self-care and independence are developed very well through the daily routines. Through the nurturing programme, pupils learn more about themselves and how to be sensitive to the needs of others. They are beginning to accept responsibility for their own actions and are developing skills that allow them to share their feelings in an appropriate manner.

81. PSCHE lessons are good because they are usually very practical and pupils learn to follow rules, take turns, collaborate, share, and celebrate together as they play games. Social stories are used very well to help pupils to discuss moral dilemmas, understand and express feelings, and develop a sense of right and wrong. Sensory resources and imaginative use of, for example, the *magic shell* and the *sad chair* all contribute to pupils' understanding of living in a community. Target setting forms part of the PSHCE programme. Pupils are consulted about their targets and agree them with staff. These targets are referred to in lessons where appropriate and pupils know what they have to do to improve. The very good ethos of the school, and excellent role models of all the staff, including the office staff, caretaker and dinner supervisors encourage pupils towards mature, considerate behaviour.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	8
Value for money provided by the school	2
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	4
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	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	2
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
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	4
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2
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 against national standards.