

# INSPECTION REPORT

## HELTWATE SCHOOL

Peterborough

LEA area: Peterborough

Unique reference number: 110948

Headteacher: Mr D Thompson

Lead inspector: Ms Sue Aldridge

Dates of inspection: 25<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> April, 2005

Inspection number: 273760

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 special
Age range of pupils:	4 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll;	105
School address:	Heltwate North Bretton Peterborough
Postcode:	PE3 8RL
Telephone number:	01733 262878
Fax number:	01733 331192
Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr John Wilson
Date of previous inspection:	19 <sup>th</sup> October 1998

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

Heltwate is a mixed, day, community special school that is approved to educate 110 pupils aged from 4 to 16 with moderate learning difficulties. From September 2004 it was reorganised to provide for pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties. There are currently 105 pupils on roll, all of whom have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. At the time of the inspection, there were no children in the Foundation Stage. Almost half of pupils have moderate learning difficulties, about a fifth have severe learning difficulties and a similar proportion represents pupils with autism. Smaller numbers have speech and communication difficulties, social, emotional and behavioural difficulties, or physical difficulties. Roughly three quarters of pupils are white; other pupils are of Asian or of mixed race, in similar proportions, and there are three black pupils. A very small number of pupils are travellers, but there are no refugees or asylum seekers. Links with mainstream high schools enable a few pupils to follow GCSE courses in art and mathematics. Through links with two colleges, 35 pupils follow vocational or general education courses. The school provides accommodation for a summer play scheme and a multidisciplinary team of Portage workers. It has links with Team Enterprise, the Comenius Project, the Graduate Teacher Programme and an organisation that provides support for Christian assemblies. Its work has been recognised by Artsmark, Investors in People, a Schools Achievement Award and the Schools Curriculum Award.

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
8810	Sue Aldridge	<i>Lead inspector</i>	Personal, Social, Health and Citizenship Education; Modern Foreign Language.
19692	Bob Folks	<i>Lay inspector</i>	
23390	Mel Blackband	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics; Physical Education.
17855	Gordon Gentry	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science; History; Geography.
2480	Christine Gilder	<i>Team inspector</i>	Religious Education.
30243	Anne Heakin	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Art and Design; Special Educational Needs.
22178	Kate Robertson	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information and Communication Technology; Design and Technology; Music.

The inspection contractor was:

VT Education Ltd  
Old Garden House  
The Lanterns  
Bridge Lane  
London  
SW11 3AD

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## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

### OVERALL EVALUATION

**The school's effectiveness is satisfactory.** Teaching, learning and pupils' achievements are all satisfactory. Leadership and management are adequate, and the school provides satisfactory value for money.

**The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:**

- Pupils across the school achieve well in English and personal, social, health education and citizenship (PSHCE).
- Achievement in religious education is unsatisfactory, as too little time is allocated to religious education lessons.
- In science, pupils in Years 1 - 9 achieve well; in Years 10 and 11 the most able pupils do not achieve well enough, as they do not follow examination courses.
- In Years 1- 6, achievement in information and communication technology (ICT) is unsatisfactory because planning for the subject is weak.
- Weaknesses in planning, marking and recording detract from otherwise good classroom teaching.
- There is very good provision for work related learning (WRL).
- Pupils greatly enjoy coming to school and their behaviour is very good.
- A good range of activities enriches the curriculum.
- Pupils are involved well in school life and there are good arrangements to care for them and ensure that they work in a safe and healthy environment.
- Monitoring and evaluation are not well developed enough.

The school has not improved enough since the last inspection. In the past three years there has been a lack of continuity in the leadership team and the school has been reorganised. This inspection identifies the same weakness in ICT provision that was identified in the inspection of 1998. A lack of monitoring has resulted in considerable inconsistency in the way that staff carry out aspects of their work. Staff have been fairly successful in adapting their provision and methods to suit a wider range of special needs. The school has not kept pace with some national developments. Following the appointment of a new headteacher two terms ago, there have been some significant developments, particularly in the analysis of assessment information, workforce remodelling and improvements in the accommodation. Wide consultation has led to the development of a new mission statement for the school. There is a sound capacity for further improvement.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

**Achievement is satisfactory overall, and at each stage.** Good achievement in English and PSHCE is associated with a wide range of learning experiences and good teaching and learning. Achievement is satisfactory overall in mathematics, science, and ICT. Although classroom teaching is generally good, underlying weaknesses in planning and recording mean that teachers do not identify what pupils have learned in lessons. A comparatively low allocation of taught time for pupils from Year 3 onwards means that a narrow range of learning experiences is provided in some

subjects. Underachievement in ICT in Years 1 - 6 is associated with a lack of clear planning to develop pupils' skills. Too little time is allocated to religious education and so pupils do not cover enough of the syllabus. In Years 10 -11, there is too little science taught to the more able pupils, and no accreditation in science is provided for those who are capable of examination passes.

**Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are developed well.** Pupils are keen to do well and value the awards they are given for good work and effort. Attendance is very good, and punctuality is good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

**The school provides a satisfactory quality of education.** Much of the classroom teaching is good but weaknesses in planning, marking and recording detract from this; **teaching is satisfactory overall.** Teachers and their assistants work well together to promote learning. The curriculum is satisfactory. However, the amount of work covered is low because every Friday afternoon is allocated to leisure activities. A good programme of PSHCE is provided. A good number of teaching assistants support pupils well, and very good careers guidance is provided. Inconsistencies in record keeping make the monitoring of pupils' progress very difficult. Pupils' progress is kept under review well enough through annual reviews, and pupils and their parents are involved well in this. There are good links with the community.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

**Leadership and management are satisfactory.** The headteacher provides satisfactory leadership, and so do key staff with responsibilities. Governance is satisfactory; governors are supportive and are developing their strategic role. However, a few statutory requirements are not met in ICT or science. Monitoring and evaluation are at an early stage, and this shows in the school's inaccurate evaluation of its provision.

## **PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents and pupils have very positive views of the school. Parents particularly like the range of extra-curricular activities. A few would like more homework and better information on pupils' progress, and inspectors agree with this view. Pupils appreciate the fact that they are expected to work hard and do their best. They feel that they are treated fairly and that the school is well run.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

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

- Improve planning for ICT in Years 1 - 6;
- Increase the time allocated to the teaching of religious education;
- Ensure that pupils who are capable of examination passes are given the chance to follow suitable courses;
- Agree a suitable whole-school format and content for planning what should be taught in each subject and a common system for recording what pupils learn;
- Improve marking and annotation of pupils' work so that this provides evidence of pupils' achievements;
- Develop procedures for whole-school monitoring and evaluation;

**and, to meet statutory requirements:**

- Ensure that all pupils' progress reports to parents include a comment on every subject taught and give levels achieved in all subjects in Year 9;
- Ensure that requirements are met in ICT and science.



## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

Although standards are well below those expected, this is the result of the nature and extent of pupils' learning difficulties. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils achieve well in English and in PSHCE; achievement in science is good in Years 1 to 9.
- Pupils in Years 1 to 6 do not achieve well enough in ICT.
- Achievement in religious education is unsatisfactory.
- In science, the most able pupils in Years 10 and 11 do not achieve well enough.
- Pupils with autism do not achieve as well in speaking and listening as other pupils do; nonetheless their achievement is satisfactory.

#### **Commentary**

1. In the past, the school has measured the P Levels that pupils reach in English, mathematics and science, made predictions of levels that pupils might reach the following year, and then sent the outcomes for analysis to a national project. The data from this shows that pupils do at least as well as others in similar participating schools. Since the new headteacher took over, much valuable work has been done to improve whole-school assessment so that the school will have the necessary information that it needs to evaluate the effectiveness of teaching and the curriculum. However, this is at too early a stage for the information to be useful to this inspection team.

2. Pupils' achievements in speaking and listening, reading and writing are generally good. This is a reflection of the wide range of opportunities that pupils have to practise and extend their skills in English and other subjects, as well as the quality of teaching that pupils receive. However, pupils with autism do not do as well as others because teachers are not yet secure in the management of these pupils. Nonetheless, pupils with autism learn to make requests by using Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS), or by speech if they have the verbal skills. By the time they leave the school, pupils are competent and confident communicators; the most skilful hold a fluent conversation, and all have a suitable means of communicating. All are successful in achieving external accreditation in the key skill of communication.

3. In PSHCE, all pupils make good progress and achieve well. Their achievement is well supported by the breadth of learning experiences they are given, in lessons, across other subjects and in extra-curricular activities. For instance, pupils learn valuable social and independence skills when they go away from home on residential school journeys. In Years 10 and 11, pupils select challenges from the Youth Award Scheme (YAS), accredited by Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). This accredits a wide range of key skills, and in 2004 all pupils were successful in obtaining either a Bronze or a Silver award.

4. Similarly, all pupils in Year 11 achieve suitable accreditation in the key skills of numeracy and ICT. In 2004, higher attaining pupils were successful in obtaining the National Skills Profile; others were successful in achieving accreditation through Accreditation for Life and Living (A.L.L.). The school is considering Entry Level qualifications in future, as there are a few pupils coming up through the school who are capable of examination passes.

5. In religious education, pupils do not achieve well enough. There is a suitable scheme that reflects the locally Agreed Syllabus but not enough time allocated to teaching the subject. The school currently allocates all Friday afternoon to leisure programmes; these offer valuable learning opportunities but they do limit the time available for teaching subjects. As a result, religious education takes its turn alongside other subjects, and pupils do not have a weekly lesson. Although rich learning experiences are provided through regular religious education days, pupils do not learn as steadily as they should, because they do not build continuously on their knowledge and understanding.

6. In Years 1 to 6, pupils do not achieve well enough in ICT because there are no discrete ICT lessons and teachers do not routinely identify where they will develop pupils' ICT skills in other subjects. Progress is therefore patchy and achievement unsatisfactory.

7. In science, pupils in Years 1 to 9 achieve well. They are well taught and have a broad range of experiences provided through science lessons and topics with a scientific content. Lower attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve satisfactorily. They have discrete science lessons that build on what they learned up to Year 9, and additional scientific experiences are provided through A.L.L. However, higher attainers have no science lessons, although they have some scientific experiences through YAS. A few of these pupils have reached Levels 2 or 3 by Year 9 and are capable of obtaining examination passes at entry level or even GCSE. However, these courses are not currently provided, so these pupils do not achieve well enough. In one sense, the school is limited in what it can do because pupils occasionally enter in Year 10, when it is too late to start courses.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

The pupils have good attitudes to school and take a full part in the life of the school. Their behaviour is very good overall. Relationships within the school are good. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school is particularly successful in improving pupils' behaviour and attendance.
- The pupils have good attitudes to school.
- Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good.
- Attendance and attendance procedures are very good.
- Punctuality is good.

### **Commentary**

8. The pupils have good attitudes to school, and this can be seen as they arrive at the school in the mornings and are greeted by the staff. In lessons, the pupils behave well or very well, and only one or two exceptions were observed during the inspection. Some older pupils were very enthusiastic about making Fathers' Day Cards and posters to advertise them in a Goldust Team Enterprise lesson. Relationships in this lesson were particularly good as they admired each other's work and exchanged ideas. There are good relationships overall in the school.

9. Outside lessons, the pupils behave very well. They are happy coming into school, play well together at break-times and lunchtimes, help each other, and look after one another. Some of the older pupils have an early lunch so that they can go into the playground to look after the younger pupils. Supervision is almost imperceptible but very effective. No bullying or harassment was seen during the inspection and the pupils could describe what the procedures were if anything happened. Promotion of good behaviour is very effective, and it is a credit to the school that it has accepted some pupils into the school with poor attendance and behaviour records and has 'turned them round' to be good attenders and well-behaved pupils. There have been no exclusions during the last year.

10. The school has very good attendance figures and very good procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance. The registers are neatly and efficiently completed and absences are pursued during the first morning of absence. All statutory requirements are met.

**Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)**

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	5.2	School data	0.6

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

11. Pupils are encouraged to develop responsibility and independence. A good example is the way they look after the gardens in the school and grow and sell vegetables. The pupils have good self-esteem and confidence and this is encouraged and fostered by the teachers and support staff.

12. Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good. Spiritual awareness is nurtured through lessons, in assemblies, and by the religious education days that the school holds. Achievement is celebrated in the classroom and at a special weekly assembly, and pupils value the certificates they receive. Different races and religions are explored on these days and they include Sikhism, Buddhism and Judaism. Pupils are taught to develop an understanding of other people's situations, and a good example of this was the story of the rickshaw driver in Dakar which the headteacher told at an assembly. This brought home the differences between life in this country and places like Bangladesh. The design of the Father's Day cards and an impressive range of artwork displayed well around the school show pupils' expressive or creative impulse.

13. Moral awareness is constantly promoted by staff, and it permeates all activities in the school. The pupils know right from wrong and they learn the consequences of their actions upon others. They willingly express their views on given situations. Many very useful dilemmas and practical situations are explored in PSHE lessons and these help considerably with the pupils' understanding of many of the issues they may well encounter in their lives. The older pupils learn more about these issues in Citizenship lessons. They appreciate their rights and responsibilities when they elect council representatives, and make their views known through the council.

14. The pupils relate well to each other and work well in groups. This was to be seen in many science lessons during the inspection. They exercise responsibility and are proud to talk about this, as they did when meeting inspectors during the inspection. They show respect for people and for property. They are pleased to help one another, which they do with kindness and consideration. All pupils take part in activities in the community, although this becomes more apparent as the pupils grow older. There are lots of visits in connection with sports and music, and the older pupils all go into the community for work experience. The numerous residential trips available contribute greatly to the pupils' personal and social development.

15. Appreciation of cultural diversity is developed through exploration of other faiths and by examining the lives and crafts of people from other countries. Examples include Indian and Asian cooking, African art and a visiting African band, tribal masks, Aboriginal art and music, Indian dancers, displays of different countries on school walls, and a variety of artwork and artists. Pupils also develop an awareness of their own cultural heritage in lessons and through visits.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL**

The school provides a satisfactory quality of education. The curriculum, which is satisfactory, is enriched well. The school provides good quality care, and arrangements for pupils' safety and welfare are good. Pupils are involved well in school life; they are consulted through a school council and their views are acted upon.

### **Teaching and learning**

Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Assessment is satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Good encouragement and engagement of pupils by teachers and their assistants ensures that pupils are productive throughout lessons.
- Teaching and learning are good across the school in English and PSHCE; they are good in science in Years 1 to 9.
- Staff make their expectations of good work and behaviour clear, and pupils respond well to this.
- There are weaknesses in planning and recording what pupils learn in each lesson.
- Staff have a limited range of strategies for teaching pupils with autism.
- Teachers are not consistent in setting homework, and older pupils are not routinely set work to do at home.

### **Commentary**

16. The most significant strength of teaching is the way in which staff support and encourage pupils; they keep them interested and engaged well throughout lessons. Teachers and their assistants work well together to achieve this goal, as the teaching assistants are well briefed. Several lessons were observed when teaching assistants made a strong contribution to direct teaching by working with individuals or small groups. This is particularly beneficial when pupils in a class are put into groups of similar ability and are set different tasks, so that all are equally well challenged. Teaching assistants show initiative, interjecting to make sure that the teacher has heard a quiet reply from a pupil, for instance.

17. In English, good teaching is characterised by good planning, which is based on the national literacy strategy. Teachers plan a wide range of activities for pupils and, across the curriculum, speaking and listening opportunities abound. In all secondary classes, pupils are grouped by ability for English; this also happens in upper primary classes. It works well in English, as teachers plan suitable activities which match pupils' abilities well. However, in mathematics, grouping by ability is not as effective because teachers do not always set tasks that are challenging enough. Teachers do not base their planning on the national strategy for mathematics, which results in a narrow range of learning experiences.

18. In PSHCE, teachers plan a wide range of learning experiences and plans are regularly modified to take account of the pupils' changing needs. Teachers make good use of visits and visitors to bring the subject to life and enable pupils to learn in and about the community. As a result, pupils learn to be safe and healthy, and they enjoy their lessons. In science, some very good teaching was seen; there was a buzz in these lessons and pupils were most industrious, so they achieved a good deal in the time available. Teachers use practical activities, which pupils enjoy, and they draw well on the local environment, which brings science to life.

19. For most subjects, the school has adequate plans to ensure that topics are not repeated or missed out altogether. Teachers revise these all the time to make sure that they meet pupils' needs. However, as there is no agreed format, teachers planning entails the use of a wide variety of formats. As a result, not all plans contain the same information. Teachers do not routinely show, for instance, where there are opportunities for consolidating literacy, numeracy and ICT skills. The

use of numeracy in subjects other than mathematics is unsatisfactory as a result. A common weakness of lesson planning is that teachers identify general learning objectives for the whole class. In this respect, they do not follow the most recent guidance on planning the curriculum for pupils with learning difficulties, which suggests the setting of different objectives for pupils of different abilities. Teachers rarely review learning with the pupils at the end of a lesson, so pupils have little idea of how well they have done. There is too little recording of what pupils actually learn in lessons. A good planning format was seen in design and technology, and in a recently developed PSHCE unit a teacher has identified different objectives for each group of pupils.

20. In one respect, teachers make pupils' learning very meaningful. Every pupil is set one or two short term targets each week, and these are reviewed at the end of that time. Pupils know what their targets are, and when and whether they have been successful in meeting them. Where practice is best, a copy of the pupils' target goes home to parents so that they can support their children in achieving it. The achievement of personal targets is recognised and rewarded in assembly. However, not all teachers are consistent in keeping records that show whether pupils have achieved their targets or not. As a result, it is not possible to track pupils' progress over time, and valuable information is lost that might be a positive indicator of the school's success in promoting achievement.

21. Since the last inspection, the school has admitted pupils with autism, and there has been satisfactory training for teachers. Suitable methods are used in many classes, but staff are still insecure in some aspects of management, particularly challenging behaviour, and this results in some unsatisfactory involvement of pupils in lessons. There is no one on the staff that teachers can turn to for advice or guidance, and they do not have access to advisory staff in the local education authority (LEA), as advisory teachers work with mainstream schools only.

### **Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 42 lessons**

<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Good</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Unsatisfactory</b>	<b>Poor</b>	<b>Very poor</b>
0 (0%)	5 (12%)	28 (67%)	8 (19%)	1(2%)	0 (0%)	0 (0 %)

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

22. A recent worthwhile development has been the adoption of a commercial assessment system that enables teachers to see where individuals and groups need reinforcement of learning in different areas of the subject. For instance, in subjects such as English, mathematics and science, assessment systems are beginning to be used to analyse and track pupils' progress and to influence lesson planning. There is inconsistent practice in the marking and annotation of pupils' work; some is effective, as it gives pupils good quality information about how they can improve, but in other classes it is much less informative. As a result, pupils across the school receive variable feedback on their learning, and there is too little evidence to support teachers' assessment of the levels that pupils reach.

### **The curriculum**

The curriculum is satisfactory. There are good opportunities for enrichment. Resources and accommodation are satisfactory.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils do not get their full entitlement to all aspects of some National Curriculum subjects and religious education.
- The school prepares pupils well for the later stages of education and employment.
- The provision for PSHE is good.
- A good range of activities enriches the curriculum.
- There is a good number of support staff, who contribute well to pupils' learning.
- Lack of consistency in teachers' planning restricts pupils' progress.

## Commentary

23. There were no major issues at the time of the last inspection. Minor issues relating to accommodation have been addressed. The school has new buildings providing improved facilities for secondary aged pupils. Completion is so recent that there has not been sufficient time for any clear impact on pupils' achievements. The new library is not fully developed and the science room is not yet in full use. The school places high emphasis on pupils' social development, and a half-day of leisure activities is included on the timetable. Although this makes a good contribution to pupils' social development it also restricts the time available for National Curriculum subjects, resulting in pupils not getting their full entitlement to religious education. Not all pupils in Years 10 and 11 have discrete science lessons, and this results in unequal access and unsatisfactory achievement for higher attaining pupils. Similarly, in ICT, primary aged pupils do not receive the full programme, as control technology is not taught. Within the school there is a lack of consistency in planning the curriculum, teachers working more as individuals than as a cohesive team. This makes the monitoring of the curriculum difficult and managers are not always aware of the deficiencies.

24. In recent years the school has changed. The proportion of pupils attending who have additional educational needs has increased. Though efforts have been made to ensure that members of staff increase their skills there is still a lack of awareness about the learning needs of pupils who have autistic spectrum disorder and more severe learning difficulties. The school is conscious of the requirement to provide for pupils' individual special needs. All pupils have a range of individual targets linked to their statement of special educational need; they also have meaningful weekly targets reviewed and discussed in class, which helps to improve academic and personal development.

25. In Years 10 and 11, pupils follow accredited courses, ALL and OCR National Skills Profile, and ASDAN's Youth Award Scheme at Bronze and Silver Levels. Good links with other schools and colleges enhance the learning opportunities for these older pupils. Individual pupils are given the opportunity to take GCSE in art or mathematics but the school does not offer Entry Level certification, and this restricts the level of opportunity within the school. Preparation for the next stage in education after school is a strength of the curriculum. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 are given good opportunities to attend work experience and benefit from college link courses. The slant towards vocational education within lessons is effective and pupils are prepared well for their move into further education or employment. The Connexions officer plays an integral role in supporting the school and pupils in this transition.

26. In line with the school ethos, a good quality PSHE curriculum is in place. This aspect of the curriculum is promoted well during the school day, and across other subjects, courses and extra-curricular activities.

27. The range of extra-curricular activities is good. Though the restriction of transport arrangements limits the viability of after-school activities, the school manages a good range of lunchtime clubs, which include dance, bingo and 'stomp'. The regular Thursday Youth Club, visiting theatre and music groups, cycling proficiency, and regular minibus trips enhance the taught curriculum, providing a variety of good opportunities for social development. Where possible, the school arranges residential trips; one class had been in Paris prior to the inspection and previous visits to Scandinavia and Austria have extended pupils' knowledge of travel and other cultures.

28. There are sufficient teachers to teach the curriculum, though the lack of expertise in some areas of special needs limits the impact of teaching. Good numbers of teaching assistants support teachers and pupils well, giving one-to-one attention, reinforcing teaching points and encouraging pupils to develop their communication skills. They help pupils to access the curriculum and they provide for their care and welfare. Accommodation and resources to support the curriculum are satisfactory.

## Care, guidance and support

Arrangements for pupils' care, welfare, health and safety are good. The school provides satisfactory support, advice and guidance based on monitoring. The involvement of pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is good.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Health and safety procedures are good. Staff and pupils display a keen awareness of the importance of these procedures.
- There are very good arrangements for child protection and the general welfare of pupils.
- Trusting and caring relationships between pupils and staff form the basis of good quality pastoral care. This care is underpinned by the staff's thorough knowledge of pupils' individual needs.
- Arrangements for the induction of new pupils are good.
- Very good advice is given on careers and further study opportunities.
- Staff value the opinions of pupils and take these into account in planning and development.

### Commentary

29. Pupils willingly tell visitors that they are happy in the school. Parents' comments confirm this. The whole ethos of the school is that of a caring community. All staff and visiting therapists share a vision of meeting the needs of each individual pupil. Class teachers and teaching assistants provide high quality support and guidance for their pupils. Staff familiarise themselves with pupils' individual education plans (IEPs) and targets. Child protection procedures are embedded in staff thinking and all staff are aware of locally agreed arrangements. Details of any general concerns about a pupil are regularly recorded on individual information sheets.

30. A physiotherapy team spends the whole of Monday morning in the school. As well as helping pupils directly, it gives teaching assistants and families ongoing treatment plans for the whole week. The school also has regular visits from speech and language therapists and occupational therapists. As well as seeing pupils individually, they advise classroom staff on how to help these pupils.

31. There have been good developments in health and safety procedures, with a permanent staff group overseeing these. Staff take great care to ensure the safety of pupils. Risk assessments are carried out whenever appropriate. These include assessing every outing, whether local or further afield. There has been a very significant improvement since the previous inspection. Many pupils are able to explain health and safety issues, particularly if they affect lessons. The site manager is very helpful in attending to safety and to maintenance issues which he can resolve. Very noticeable is the endeavour of the school to help pupils make healthy eating choices. At lunchtime there are always good healthy menus available. This approach is also seen when pupils have a daytime snack. The commitment of all ancillary staff to pupils' welfare is a strong feature of the school.

32. There is a marked mutual respect between staff and pupils. The pupils feel valued. They like the way in which they can express their views either directly to staff or through the school council. Examples of this have been their involvement in decisions about the new school extension, their contribution to decisions on sports kit and equipment, and advice they have given over provision of lockers. Pupils also enjoy the responsibility they are given in tasks such as helping teachers with lesson preparation and clearing up. An impressive feature of the school is the very significant number of pupils who help either their peers or younger pupils, during play and at mealtimes for instance. Some of the more senior pupils are very good role models.

33. Some pupils have had unhappy school experiences before coming to Heltwate. They speak highly of the way in which they were welcomed at their new school. A good programme of induction is in place. A senior staff member visits feeder schools, and prospective pupils make a number of visits to Heltwate. Parents and carers also visit and are invited to school functions before their child is admitted. The school is able to form a good profile of a new pupil's core needs.

34. There is no doubt that the school is highly committed to catering for the needs of every individual pupil, regardless of gender, ability or the range of his or her needs. Pupils' records, such as IEPs and information sheets, give a good indication of academic, social and behavioural targets. Pupils are keen to attain their personal goals, and the school has a range of rewards for effort and progress. Special assemblies celebrate success. There is, however, some inconsistency in tracking pupil progress and using the information in forward planning. This is an area which needs attention.

35. Careers guidance in the upper school is very good. The Connexions representative, who is of a particularly high calibre, works very closely with the school, colleges and work placements to provide a high quality service. Links with colleges and work experience placements are very good and invaluable local contacts have been built up. This is a strength of the school.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school has satisfactory links with parents. There are good links with the community. Links with other schools and colleges are satisfactory overall.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Parents have very positive views of the school; nonetheless they would like more information on the progress that pupils make.
- Very good links with the community enrich the curriculum and create learning opportunities that the school would not be able to provide itself.

### **Commentary**

36. The parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting were largely positive, and the responses in completed parental questionnaires show an unusually high degree of satisfaction amongst parents. In particular, parents whose children have come to Heltwate from unhappy experiences in mainstream schools find that children flourish at the school. However, they would like to be consulted more and would like more information on how well their children are getting on at the school. A sound start has been made by the new headteacher, who involved parents in a consultation exercise to draft the school's new mission statement.

37. The parents of pupils with home/school books said that these are inconsistently used, and inspectors found that this is the case. Some staff are more rigorous than others in ensuring that books contain up-to-date information and that parents' queries are answered; in a few instances, staff illness accounts for periods of time where books are not consistently completed.

38. The school provides parents with satisfactory information. The school prospectus is informative and friendly and is well supplemented by the Governors' Annual Report to Parents. The annual review reports are of a variable quality but generally provide good information. However, for pupils in Years 10 and 11, reports do not include a section on every subject taught, and this is a requirement. The requirement to report the levels that pupils reach in all subjects in Year 9 is not met either.



39. The school provides a regular and friendly newsletter to keep parents informed about events in the school and also a curriculum forecast. Staff have organised several workshops for parents, including one on the P Levels and a Sleep Workshop. There are two consultations each year and the Annual Review meetings are well attended. Parents would like another opportunity around about February, perhaps an Open Day, to be able to talk to teachers.

40. Several parents help in the school, hearing pupils read and supporting in art lessons and with swimming. There is a flourishing Parent and Friends Association, which raises useful additional funds to buy equipment for the school.

41. The school has good links with the community and is well regarded locally. Pupils visit local parks, shops, churches and museums; they make full use of sporting facilities and have links with local businesses. All pupils have the opportunity for work experience in the locality. There are residential experiences for pupils further afield, and secondary pupils recently expanded their horizons by visiting France.

42. Links with local schools and colleges enable pupils to follow GCSE courses and to have a taste of vocational education. Since the last inspection, the LEA has withdrawn funding for outreach, and the recent school reorganisation and changes in the leadership team have meant that further development has been curtailed. However, the school's self-evaluation form shows that this is an area to be included in the upcoming school development plan.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

The leadership and management of the school are satisfactory. The headteacher provides satisfactory leadership and is well supported by an inexperienced but committed management team. The governance of the school is satisfactory, although a few minor statutory requirements are not met.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school's use of pupils' performance data is developing well but monitoring has not been successful in identifying weaknesses in planning and assessment.
- The leadership and management role of subject co-ordinators is underdeveloped.
- The performance management of staff is effective and promotes high standards in their professional development.
- The governing body is very supportive of the school and is developing the effectiveness of strategic management.

### **Commentary**

43. The headteacher is relatively new in post, but he has developed good relationships with staff through his determination to establish an open style of leadership and because the staff feel he is prepared to listen to them and to take their views into consideration in determining policy. He maintains a high profile in the school and staff feel secure in his leadership. The headteacher has clearly and appropriately delegated aspects of management to the senior management team and has established very well defined areas of responsibility. The team provides good support to staff and to the headteacher and makes a significant contribution to the growing effectiveness of the school's management. Since taking over, the headteacher has successfully managed a large building programme at the school and has made good progress in addressing the current national issue of substantially revising the responsibilities and working practices of non-teaching staff.

44. The school is gradually developing sound systems of collecting data on pupils' progress. As yet, this information is not substantial enough to assist in measuring the school's effectiveness, but there are suitable plans to track a sample of pupils through their school career. The school does not have a system or cycle for monitoring and evaluating its work, and this is unsatisfactory.

45. The school's current improvement plan, covering the period from 2003 to 2006 and developed under the leadership of the previous headteacher, is ready for review. The headteacher is clear about his priorities for development and has waited to see what the inspection team identifies as being in need of improvement. There are not sufficiently robust procedures for staff to identify areas in need of improvement, as evaluation is at such an early stage.

46. There is a good system for managing the performance of teachers and teaching assistants. Teachers' targets for improvement are efficiently collated and this, along with a recent and well-organised audit of teachers' development needs, provides good information on which to base the school's arrangements for the further professional development of staff. The school has appropriately supported training in aspects of provision for autism and has recognised the need to extend the management skills of subject co-ordinators. Teachers' targets are not however, clearly or sufficiently linked to the school's development planning, and this has reduced the effectiveness of further development. The headteacher has been very successful in reviewing the job descriptions of teaching staff to take account of recent changes in responsibilities and also in managing the forthcoming substantial changes in the working practices of teaching assistants. He has developed good practice in organising professional discussions with support staff to clarify both training and work-related opportunities for their development.

47. The governing body is relatively new and inexperienced, but it is very supportive of the headteacher and is becoming more proficient in maintaining oversight of the school. Governors have established good relationships with staff and they visit classrooms regularly. This has enabled them to develop a greater understanding of the strengths of the school. They are presently less well informed about what the school needs to improve, and as such are not yet able to confidently hold the school to account or to systematically monitor the headteacher's performance. They do not have a secure means of ensuring that the curriculum meets requirements, or that adequate steps have been taken to address weaknesses identified at the last inspection.

48. The management role of subject co-ordinators lacks clarity, and their work is not sufficiently monitored by the senior management of the school. The decision to split responsibility between the upper and lower parts of the school in some subjects has not been well managed. Co-ordinators do not have a good grasp of development in all areas. As yet, the school has not developed efficient systems for the monitoring of teachers' work to ensure the continuing improvement of standards.

**Financial information for the year April 2004 to March 2005**

<b>Income and expenditure (£)</b>	
Total income	1,107,715.00
Total expenditure	1,195,196.00
Expenditure per pupil	11,382.00

<b>Balances (£)</b>	
Balance from previous year	112,112.00
Balance carried forward to the next	24,631.00

49. Pupil costs are within normal limits for similar schools. The school spent heavily on teaching resources during the year to ensure they are satisfactory throughout the school. The governors and the headteacher monitor the school's budget through an efficient committee which is kept well informed by the school's financial officer. Administrative staff provide a warm welcome for parents and visitors and contribute strongly to the smooth running of the school. The school has appropriate procedures to ensure best value in purchases, and overall it provides satisfactory value for money.

## **OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES**

### **What is the effectiveness of work-related learning?**

Provision for WRL is very good.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school's long-standing focus of preparation for adult life provides a strong foundation to meet the requirements for WRL.
- This aspect of the school's work is very well led.
- Local employers and the Connexions service contribute strongly to the programme.
- Pupils achieve well, developing good understanding of the skills and qualities needed for success at work.
- Good teaching and lively enterprise activities engage pupils in understanding how businesses operate.
- Work experience is available for every pupil, regardless of learning and physical abilities.
- Higher attaining pupils could be offered additional accreditation to show what they have achieved.

### **Commentary**

50. Preparation for leaving school was a strength of the school at the last inspection and has developed further since. The co-ordinator has enthusiastically embraced the new statutory requirements. He has mapped the existing provision carefully against the nine strands in the statutory guidance materials, and has extended the range of activities to meet these fully. Relationships with local employers are positive and well established. The school also benefits from the close collaboration with the Connexions Adviser, who takes a very active part in many teaching sessions.

51. Pupils achieve well, and show a growing understanding of the demands of the world of work. The main accreditation they receive is through the ASDAN and in key skills. The focus this brings to independence and understanding of adult life provides a range of challenges for pupils to master, many of which are set on the context of work or further study. Teaching is good and this makes a major contribution to the success of this work with the youngsters.

52. In discussion, Year 10 and 11 pupils show that they are thinking and planning ahead, and their team enterprise sessions are particularly lively. Year 11 pupils were working on a new enterprise project, to produce learning materials that would help younger and less able pupils with number work and telling the time. They had produced a prototype fabric clock, with Velcro hands that could be moved and positioned. They were planning a strong sales pitch to the headteacher, hoping for a contract to produce a substantial number. They considered cost, and the price and profit margin, and showed a clear understanding of the strengths and merits of their product that should be emphasised in any marketing activity.

53. When the sales pitch was under way, they were able to answer with energy and enthusiasm the headteacher's questions, criticisms and queries about robust quality standards. This engaging spectacle was somewhat undermined when, flushed by imminent success in closing the deal, one pupil added that their profit margin on the item was 'huge'. He was immediately silenced by the rest of the sales team, and everyone learned the first basic rule of marketing. First rate teamwork was also evident. After the headteacher had left to consider his order, the higher attaining pupils who had made the pitch immediately rejoined their friends, armed with the further improvements they had agreed with their client. The other pupils had worked tirelessly at the less glamorous but equally important task of number production, ably supported by their business adviser, a volunteer, and the teaching assistants.

54. All pupils take part in work experience, regardless of ability. This is a significant achievement for the school and the pupils benefit greatly from it. Pupils' folders show that meticulous preparation takes place and they keep their diaries very carefully. Pupils also have a wide-ranging involvement in their community. Their understanding of local business and industry is very well supported by a new programme of industrial visits, which is excellent. The curriculum structure provided by the YAS does not extend the most able pupils fully. A few are pursuing GCSE subjects in mainstream schools and would benefit from alternative vocational routes that offer greater parity with GCSE accreditation.

# **PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

## **SUBJECTS IN KEY STAGES 1 - 4**

### **ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

#### **English**

Provision in English is good.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching is consistently good.
- The strong focus on developing pupils' communication skills is effective.
- The lack of consistency in assessment, planning and recording restricts whole school development.
- There is too little monitoring of English across the whole school.

#### **Commentary**

55. Overall, pupils achieve well in English. Achievement is good in speaking and listening (communication), and in reading and writing. Pupils in Year 11 achieve particularly well. This is because the teacher has high expectations; the more able pupils are challenged to think imaginatively. Occasionally, owing to a lack of up-to-date expertise in how autistic pupils communicate and learn, members of staff use inappropriate strategies that confuse pupils and restrict their achievement. For these pupils, achievement overall is satisfactory. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

56. Teaching and learning are good overall, and this is the case in all year groups except Year 11, where it is very good. Teaching assistants work consistently well in all lessons; they reinforce teachers' expectations of good behaviour and use their good relationships with pupils to good effect, encouraging pupils to remain focused and to take part in and enjoy their English lessons. Teaching assistants are well informed and well prepared for the lessons. Their contribution in managing pupils' behaviour is such that teachers are free to continue teaching, and the learning of other pupils is not disturbed. Throughout the school, teachers use the format of the national literacy strategy as a basis for their lessons, and provide a wide range of activities based on the differing abilities of pupils in the class. Inspection findings show that the setting system is helpful; pupils are taught in groups of similar ability so that teachers are able to focus more easily on pupils' learning needs.

57. Many pupils have difficulties in communication and have need for either speech and language therapy or alternative methods of communication. The speech and language therapist supports the school well by working directly with pupils, supporting assistants when they work with PECS and maintaining an overview of pupils' communication needs. Informal advice is readily available, not only in speech and language but for related issues such as feeding programmes. The school recognises the significance of this area of the curriculum, and a senior member of staff has specific responsibility for developing speaking and listening and non-verbal communication. Staff are gradually increasing their skills in signing, and in using symbols and objects to support pupils' understanding. Speaking and listening are encouraged in many settings outside English lessons, and many pupils confidently communicate with visitors, happy to show their work and explain what they have been learning. The youngest pupils join in role-play, class singing and games, and by Year 11 the most confident describe items and characters and express opinions and feelings. Throughout the school, pupils learn to take turns and listen to each other. By Year 11, pupils behave responsibly and sympathetically to each other when they have group discussions. The subject makes a good contribution towards developing pupils' social skills.

58. Reading skills are taught well. Within each year group there is a wide range of ability. Teachers and assistants work hard to help pupils understand text in the most appropriate way, according to pupils' individual learning needs. The younger pupils enjoy listening to stories, and though imaginative play is difficult for those pupils who have autism, pupils learn to act out stories. In line with the national literacy strategy, they learn that the written word has meaning, and the significance of *author* and *title* on a book cover. Pupils learn to identify sounds that match letters, and steadily develop a sight vocabulary. By Year 6, pupils follow the familiar Big Book stories with enthusiasm, joining in repetitive lines; more able pupils put their knowledge of sounds to good use to read unfamiliar words. As a result of the consistently good teaching, pupils continue to make steady progress, and by Year 9 they appreciate humorous poetry and recognise the format of traditional tales; they read independently and use alphabetical order to locate information. In a good Year 9 to 11 lesson, teachers made good use of symbols and flash cards to support pupils' understanding of Wordsworth's 'Daffodils'. Pupils' very positive attitudes, combined with varied and effective teaching strategies, resulted in good achievement in word recognition in this lesson. Pupils in Year 11 show interest in text; they understand that words, symbols and signs have meaning. Higher attaining pupils in this year group make good use of their reading skills, not only in literacy lessons but in scanning text and researching for life-skills accredited courses.

59. The teaching of writing is good. The youngest pupils learn to make marks on paper, to colour within lines and, gradually, to form letters. More skilful pupils in Year 6 write clearly and use simple punctuation correctly. Good use is made of computers to enable pupils to write recounts and to access the *Writing With Symbols* program that enables pupils with restricted communication skills to develop literacy skills. In Years 7 to 11, pupils use word banks to help their imaginative writing based on stories such as *The Secret Garden*, or to devise the action plan for organising the Macmillan coffee morning. Pupils write with increasing confidence and a heightened understanding of sentence construction and punctuation. In Years 10 and 11, teachers provide a good range of opportunities for pupils to write for a variety of purposes in English and in other subjects.

60. Leadership in English is good. The action plan has been carefully and successfully followed, leading to improvements in resources and in training. The subject manager has clearly and accurately identified areas for improvement and has a clear vision for the future. Management in English is satisfactory. Assessment and recording procedures are in the early stages of development and are inconsistent. Although the co-ordinator has some opportunities to monitor teaching, this aspect of the role is not developed sufficiently throughout the school. Resources to support teaching and learning are satisfactory; a new library has recently been built, but it is not yet equipped as a suitable place for pupils to enjoy books and research information.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

61. The development of reading and writing across the curriculum is satisfactory. The promotion of speaking and listening skills is good and reflects the school's ethos. Teachers and assistants frequently ask questions in such a way that pupils of different capabilities are helped to extend their learning. Key words and symbols are carefully taught and become familiar to pupils. Pupils write reports, fill in charts and label designs. Lively discussions in science help pupils to grasp simple concepts and more skilled pupils to make confident predictions. Pupils are generally friendly and ready to talk with staff members and visitors.

### **French**

62. The subject was not a focus for this inspection and too little evidence was collected to make judgements on the provision. Only one lesson was seen, and in this the teaching was satisfactory. A good range of resources was used well to enable pupils to learn to distinguish between *bleu* and *rouge* objects. Unfortunately, turn-taking in a group slowed the pace of the lesson somewhat. Nonetheless, pupils made progress in recognising the two colours and in pronouncing the words. Older pupils had recently returned from a residential visit to France and they were most enthusiastic about their experiences.

### **MATHEMATICS**

Provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Classroom teaching is generally good.
- Planning does not ensure that pupils continue to build on their mathematical skills and knowledge, and this leads to lower expectations of pupils.
- There are weaknesses in the marking and recording of pupils' progress which lead to inconsistent assessment of achievement.

### **Commentary**

63. Despite the generally good standard of classroom teaching, underlying weaknesses in planning and assessment account for no better than satisfactory learning and achievement. The school does not make effective use of planning that forms part of national strategies, and teachers' planning varies in its effectiveness across the school.

64. Pupils are taught in small groups according to their level of attainment. This practice does not produce substantial benefit for all pupils. This is because pupils' progress is constrained by the practice of ensuring that they have achieved most aspects of each level of a comprehensive small steps assessment system before being moved to the next stage; the recording system is driving the curriculum. Higher attaining pupils in Year 2 can count confidently to 10 and they recognise common two-dimensional shapes. This work is reinforced throughout Years 3 to 6, and by Year 6 the higher attaining pupils have learned to recognise numbers to one hundred and to add numbers to twenty. By the end of Year 9, most pupils are familiar with numbers to twenty and the properties of some two-dimensional shapes. Every pupil is able to achieve accreditation in Year 11.

65. Overall, teaching is satisfactory with some good features. Teachers maintain good relationships with pupils, who respond by behaving well and working hard. In the best lessons teachers ensure a brisk pace to the learning and adapt the work well so that the pupils are suitably challenged. The teachers manage their competent teaching assistants well. This results in a high degree of skilled individual support for each pupil and gives the pupils confidence that they will succeed. For instance, a small group of pupils in Year 7 were taught how to construct a simple graph by the teaching assistant. She took the pupils outside to count different coloured cars. On their return, through a high standard of questions and explanations, she ensured that the pupils made good progress in their knowledge and understanding of tallies and block graphs. The pupils were justifiably proud of their completed work.

66. Teachers know their pupils well and have a good understanding of their ability. The overall quality of teaching is diminished because there is variation in the standard and the style of planning, as well as in the quality of marking and annotation of pupils' work. This is reflected in inconsistent standards of record keeping. Teachers in some classes do not effectively record and evaluate pupils' learning in each lesson. The school has adopted a suitable commercial assessment system which enables teachers to set appropriate objectives for each pupil, but this is not used to good effect in teachers' planning, since some teachers are not yet secure in the use of the system.

67. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory overall and the two co-ordinators operating in the primary and the secondary parts of the school manage their areas well. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. Both co-ordinators have a good knowledge of standards within their areas but their monitoring of provision is restricted to informal discussion with staff and pupils and infrequent scrutiny of teachers' planning. Monitoring of teachers' planning is made much more time consuming than it should be because of the variety of formats used. The school has collected data on achievement in mathematics for several years

now, and analysis of this led recently to the introduction of a link with a secondary school locally; this has enabled pupils in Years 10 and 11 to follow a GCSE mathematics course. This is a good development, but further thought needs to be given to courses for higher attaining pupils who are capable of achieving entry level passes.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

68. The provision for mathematics across the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Pupils are given little opportunity to practise their skills in other subjects, as teachers do not routinely identify opportunities for developing numeracy skills in their planning. Pupils have experienced time-lines in history and have estimated quantities and weights when cooking, but little evidence was found of numeracy skills being developed in science.

## **SCIENCE**

The provision in science is **satisfactory**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and learning up to Year 9 are good. This fact, coupled with good attitudes to work, means that there is good achievement.
- The breadth of curricular opportunities is unsatisfactory for Years 10 and 11.
- In all lessons observed, the teaching, learning and achievement were at least good.
- Grouping of pupils by ability is advantageous and enhances progress.
- Monitoring and evaluation need further development.

### **Commentary**

69. From the time they enter the school to the end of Year 9, pupils achieve well and make good progress. In Years 10 and 11, a few pupils are capable of achieving examination passes at entry level, but the school provides very limited opportunities for them to learn science, as there is no science taught discretely. For these pupils, achievement is unsatisfactory. All pupils in the Years 10 and 11 higher ability group follow the YAS course, and the science content in this is inadequate.

70. By the end of Year 2, pupils have made a good start on their scientific learning. Although there were no science lessons to observe during the inspection period, scrutiny of pupils' work shows that they have made good initial progress in a range of scientific concepts that come into their topic work. A topic on jobs in the home contains elements on water, electricity and materials. The pupils have carried out practical work on a small range of materials. They have studied the progress of frog's spawn and recognise how the human body changes with age. They know something about temperature and the various states of water from their weather topic. The breadth of their work gives them a good start in science as they move to the next stage of their education.

71. By the end of Year 6, pupils have made good progress and achieve well. Science has been studied both as a separate subject and as an element of some topic work. Work folders show that there is a good breadth in pupils' scientific learning and that their investigative skills have developed well. The work is well recorded and the marking at this stage is of good quality and informative. Pupils' folders show that the ability range has been well catered for. Three lessons for pupils in Years 3 to 6 were observed. The lessons were all at least good. In one lesson, pupils discussed differences and similarities between a range of seeds, and learned about plant growth. There was good practical work as they planted seeds, and some pupils volunteered the information that light and water are necessary for growth. A very good lesson with higher attaining pupils consisted almost entirely of investigative work. In small groups, they moved around tables to discover successfully the effect of squashing, bending, twisting and stretching materials. The recording of



their findings was impressive. The lower attaining group also enjoyed a good lesson about the properties of a range of materials. Again it was a very practical lesson, with pupils classifying materials by appearance, feel, smell and shape. Discussion was of a high quality and these pupils made creditable predictions.

72. By the end of Year 9, pupils' knowledge, understanding and scientific skills have developed well. All pupils have produced a good science folder with plenty of work, and all achieve well. In general there is a good breadth in the work, but the pupils' records are sparse on the subject of living things. The folders contain some very good accounts of practical investigations. An example was the effect of forces on a range of bridges, including a model cantilever bridge which pupils had built. In recording, the improvement in literacy was noteworthy, with some good sentences and extended descriptive writing. A very good lesson for lower attaining pupils was observed. Pupils were learning about electrical circuits through a series of small group experiments. They found out about conductors and insulators and built circuits containing lights and electric motors. The high quality of this lesson was enhanced by the appropriate use of information technology and a communication system (PECS) for pupils with autism.

73. Teaching and learning are good through the school up to the end of Year 9. In Years 10 and 11 they are satisfactory overall because of the failure to extend all of the pupils. Lesson plans are generally detailed and incorporate provision for a range of abilities. Although worksheets are frequently used, the development of writing skills is successfully encouraged. The success of teaching is greatly enhanced by the teamwork between teachers and their skilled teaching assistants. A strength of teaching is the frequent use of practical work, to develop pupils' investigative skills, coupled with very good discussion. Pace is good. The use of the local environment and trips to locations of scientific interest considerably enrich science teaching. Pupils respond very well, and in all lessons observed they were thoroughly enjoying the work. Relationships at all levels are very good and this helps to generate good behaviour. Very good lessons were characterised by first-rate industry and co-operation and a 'buzz' of controlled excitement. Pupils with more complex educational needs are well integrated. All staff are skilled in the appropriate use of praise, and this leads to a growth in pupils' self esteem and confidence.

74. There has been an improvement in assessment and recording since the last inspection but the quality varies between staff. Tracking of individual pupils has begun but needs refining. Some good examples were seen of pupils evaluating their own work at the end of lessons. In lessons observed, the grouping of pupils by ability was very effective.

75. Currently, the headteacher is science co-ordinator. He is an experienced and knowledgeable science teacher but there is not enough time for him to do justice to leading a core subject. Since the previous inspection, schemes of work have been put in place but they are in need of revision. The use of homework is rather haphazard and pupils would benefit from a consistent and more rigorous system. Science teachers seldom meet as a group. The new science room is underused and needs to be made more inviting and exciting. All lessons observed during the inspection were in classrooms.

76. The co-ordinator has managed to monitor some teaching, but this needs to be carried out on a more regular basis. Health and safety issues are well catered for and many pupils can explain the reason for necessary precautions. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

## INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information technology is **satisfactory** overall.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement for pupils in Years 1 to 6 is unsatisfactory.
- The quality and range of resources has improved.
- Pupils achieve well in examination courses in Years 10 and 11.
- Provision for the control element of ICT is inadequate.
- The assessment of ICT is not consistent throughout the school.

### Commentary

77. In Years 1 to 6, pupils' ICT work is integrated into their other subjects, although the extent of this is too limited. In addition, plans for what pupils should be taught have not been developed sufficiently since the previous inspection, with the result that pupils' progress is patchy. By Year 2, pupils understand the basic functions of a computer and use a keyboard and a touch screen; higher attaining pupils use a mouse and keyboard to type out their names. Most Year 1 pupils experience computer programs and control what is on screen, using the mouse or touch screen. However, pupils' progress is unsatisfactory because of the absence of plans which ensure that pupils in Years 1 to 6 cover all that they should and do not repeat or miss out topics.

78. Teaching and learning are broadly satisfactory for pupils in Years 7 to 11, but not all teachers are yet sufficiently confident in the use of ICT to support their teaching. There is no specialist area where a whole class group can have access to a computer each; this limits pupils' use of computers. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow the OCR course, National Skills Profile (NSP) and A.L.L. modules. In 2004, 13 pupils gained an accreditation, five of these pupils achieving Level 3 in some modules of numeracy and ICT. However, there is currently no suitable accreditation for higher attaining pupils, although GCSE Entry Level is being considered.

79. Improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory; the previous inspection identified planning in Years 1 to 6 as a key issue and this has not been addressed well enough. The school has improved the quality and quantity of learning resources since the last inspection. All classrooms have computers for pupils' use. Higher attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9 can use a range of equipment, including digital cameras and tape recorders, and make satisfactory progress. They learn to operate the *volume* and *pause* buttons on equipment. The school has purchased interactive whiteboards, and pupils can identify and point to icons on the screen. For instance, in a Year 7 mathematics lesson, pupils pointed to shapes and moved them into sets, making good progress in their understanding of the properties of shape. Although several classrooms are equipped with interactive whiteboards, the scope of these for teaching has not yet been fully realised. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on the use of 'word art', the teacher lacked confidence and so did not make use of the interactive whiteboard; as a result, a learning opportunity was lost.

80. Although leadership is satisfactory overall, management is unsatisfactory. Teachers' assessment of their pupils' work is satisfactory, but its inconsistency reflects the lack of whole school monitoring. The school has adopted a commercial assessment system, but it is only just beginning to be used in ICT and does not yet ensure that teachers use assessment information to set appropriately demanding targets for pupils within lessons. The lower school coordinator recognises the need to develop appropriate planning. The 'Equals' scheme of work is currently being adapted, and planning in Years 1 to 6 is to be revised. The limitations in the range of control activities has also been identified, and items of equipment such as floor robots have already been purchased in order to extend the breadth of the curriculum. The upper and lower school coordinators have a clear understanding of what needs to be done to develop ICT throughout the school, and good efforts have been made to organise and increase the hardware and software available to support learning.

## Information and communication technology across the curriculum

81. Although the use of ICT in other curricular areas is satisfactory, the planning within individual subjects is variable and is not being monitored. Pupils are given opportunities to rehearse and extend their skills in some subjects of the curriculum. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 use relevant literacy software to identify letters, complete sentences and record data about themselves. All pupils use a mathematics assessment program to reinforce and support their learning. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 experiment with font size, colour and style, organise and reorganise text, and import images to illustrate and enhance their work. In a Year 9 science lesson the interactive whiteboard was used very effectively to enhance pupils' understanding of circuits. However, there is no provision for data logging in science.

## HUMANITIES

82. It is not possible to make an overall judgement on history or geography, since only one history lesson was observed.

83. The lesson observed was with the more able pupils from Years 7, 8 and 9. Two teachers worked as a team. The context of the lesson was *The Mystery of Tollund Man*. The lesson began with a first-rate discussion based on an excellent time-line of Peterborough, which the class had constructed the previous week. When they were discussing fossils, a pamphlet about Tollund man was distributed. Pupils across the whole ability range were drawn into the discussion. It was animated and pupils enthused about the work. It was clear that the majority had grasped the concept of the passage of time.

84. Pupils then became history detectives to look at evidence about Tollund man, based on a series of photographs of his remains. The team teaching was of a high quality and pupils achieved very well. There was an air of industry and considerable excitement as pupils split into small groups to pursue their investigations. The observations from the photographic evidence were perceptive and pupils recorded their findings neatly and with clarity. Many pupils could make sound predictions and understood what is meant by valid evidence. This was a quality history lesson which led to a high level of motivation amongst the fifteen pupils. The elements of literacy and numeracy in this lesson were commendable.

## Religious education

Provision for religious education is **unsatisfactory**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Provision for religious education does not meet statutory requirements.
- Few of the weaknesses noted at the last inspection have been put right; because of this, pupils do not achieve as much as they should.
- The school's termly religious education days provide imaginative and engaging activities which stimulate pupils' interest and understanding of a range of faiths and traditions.
- Pupils do not receive a programme of lessons that makes sure they build on their knowledge and understanding of religious education over time.

85. The governors and the leadership team have not made sure that religious education receives enough lesson time over the course of the year. The subject is often taught as a single lesson, which is part of a wider programme that includes important subjects such as PSHE, citizenship education and French. This has two unintended effects on the way pupils' knowledge and understanding develops. There is not enough time given to the subject to deepen pupils' understanding. The gaps in time between the blocks of religious education lessons can be as long as two terms, with the result that pupils' learning does not develop steadily. There is very little

written work by pupils throughout the school and not enough evidence that the higher attaining pupils are being stretched and challenged broadly enough, particularly in Years 10 and 11. Since the ASDAN course requires a single written piece of work, which is a study of one major religion, the breadth of study is limited.

86. The record of religious education days in recent years shows that Christianity and the major world religions have been covered. Each individual day is undoubtedly memorable and enjoyable for pupils and is a major part of their experience of the subject. The approach is very effective in making a complex area accessible to pupils of all abilities and it remains a worthwhile part of the provision. Its particular strength is the contribution it makes to pupils' cultural understanding of the diverse faith traditions in the world. Music, dance, drama and art are all used well, and some first-rate illustrative and performance activity has taken place.

87. Because teachers have flexibility to choose how to interpret each term's religious education day theme, different classes have individual experiences on these days as well as taking part in shared activities. There is no overall plan to make sure that knowledge of the teachings and beliefs of the different religions develops equally strongly in each class and is built upon over time. Only one lesson was seen during the inspection. It was a good example of staff working together to share their experiences of marriage with a combined group of Year 4 pupils. As one teacher is about to be married, she shared her experience and excitement with the pupils. The other teacher showed photographs of her own wedding twenty years ago and brought in her own veil and another teacher's wedding dress. Pupils treated the precious items with great care and took part solemnly in their own version of a Church of England wedding.

88. The 1998 report noted that the school needed to give more attention to the locally Agreed Syllabus for religious education, to monitoring and evaluating the provision for quality as well as syllabus coverage, and to making sure that lessons happened as planned. The Agreed Syllabus has been used well, but monitoring and evaluation by the governors as well as the coordinator is weak. There has been an unnoticed drift towards reliance on religious education days as the main experience rather than as a broadening, deepening and enriching opportunity. The foundation is now secure from which to develop a fuller and more consistent approach to the subject, but improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

89. No judgement on provision in design and technology is made because the subject was not a focus for this inspection. On the evidence of curriculum documents, pupils' records and displays, and the one lesson observed, pupils have opportunities to experience different aspects of this subject. However, while there is a suitable food technology room, the new design and technology room, shared with science, is not yet fitted with suitable machinery. However, equipment has been obtained, and it is a matter of time before the school will be able to provide the required range of work in resistant materials.

90. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 experiment with a range of materials, making puppets and junk models; for instance, they have made trains from boxes. Older pupils design and make items such as pizza boxes, maze games, and kites. In food technology, pupils learn about food preparation and healthy eating in the very well equipped specialist accommodation. In the lesson observed, teaching and learning were good. Following a well-planned introduction to a range of fruits, pupils in Year 9 enjoyed designing and successfully making their 'smoothies'.

## **VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS**

### **Art**

91. This subject was not a particular focus for the inspection, and too little evidence was gathered to make valid judgements on the provision, teaching, learning or achievement. It is clear from the good quality displays around the school that art has a high profile and makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development. The school is proud of the fact that samples of pupils' work are on display in the office of the Director of Children's Services. The specialist art teacher takes responsibility for most of the teaching in the upper school and offers guidance to teachers in the other classes. The newly built specialist art room is pleasant and well resourced, providing good shelving and wall space for display and storage of pupils' ongoing work. Pupils throughout the school get good opportunities to examine the work of known artists, and they have created their own animal paintings and sculptures based on work by Picasso, Frink or Rousseau. Pupils use a range of techniques such as photography, leaf prints and collage when they work on natural forms. Fascinating displays of masks around the school have been inspired by North and South American cultures, and all the pupils in the school have made ceramic gargoyles to be hung in the courtyard on completion of the garden and water feature. Pupils enjoy their lessons and benefit from the good opportunities to express themselves creatively. Opportunities are provided through links with local schools for those pupils with an aptitude for art to take GCSE examinations.

### **Music**

92. No judgement is being made about provision in music as only one lesson was observed during the inspection. However, it is evident that music plays a valuable role in the development of pupils' spiritual, social and cultural awareness. For example, regular visits from musicians enable pupils to hear a variety of music and join in with a range of music-making activities. Annual concerts and shows help to develop musical skills.

93. In the one lesson seen in a mixed ability group of pupils from years 7 - 9, pupils thoroughly enjoyed using a wide range of percussion instruments. They played with evident pleasure and showed an increasing awareness of rhythm. Their concentration levels were high, and the teacher was successful in helping pupils to improve their understanding and skills.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

94. This subject was not a focus for the inspection, although one lesson was seen. In this lesson, pupils in Years 7 to 9 were practising starts in races as part of a unit on athletics. The teacher, who is a specialist, had high expectations of the pupils' attainment. They responded well and made good progress throughout the lesson.

95. The co-ordinator has developed a scheme of work which is appropriately broad and balanced. The scheme has been adapted to provide pupils in Years 10 and 11 with choices in recreational activities such as tenpin bowling, which encourages their independence. There is a satisfactory range of extra activities for all pupils. Lunchtime clubs operate in school, and pupils are able to play football against other schools and take part in inter-school sports. There is an annual residential visit. All pupils have the opportunity to swim at local pools.

96. The accommodation is satisfactory. Changing and showering facilities are of a high standard and there is good outside provision on a well maintained sports field. However, the hall is too small for groups of senior pupils and it remains a thoroughfare during lessons because of its central position in the school. Resources are good and are efficiently stored. The co-ordinator makes good use of outside agencies in gaining access to a high standard of equipment.

## **BUSINESS AND OTHER VOCATIONAL COURSES**

97. Although pupils in Year 11 do follow a few vocational courses at a local college, this was not a particular focus for this inspection and sessions at the college could not be seen, as they occurred outside the inspection period. No judgements can therefore be made on the provision.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP**

Provision in PSHE and citizenship is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school provides a good range of learning experiences for pupils.
- All Year 11 pupils achieve external recognition for their achievements.
- Most aspects of teaching and learning are good, but there are weaknesses in assessment.
- The school does not yet have sufficient information to enable it to evaluate the effectiveness of its provision.

### **Commentary**

98. Pupils achieve well in PSHE and citizenship. The school has successfully combined provision for citizenship with that for personal, social and health education, and has ensured that the citizenship element meets requirements. The curriculum is good; it is broad, and adequately planned, ensuring that pupils continue to build on their knowledge, skills and understanding. Staff revise subject planning to ensure that it is relevant to pupils' needs; for instance, pupils in the current Year 6 learn about cycling proficiency, as several are cyclists at home. The subject has a wider scope than the PSHCE lessons, as other subjects contribute to personal and social development too. For instance, current affairs were exploited well to teach ICT skills. Residential school journeys add to pupils' experiences, and pupils develop personal and social skills through extra-curricular activities.

99. During the inspection, pupils in Years 1 and 2 were visited by two community police in their specially adapted vehicle. They joined pupils for breakfast, then the pupils had the novel experience of exploring the vehicle. They thoroughly enjoyed the siren and being put in the secure area at the rear of the vehicle. They were enthralled with the demonstration of the 'stinger' used to deflate the tyres of criminals' cars. Back in the classroom, they experienced wearing a policewoman's hat and trying out the handcuffs. The lesson plan identified different learning outcomes for pupils of different abilities, and the teacher made sure that all pupils were given sufficient and appropriate challenge. For instance, those who could do so asked questions of the police at the end of the session. In a similarly good lesson for Year 6 pupils, literacy skills were encouraged well when pupils used a simple text and group discussion to find out about pedestrian safety. All pupils were able to spot possible dangers in a cartoon of a road scene. No lessons could be seen in Years 7 to 9, but pupils' work shows that they build on earlier experiences; by Year 9 they know about healthy eating and keep a food diary. In Years 10 and 11, pupils follow accredited courses. Last year, all pupils achieved either a Bronze level of the Youth Award Scheme or had their achievements accredited by A.L.L. In a successful lesson for the oldest pupils, they worked hard in the school's garden, digging the soil over and planting vegetable seedlings. These will be tended until they are fully grown, then sold as part of an enterprise. The most knowledgeable pupils are beginning to understand why there is a need to rotate crops.

100. Teaching assistants are well briefed and make a good contribution to learning by ensuring that pupils attend and remain on task. They judge well the amount of support they give and are competent when leading group work.

101. In negotiation with staff, pupils set personal targets each week. This works well in the classroom, as pupils generally know what their target is, and when the target is achieved there is recognition for it. However, the recording of pupils' progress is inconsistent; staff in Years 7 to 11 record well, and they also send slips home so that parents can work on targets with pupils for homework. In other classes, recording is patchy or non-existent. This makes the monitoring of progress impossible.

102. Staff know pupils well, and so are able to plan work that is suitably challenging. The school has started to use a commercial scheme to record which P Levels pupils have reached in PSHCE, but there is not enough data yet for staff to analyse the information, for instance to see if all groups of pupils are doing equally well. A further weakness is that pupils' work is occasionally not dated, marked or annotated, so there is no evidence to support the levelling carried out. Overall, assessment is satisfactory.

103. Leadership of the subject is good. There is an effective team of teachers who teach and develop the subject, and a good range of policies to guide staff in their work, including one for sex and relationships education and drugs use and misuse. The co-ordinator has ensured that the requirements for citizenship are met, and that the subject meets the diverse needs of the pupils in school. There are suitable plans to develop provision further so that the school can apply for the Healthy Schools Award. The co-ordinator has carried out a little monitoring of teaching and learning, but monitoring and evaluation are underdeveloped. Management of the subject is satisfactory. It is not possible to judge the scale of improvement, as the subject was not reported fully at the last inspection.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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

*In a special school such as this, **standards achieved** are judged against individual targets and not national standards.*