

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **PALMERSTON SCHOOL**

Woolton, Liverpool

LEA area: Liverpool

Unique reference number: 104748

Headteacher: John Wright

Reporting inspector: Michael McDowell  
1405

Dates of inspection: 11<sup>th</sup> - 14<sup>th</sup> March 2002

Inspection number: 062129

Full 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:	11 to 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Beaconsfield Road Woolton Liverpool
Postcode:	L25 6EE
Telephone number:	0151 428 2128
Fax number:	0151 421 0985
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Pat Lee
Date of previous inspection:	Not previously inspected

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1405	Michael McDowell	Registered inspector	Special educational needs	<p>What sort of school is it?</p> <p>The school's results and achievements</p> <p>How well are the pupils taught?</p> <p>How well is the school led and managed?</p> <p>What should the school do to improve further?</p>
19342	Tom Heavey	Lay inspector		<p>How well does the school care for its pupils?</p> <p>How well does the school work in partnership with parents?</p>
28002	Sue Taylor	Team inspector	<p>Science</p> <p>Equal opportunities</p>	
17182	Michael Farrell	Team inspector	<p>Information and communication technology</p> <p>Art</p> <p>Music</p> <p>English as an additional language</p>	
20055	Sheila Entwistle	Team inspector	<p>Mathematics</p> <p>History</p> <p>Geography</p> <p>Religious education</p>	<p>Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development</p>
23696	John Morris	Team inspector	Design and technology	

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1288	Dorothy Barraclough	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Post-16	
30142	John T. Morris	Team inspector	English Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Palmerston is a day, community, special school for boys and girls aged 11 to 19, who have severe learning difficulties. There are 73 pupils on roll, about a third of whom have profound and multiple learning difficulties. In addition, a number have other barriers to learning, including Autistic Spectrum Disorder or sensory impairment. All pupils have statements of special educational needs and come from the City of Liverpool. Their economic circumstances are mixed, but a higher than usual proportion, 77 per cent, are entitled to receive free school meals. There is a significant imbalance in the numbers of boys and girls. 70% of all pupils are boys. A number of pupils, seven in all, are drawn from Black and Asian families. There is one pupil from a white European family. Some of these pupils are in an early stage of acquiring language but this is more related to their special educational needs than it is to acquiring English as an additional language, for they are autistic. One pupil is looked after by the Local Authority. The school aims to ensure that pupils have a safe, secure learning environment, feel that they are part of a community, learn as far as is possible to be independent, receive a curriculum that matches their entitlements and needs, and achieve as well as they can.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

The school makes satisfactory provision for its pupils. Over time they make good progress and achieve well in English, mathematics and science; in Spanish and physical education achievement is high. However, achievement in history and geography is unsatisfactory because not enough is attempted. Achievement is satisfactory in information and communication technology for pupils aged 11 to 14 while in art and in design and technology achievement is satisfactory overall. Teaching is of good quality overall with a significant proportion of excellent or very good lessons. However, there is a very small amount of teaching that is unsatisfactory, particularly in information and communication technology where teachers have had insufficient training. Leadership is satisfactory overall; although it has positive features, it also has some weaknesses. It will need to focus more clearly on improving the quality of education and the achievement of pupils if the school is to move forward, raise standards further and take advantage of the good new accommodation with which it has been provided. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- Teaching and learning are good overall.
- Achievement in physical education is very good and it is good in mathematics, science, English, Spanish and at post-16.
- Provision for personal, moral and social development is good and leads to pupils and students becoming more independent.
- The school provides effectively for the welfare of its pupils. It has taken sensible measures to ensure their protection, health and safety and liaises very well with other services to help pupils move on when they are 19.

#### **What could be improved**

- Achievement, where this is unsatisfactory, as in history and geography where too little is done, or, where it is satisfactory rather than good, as in information and communication technology (ICT), where there is a lack of knowledge about the subject and too little opportunity for pupils to use computers.
- The overall balance and continuity of the curriculum so that sufficient time is allocated to history and geography for pupils aged 11 to 14 and subjects that require the highest degree of mental effort from the pupils are scheduled for the earlier parts of the day when they are fresh and most ready to learn.
- The co-ordination of what is to be taught in those subjects where there is as yet no named curriculum leader.
- In those subjects where this is not yet done effectively, the use made of assessment in planning learning tasks that best match the pupils' known attainments.
- Planning for the school's future development and improvement that needs to be more focused on pupils' achievement and more tightly linked to the school's target setting and its priorities for professional training.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the appropriate authority.*

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has not been previously inspected.

### STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets.

Progress in:	by Year 11	by Year 13	Key	
speaking and listening	A	A	very good	A
reading	B	B	good	B
writing	B	B	satisfactory	C
mathematics	B	B	unsatisfactory	D
personal, social and health education	B	B	poor	E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B		

\* IEPs are individual education plans for pupils with special educational needs.

The school sets targets for pupils' achievement in literacy and numeracy. It is well placed to reach these. Pupils achieve particularly well in mathematics. They acquire and develop their numeracy skills at a good rate. Communication skills develop well and achievement in speaking and listening is very good. Pupils achieve well in science. The post-16 students work well with the broad range of learning experiences with which they are provided and make good progress. Achievement in ICT is limited, as pupils have too few opportunities to use computers in many subjects and teaching is sometimes insecure. Too little time is given to history and geography to enable pupils to make consistent progress. Pupils make good progress in personal, social and health education and good use is made of time outside lessons to teach and reinforce social skills. Targets set at annual reviews and in individual education plans are achieved in most cases.

### PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are happy to come to school and enjoy the opportunities to work, learn and play that it provides.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Behaviour is good in the majority of lessons and sometimes very good. There have been no exclusions over the past twelve months. Very rarely, when pupils are taught by a teacher they do not know well, there are lapses in behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Relationships between pupils and the adults who teach and support them provide a strong foundation for pupils' personal development. Over time pupils become more confident and begin to play a role, in keeping with their capabilities, in the life of the school.
Attendance	Good. Attendance is high and pupils come willingly to school. Transport difficulties, however, lead to punctuality being poor.



## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 7 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Good	Good

*Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.*

Teaching is good overall and promotes learning well. Twenty-eight per cent of lessons were excellent or very good, 44 per cent were good, 23 per cent were satisfactory and 6 per cent were unsatisfactory. Teaching is good in English. The National Literacy Strategy has been used well in most lessons, but in some there is insufficient use of resources to prompt recall of learning. Teaching is very good in mathematics for pupils who are aged 11 to 16, and it is good for post-16 students. In science, teaching is good overall and never less than satisfactory. Teaching is very good in music and Spanish and it is good in physical education. In other subjects it is broadly satisfactory, except in ICT where it is, too often, unsatisfactory. The needs of those pupils with the most complex and profound difficulties are met effectively. Teachers know their pupils well and give a high priority to ensuring their welfare. Teachers plan the content of their lessons well but do not always make the best use of assessments of what their pupils know, understand and can do to in setting tasks. They work effectively to develop pupils' communication skills and their awareness of number. They expect their pupils to show readiness to learn and to take part in lessons. Good use is made of learning support assistants to help pupils maintain concentration and complete their work. Because of this, pupils are willing learners and they try hard. They show, in some instances, by working without adult supervision, that they are developing independent learning skills. Pupils' behaviour is generally managed well, but, in a very few lessons, where younger pupils are taught by teachers they do not know well, this is not the case and here the quality of learning declines as a result.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. There is a sufficiently broad range of learning opportunities for pupils aged 11 to 16. However, the balance of time given to subjects and the time of day when certain subjects are taught is inappropriate and in need of revision. The statutory requirement to teach the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education is met and there is good provision for personal, social and health education. Good learning opportunities are provided for students aged 16 to 19.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory. Because of their profound and complex learning difficulties, pupils who have English as an additional language develop communication skills using a range of symbols, pictures and signs. Their progress is in keeping with their attainments.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The personal development of pupils and students is strongly supported by such measures as the very good use of lunchtime to teach appropriate social behaviour and the pairing of physically able pupils with others who use wheelchairs in a buddy system. There are opportunities for older pupils to have work experience and to attend college. Pupils' moral development is well supported and provision to develop their cultural and spiritual awareness is satisfactory.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory. The school provides effectively for the welfare of its pupils. It has taken sensible measures to ensure their protection, health and safety. It monitors their behaviour and personal development well and works energetically to help pupils to improve these. Assessment of what pupils know, understand and can do is satisfactory; in some areas including mathematics and English it

	is good, but there are weaknesses elsewhere. Overall, the use of assessment to help teachers in their planning is unsatisfactory.
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## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. The headteacher provides calm leadership giving the school stability and the confidence to continue with its work during a time of change. At present the leadership of the school is insufficiently dynamic and planning insufficiently effective to further develop the school.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Good. The governors carry out their statutory duties well. There is a committee structure and a start has been made on formal monitoring of the curriculum. At present governors are insufficiently active in the planning of the budget to ensure that expenditure closely matches the educational priorities they have identified through the target setting process.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. There is a target setting process as is required and a performance management strategy. The governors have consulted with an external advisor and set targets for the headteacher and his deputy. Targets have been set for each teacher and teaching and learning are monitored. The progress made by teachers towards their personal targets is kept under review.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The school deploys its staff effectively but has been unable to make the best use of the facilities provided for it because of lack of key resources. It tries to adhere to the principles of best value and has begun to compare its performance with that of similar schools.

There are presently insufficient permanently appointed, qualified and experienced teachers to fully meet the needs of pupils and the demands of the curriculum. There are, however, sufficient experienced support staff. Accommodation is good but the equipment and resources to make the best use of it are not yet in place and this is unsatisfactory.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The school works very closely with them.</li> <li>• They agree that this is a good school that their children like to attend.</li> <li>• They think behaviour and teaching are good, that their children make good progress and that they are kept well informed about their children's progress.</li> <li>• They would feel comfortable in approaching the school with any worries or concerns about their children.</li> <li>• They believe that the school expects their children to work hard and helps them to become mature and responsible.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A significant minority of parents expressed some concern about homework.</li> <li>• Parents also voiced concerns about school transport always being late.</li> <li>• Some parents felt that there were too few opportunities provided for their children outside lessons.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree to a great extent with the positive views expressed by parents but believe there is room for improvement in pupils' achievement in some areas. The inspectors judged that for most pupils the school approach to giving homework was right, but that greater use could be made of the home-school diaries to enable and encourage parents to help with some elements of social learning, communication and the use of developing skills. The inspectors share parents' concerns about transport arrangements,

which were unsatisfactory. However, they found that there were a satisfactory number of out-of-school activities provided.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and pupils' achievements**

1. Pupils enter the school at the age of 11, with very limited achievements, but they achieve more than expected by the age of 16. Most make particularly good progress in developing communication skills and use these well in social situations and in lessons. Over time, pupils at all levels of ability benefit from carefully planned teaching to make good progress in reading and writing.
2. Pupils aged 11 to 16 are set for English and taught in groups that reflect similar abilities rather than age. In most cases, pupils' degree of learning difficulty and the complexity of their special educational needs, including physical disabilities, have greater impact on their ability to learn than does their age. Almost all pupils, whatever their degree of learning difficulties or special educational needs, achieve well in English, by the age of 14.
3. Pupils' progress is monitored by a finely graded scale (the 'P' levels) and, in their first three years at the school, they progress well. Symbols and sometimes signs are used to make oral or written communication clearer. Higher attaining pupils use a phonic technique to sound out letters when they are reading and they are able to read out words with which they are not familiar. They read short passages accurately and clearly. Pupils recall the spellings of commonly used words and confidently write in a legible hand on the white board in their lessons. They identify the vowels and accurately place missing vowels in three letter words. Those with greater learning difficulty develop a useful vocabulary. They 'read' passages aided by symbols beneath the text. They remember and can recognise a number of words.
4. By the age of 16, pupils have consolidated their reading and writing skills and, through practice, they extend these.
5. Students who are over 16 show that their listening and communication skills continue to develop well. This is in spite of the fact that, generally, the 16 to 19 year olds have greater learning difficulties and more complex special educational needs than the pre-16 group.
6. In mathematics, pupils achieve well across the age range. Provision for mathematics has been strengthened by the adoption of the National Numeracy Strategy that has given much more structure to lessons. By the age of 16, most pupils are familiar with numbers up to 100 and can count singly or in tens. They use bar graphs to present data they have gathered and know the names of some of the properties of two and three-dimensional shapes. They develop an understanding of mathematics in social situations such as paying for goods and understanding or calculating change.
7. Post-16 students continue to develop their use of mathematics and they progress well. Those with more profound and complex needs recognise and respond positively to shape, number and colour.
8. Pupils throughout the school achieve well in science. By the age of 16, they are aware of the Earth's relation to the sun and how spinning on its axis causes us to experience day and night. They have some knowledge of electricity and simple circuits, of materials, and how these may change their state from solid to liquid or liquid to gas,

and of how the human body works. Post-16 students are, in the main, more limited in their understanding of science because of their more complex needs. They make progress at a slower rate, but nevertheless, they achieve well. There is, for example, good response when they examine the feel and texture of materials and find ways to describe these properties.

9. Because of the variation in what is provided, pupils at each stage achieve differently in information and communication technology. For those who are aged 14 to 16, provision facilitates good achievement that continues among the 16 to 19 age group. Those aged 11 to 14, however, make only satisfactory progress as teaching and opportunities to learn are of an inconsistent standard, reflecting teachers' skills and confidence.
10. Achievement in art, design and technology and humanities (history and geography) is satisfactory but, in each of these subjects, provision is limited and there are weaknesses in co-ordination. Currently there is no co-ordinator for design and technology or for humanities although these posts have been advertised and it is hoped to make appointments soon.
11. Pupils make good progress in Spanish in all year groups for 11 to 19. Achievement in music, where there was sufficient evidence to form a judgement, is very good. Pupils aged 11 to 14 and students who are post-16, make progress well beyond expectation. Pupils and students of all ages make very good progress in physical education but there are insufficient opportunities for those with more profound and complex special educational needs to make the best progress. In religious education, pupils aged 11 to 14, make good progress; the provision for older pupils and those aged 16 to 19 is not yet related to an agreed syllabus and insufficient work is available to form a judgement about standards. Students aged 16 to 19 achieve well across the broad spectrum of learning opportunities with which they are provided.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

12. Pupils are keen to come to school. They enjoy learning and take part in a range of activities including a number outside lessons. Pupils and students have very good attitudes to their work. They listen attentively to their teachers, show interest and concentrate on the tasks they are given. They take pride in what they do and respond well to praise and encouragement. Pupils and students are pleased when they make progress. However, on a very small number of occasions, a few pupils do not display good attitudes or show interest in the lesson. They became distracted and sometimes disrupt the learning of other pupils. These instances tend to occur when a teacher who is not familiar to the pupils takes the lesson. However, most incidents of disturbed behaviour are well managed by staff.
13. Overall, the behaviour of the pupils, in class and around the school, is good. Parents are happy with the standard of behaviour achieved in the school. Pupils are happy and co-operative and are tolerant of distractions. There are no recorded instances of bullying and, if any should occur, teachers are clear about how to deal with the problem effectively. There were no exclusions in the school last year.
14. Relationships between pupils and between pupils and staff are very good. Teachers show respect for their pupils, give praise to raise their self-esteem and are patient with them. This is evident in lessons and in the dining room at lunchtime where pupils gain recognition for their good social behaviour through an award accredited by a national examination and award authority. Pupils are supportive of each other and are keen to applaud when another pupil has done good work. They generally work well together,

share and are happy to take turns. These very good relationships assist pupils' learning and progress.

### **Attendance**

15. Attendance at Palmerston is good. There has been no unauthorised absence and the overall attendance rate of 95.8 per cent is above average for similar schools. Such good attendance levels reflect the pupils' positive attitudes to school and the commitment of their carers in ensuring that they attend regularly. Their combined efforts, however, are, to some extent, frustrated by the regular failure of the school transport (provided by the Local Authority) to ensure that they arrive at school in time for the start of the school day. In consequence many pupils are denied full access to the curriculum despite the school's best efforts, including repeated representations to the Authority. The registration process at both morning and afternoon sessions is conducted in accordance with legal requirements though, because of the factors referred to above, it can only be completed when the last coach has arrived.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?**

16. The quality of teaching is good. More than one quarter of lessons are excellent or very good and, of the remainder, six out of ten are good. A very small proportion of lessons, fewer than one in ten, is unsatisfactory.
17. Teaching is good in English, with some very good teaching and a little that is unsatisfactory. Where teaching is at its best, account has been taken of the National Literacy Strategy to produce well-planned sessions in which the lesson objectives are made clear to the pupils. In these lessons, classrooms are well organised and good use is made of dialogue between teacher and pupil to access and reinforce learning.
18. In a very good English lesson for a set of higher attaining pupils aged 11 to 16, for example, the teacher made ingenious use of a simple resource. Pupils were each given five linked cards that formed a 'hand', on each 'finger' of which a vowel was displayed. When the group was asked which of the vowels was the missing letter in a word written on the white board, they chose the correct finger and held it up. This enabled all pupils to give an individual answer to each question. At a glance, the teacher could tell which of her pupils understood the questions and got them right.
19. Unfamiliarity with the pupils led to unsatisfactory teaching in one English lesson. Behaviour was not well managed in this instance and full use was not made of suitable resources, especially information and communication technology.
20. The teaching of communication skills has good elements. The use of computer-generated symbols under-written or displayed on cupboards, doors or timetables to convey information to non-readers, is a good example. The use of signing to support spoken English is, however, incidental and is not sufficiently embedded in many aspects of school life.
21. In mathematics, teaching is very good for pupils aged 11 to 14 and for students aged 16 to 19. There is effective planning and lessons for pupils aged 11 to 16 that follows the recommendations of the National Numeracy Strategy. Lessons generally start with a warm-up session of mental mathematics and finish with a session in which the teacher summarises what has been learned, using question and answer. Pupils are given clear learning objectives and this helps them to concentrate on what they should try to achieve. The needs of higher attaining pupils are taken into account and, for

these, additional work is set. Those with more complex needs benefit from the supportive individual assistance that is given to them as they work through their own suitable programmes. As a consequence of the well-structured teaching, pupils make good progress and they are involved and interested in their lessons. Their attitudes to learning are very good.

22. The quality of teaching in science is good. In most cases, pupils enjoy their lessons and concentrate well as they respond to teaching that is sufficiently challenging and tasks that they can attempt with success. On rare occasions, however, the pupils' work is not fully matched to their abilities and on these occasions their concentration flags. Students aged 16 to 19 are offered science as a small element in their EQUALS 'Moving On' curriculum. Teaching, that frequently needs to be aimed at individuals, is planned properly so as to enable students to experience and undertake the simple tasks that contribute to statements of experience and competence in their records of achievement.
23. In art, design and technology, history, geography and religious education, teaching is satisfactory. The shortcomings in co-ordination in these subjects lead to variation in the quality of planning. While individual lessons on occasion provide pupils with learning experiences of high quality, they more rarely form part of a series of lessons designed to take learning forward in a progressive way. Assessment is not well used in foundation subjects to match learning experiences to pupils' known attainments.
24. In information and communication technology, where there is no subject co-ordinator, teaching is occasionally very good but too often it is unsatisfactory. Lessons are unsatisfactory when teachers lack confident mastery of the software they use.
25. There is good teaching in Spanish across the attainment range. This is founded on the teacher's very good subject knowledge.
26. In music, teaching is very good and pupils respond to their teacher's enthusiastic, well-organised approach.
27. Similarly, teaching is of high quality, overall, in physical education and there are some excellent lessons. Pupils are encouraged to gain confidence and take part in activities and all their progress is very well monitored and assessed. In most cases, lessons move forward at a high pace.
28. Teachers work well with support staff who have a vital role in enabling individual pupils to benefit from their lessons. Learning support assistants are sensitive to the pupils' needs and quick to act when necessary to secure their comfort and welfare. They support learning well; they do not do the pupils' work for them, but neither do they leave them without help when a task is challenging. Permanent teachers and long term supply staff know their pupils well and give a high priority to ensuring their welfare. They plan the content of their lessons, but, in some cases, they do not make full use of assessment of what pupils know, understand and can do when setting the tasks within them.
29. There are many examples of teachers making good use of opportunities to develop the skills of communication, literacy and numeracy within lessons in most subjects. They have high expectations of their pupils and expect them to be ready and willing to learn. These expectations are met for the most part and pupils are willing learners who try hard. Some develop sufficient independence to work without adult supervision. The formal use of homework is in some cases precluded by the nature of pupils' difficulties;

however, greater use of the home school diaries to enlist the help of parents and carers in reinforcing emerging communication and social skills is needed.

30. Teachers manage behaviour well in most instances, but, on occasion, there are flaws in the lesson structure so that interest is not maintained and younger pupils act in an unco-operative, challenging way and learning does not take place.

### **HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS?**

31. The school provides a satisfactory curriculum in line with National Curriculum and the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) guidelines. Up to the age of 16 the range of opportunities is satisfactory. For students who are aged 16 to 19, the range of opportunities has been developed and is good. However, the school is aware that current post-16 courses may need to be further developed to fully meet the needs of higher attaining pupils who will enter the post-16 department in the next few years.
32. The strong emphasis on improving communication and numeracy skills and the positive impact of individual support enables pupils to gain success both in terms of personal achievement, and, in some cases, external accreditation.
33. Provision for personal, social and health education is good and the positive, caring learning environment provided motivates pupils to attend the school. The older and higher attaining pupils endorse this. For example, one pupil said "I am improving at the school and am enjoying helping others, particularly the younger pupils. I like this school because the teachers are nice to you".
34. Overall the management and co-ordination of the curriculum are satisfactory. Most subjects have co-ordinators in place, but there are significant gaps in co-ordination. It is a further weakness that there is little planned cross-curricular work linking what is offered, and subject co-ordinators rarely indicate in their planning where their subject impacts upon and interacts with others. However, management does not ensure that policy is adhered to. For example, the ICT policy statement states "The use of ICT allows all students to access any curriculum subject and should be encouraged" but in practice effective use of computers to support learning is a rarity.
35. The allocation of subject time on the curriculum and the time of day when subjects are taught in many cases are not well planned. For example, one group has physical education options until lunch, then recreation, followed by drama, movement and dance, then in the final lesson they have English. In addition, the allocation of time to history and geography up to the age of 14 is insufficient to ensure that meaningful learning takes place.
36. Time allocated to teaching each day includes lunchtime. The lunchtime period is very important and well structured. Most teachers are engaged with the pupils and time is exceptionally well used to develop pupils' social skills. Time is lost through transport problems. The school has attempted to reduce the impact of this loss of time by starting each day with individual work that pupils can start as they arrive. This work is closely related to the targets set in their individual educational plans.



37. All pupils at the school have a statement of special educational needs and the Code of Practice for pupils with special educational needs is fully implemented. Individual educational plans are in place and these help to ensure that all pupils have access to the curriculum.
38. The school is committed to providing equal opportunity for all to gain access to the curriculum. It is generally successful in achieving this. Each class includes pupils with a wide range of attainments and teachers, in most cases, plan work and activities to match these. As an attempt to broaden the extent to which pupils are included within their local communities, a small number attend secondary schools near to their homes for one day each week and are supported by learning support assistants. They take a full part in the activities of special needs groups within the mainstream school and have gained social confidence and acceptance by other pupils from their home community.
39. Curriculum planning for teaching numeracy skills is good. The numeracy co-ordinator has begun the process of developing links with other subjects so that skills in number work can be rehearsed more widely. Curriculum planning for teaching literacy skills is satisfactory. The co-ordinator is enthusiastic but realises that it will take time for teachers to fully implement the strategy.
40. Staff have caring attitudes and good personal support is offered by the teachers and support assistants. Provision for pupils with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties is made through 'Equals Access' and 'Moving On', which are suitable syllabuses published by a nationally recognised organisation. However, a lack of important provision and resources reduces the current curriculum options for students who have profound and multiple learning difficulties. For example, through no fault of the school, but as a result of local facilities falling into disuse, and a change in local authority budget priorities, they have no access to a hydrotherapy pool or a soft play area and there is currently no occupational therapy input to the school.
41. Provision for the pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good overall. The school succeeds well with its aims of developing self-esteem, confidence and a measure of independence. Through interactions with staff and positive role models, pupils are encouraged to develop effective relationships and respect personal differences. Each young person is offered considerable support in coping with their learning difficulties and the positive structured learning environment enables good development of personal skills.
42. The provision for careers and vocational education is good. However, the opportunities provided at present suit the needs of students with more complex and significant needs than a number of those who will join the post-16 group next year. The present post-16 curriculum is insufficiently demanding to build on the attainments of higher achievers in this incoming group and will need to be altered and developed to do so. The careers programme is incorporated in PHSE from Year 9. Pupils aged 14 to 16, receive careers education in the 'transition challenge' modules. Careers advice is undertaken within school with support from Connexions, who link with social services and adult providers. Work experience is developed with staff from Liverpool Compact who identify suitable work experience opportunities. However, there are currently no enterprise projects taking place within the school.
43. Links with the community are satisfactory. The health authority provides physiotherapy and physiotherapy assistants. The physical education programme involves use of a local leisure pool, a sports centre, a specialist horse riding facility and an after-school

club on one evening a week. There are opportunities for pupils to have a residential experience at a specialist centre.

44. Overall the development of links with partner institutions is satisfactory. Students from a local college come to the school every Friday morning to work with pupils. Two pupils are currently on a part-time inclusion programme at the local comprehensive school. There are organised links with other special and mainstream schools that make some contribution to curriculum development, planning and training.
45. Provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development (SMSC) of students is good overall. Provision for spiritual development is satisfactory. Assemblies provide opportunities to develop spiritual awareness through story telling, singing and prayer. The religious education lessons encourage pupils to consider world faiths. There is a good concentration on festivals such as Diwali. In a post-16 classroom students have created prayer mats using potato printing linked to Islamic patterns.
46. There is good provision for pupils' moral development. Pupils understand the difference between right and wrong. The positive learning environment within the school and the positive relationships between pupils and staff encourage good moral development. The staff are good role models. Effective teamwork helps in the management of behaviour. Pupils respond by making their own rules for the class. They are effectively rewarded for good behaviour by being given stamps on a class chart. There is, however, a need to develop consistency in approaches to managing behaviour so that pupils can expect the same responses from all teachers.
47. Provision for pupils' social development is good. Pupils are polite and helpful to each other, staff and visitors. The buddy system, whereby the more able help the less able promotes and supports communal living. A post-16 student who helps younger pupils during the recreation time after lunch was proud to show his prefect's badge and said, "I enjoy playing with them and helping them to play football". Older pupils have planted daffodils in the garden area to brighten the environment and are involved in lobbying the council to improve access to the local park for wheelchair users. Spontaneous clapping at the sports centre to celebrate success indicated a caring attitude.
48. Provision for cultural development is satisfactory. Well-presented displays in the classrooms and corridors are evidence of work on African and Asian art. In religious education pupils learn how important Diwali is to the Hindu faith and culture. Pupils also extend their knowledge of their own culture by visits to local museums, churches and other places of interest. Staff are aware, however, of the need to further develop work on other cultures.
49. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are appropriately provided for. They achieve as much as their age peers. They reach standards commensurate with their special educational needs. Links with parents of these children are effective. Contact is maintained through annual reviews, home-school books and annual reports.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

50. Among the strengths of this school are the effectiveness of its procedures for promoting the health, safety, welfare and personal development of those in its care. The resulting climate of orderliness, security and well-being provides a solid platform upon which to build the learning experience of those who attend the school.

51. There are good procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare. They are based on the guidance issued by the Area Child Protection Committee, enhanced by the school's own written procedures provided for all of its staff team. The headteacher is the designated person. He has received appropriate training and, by passing on his knowledge to all adults in the school through in-service training, he ensures that a high level of alertness is maintained. The sensitive arrangements for the personal care and security of this vulnerable client group makes the pupils feel valued and respected. The nominated first aider holds a current certificate. She is very well supported by the full time health care assistant who administers personal medicines that have been prepared by a qualified nurse. On site physiotherapists collaborate effectively with teachers and other staff to enable pupils with physical or postural difficulties to join in with all activities. Inspectors note the parents' comments that it is very difficult to secure the services of a speech and language therapist – a view supported by the school. The dining room is probably the place where the school demonstrates most effectively its care for its pupils. The lunch hour is treated as part of the curriculum, with many staff on duty sensitively helping with individual feeding programmes, creating a family atmosphere round the table or promoting table manners and politeness. Just one example of the success of this strategy is seen in the attentiveness of a young pupil who noticed that the inspector beside him did not have a spoon to eat his dessert. He quietly asked the inspector "Would you like me to bring you a spoon?"
52. The school has a good range of clearly written policies relating to health and safety, and responded positively to the inspector's observations about the recording of hazards, the use of fire doors, and fire evacuation practices that might improve efficiency.
53. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are good and their effectiveness is borne out in the good attendance levels. Due importance is given to the registration period as an essential part of the school day. Concern is expressed if a pupil is absent and pupils are regularly reminded of the importance of attending school. Registers are well maintained and clearly marked. Good use of the transport escorts ensures that information about matters at home is quickly passed on to school and an early telephone call is made by the school to clarify the situation.
54. The school's good procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour result in an orderly and calm atmosphere around the school and in the classroom, enabling pupils to concentrate on their work with minimum distraction. Individual effort and the pursuit of personal behaviour targets are celebrated in the weekly Awards Assembly. Adults in the school are careful to notice and publicly praise good behaviour in line with the caring emphasis of the behaviour policy. Intimate knowledge of each pupil enables staff to anticipate difficulties and to manage behaviour sensitively and effectively, resulting in very good relationships. On rare occasions where staff are temporary or new, the full requirements of the behaviour policy are not known and this leads to temporary inconsistency in behaviour management.
55. The school's very good procedures for monitoring and promoting pupils' personal development are firmly founded in its caring ethos. The establishment and maintenance of a strong, positive self-image are important elements of the school's overall objectives. The procedures are supported by the conscious efforts of adults in the school to mirror the qualities they would wish to promote in those for whom they care. The school's intimate knowledge of its pupils helps in setting and pursuing the individual targets identified in the IEPs and in the annual reviews. The school seeks the involvement of parents and carers in a shared strategy that sees the school's efforts supported by them at home. While attending one such review the inspector observed

the effectiveness of this joint strategy in fine-tuning targets and in developing the pupils' social and life skills. In discussion with the inspector one parent praised the ability of school staff to get her child to do the things that she herself would feel unable to persuade him to do. The school makes very good use of the 'Well Done' assembly to promote self-esteem, while pupils' achievements are framed in their record of achievement. Opportunities for choice and good judgement are offered in PSHE sessions and are translated to real life situations when pupils are offered choices about what to eat, where to sit, and which chores to volunteer for. The buddy system promoted by the school has resulted in several mobile pupils pushing other pupils around the school in their wheel chairs, so that they can take full part in school activities. The school provides residential experiences for its pupils to develop their social skills and to introduce them to the wider community. They are taught how to care for the disadvantaged members of the wider community by helping to raise considerable sums of money for local and national charities. The older students are thus well prepared for the choices that confront them when planning their future in the work place or in further education.

56. Arrangements for the assessment of pupils' and students' academic progress vary in quality. They are satisfactory, overall. In most subjects assessment is accurate and used effectively in lessons, but procedures in design and technology, information and communication technology and humanities are unsatisfactory. Assessment is against individual targets set for each pupil in the subjects taught, as well as specific targets that arise from the annual review of the statement. Procedures for assessment of post-16 students are good.
57. The school fails to make effective use of assessment information to guide improvements to its curriculum in some subjects. The school has attempted to address this issue by introducing a whole school policy for assessment. Procedures for recording pupils' attainments on entry into the school and at the annual reviews of statements are identified. Other strategies for assessment are laid down in guidelines for individual subjects. Pupils' work in English, mathematics and PSHE is now effectively assessed and recorded.
58. The school has a clear commitment to both recognising and celebrating pupils' and students' achievement through a comprehensive system of rewards. Achievements are referred to in assemblies and records of achievement files contain a more permanent record of success. Parents are kept informed of their children's achievements through planned meetings with staff and useful annual reports.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

59. Parents attending the meeting and those responding to the questionnaire expressed very positive views about the school, acknowledging that the school works very closely with them. The great majority agrees that this is a good school that their children like to attend, where the behaviour and teaching are good and where their children make good progress. One parent added: "The school has a very happy atmosphere and we have nothing but praise and admiration for all the staff." Another remarked upon the support and advice available to parents who are going through difficulties. More than 80 per cent of parents report that they are kept well informed about their children's progress and that they would feel comfortable in approaching the school with any worries or concerns about their children. A similar number agree that the school expects their children to work hard and helps them to become mature and responsible.

60. A significant minority of parents expressed some concern about homework. Some said that they would like homework to be set so that they might help their children with it. Others, whose children have communication difficulties, suggested that it would be helpful to know what their children had been doing at school during the day so that they could talk to them about it at home. Greater consistency in the use of the home/school diary in both directions would help to maintain the flow of information between school and home.
61. Parents also voiced concerns about school transport always being late. One parent said that her child could be on the bus for as long as two hours. Their concerns were echoed by the school. The inspectors share these concerns. Proposals relating to re-routing, re-scheduling and increasing the number of coaches to the school have now been put forward by the transport co-ordinator.
62. The school has secured good links with parents that are proving effective in achieving their shared goals. The principal link is maintained through the home/school diary, and more consistent use of this link would further improve pupils' education prospects. Annual reports and reviews are well received by parents because they present them with a clear picture of their children's progress, and involve them in agreeing future targets. A colourful brochure and an appropriate annual report from governors are backed up throughout the year by almost weekly letters from the school reminding parents about events and activities.
63. The good contribution made by parents to their children's education both at school and at home has a positive impact on their education because it reinforces the work of the school. Importantly they ensure that their children attend regularly, having them ready for the unpredictable transport. The majority of them communicate effectively with the school through the home/school diary, and are willing to support the work of the school at home by discussing the work of the day and by ensuring that any set work is completed. Though only a few parents are able to assist regularly in the school, many support the work of the Friends of Palmerston in raising considerable sums of money for school projects. They also join in the school's major celebrations such as the Autumn Fayre and the Christmas celebrations.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

64. Leadership and management are satisfactory overall. The headteacher provides calm leadership that has given the school stability and the confidence to continue with its work during a time of change. His educational vision for the school is that through developing the provision it already makes, the school will come to ensure that all pupils get the best opportunities to learn as much as they can. This will be done in an environment that is sensitive to all their needs. They will be successfully supported through the transition from school to college or community based provision when they reach the age of 19. However, while a start has been made in this direction, to achieve this goal the school will need to be led more dynamically with every member of staff being strongly motivated to attain it and development planning sharpened to guide it. The headteacher currently takes the lead in drawing up the school development plan. The present plan has significant shortcomings. It does not identify a small number of crucial priorities, but gives equal weight to a broad range of activities. Some of these, such as producing a school brochure, are, in any case, unavoidable on-going tasks rather than specific, essential steps to move the school forward. Planning is not sufficiently tightly linked to the school's set targets nor to its priorities for professional training. Planning for improvement would be helped by revising the current statement of aims, which is too long and diffuse. It should be replaced with a more succinct

statement of what the school is trying to achieve and the key principles that will inform its practice. Such a statement of aims would provide the governors and management with a useful benchmark against which they could measure the school's achievements.

65. The deputy head provides good support and exemplifies good leadership by taking on additional responsibilities when this is needed, discharging these very well. Leadership within the curriculum is satisfactory where it is in place, but some subjects do not have co-ordinators because these responsibilities have not yet been re-assigned following the resignations of the former post holders.
66. The members of the governing body carry out their statutory duties well and it is now up to strength having been below the required number for some time. There is a committee structure and a start has been made on formal monitoring of the curriculum. In setting the budget the governors presently act only to query or approve the expenditure plan put before them by the headteacher. At present, they take an insufficiently active role in the planning phase to ensure that the planned expenditure closely matches the educational priorities they have identified through the target setting process. There is, as is required, a performance management strategy. The governors have consulted with an external advisor and set targets for the headteacher and his deputy. Targets have been set for each teacher and teaching and learning are monitored. The progress made by teachers towards their personal targets is kept under review.
67. Financial planning and procedures are good and the minor deficiencies identified by the most recent audit have been put right. Because there were unresolved questions of funding, the school has set a budget that could lead to a deficit at the end of the financial year. This was done with LEA advice. Over the past two years the school maintains that it has had to use up its reserves to meet the high cost of maintaining itself in temporary premises while its own building was extended and refurbished. As a consequence it has returned to its newly renovated building unable to make the best use of the facilities it provides because of lack of funds. While it does not wholly accept the basis of the school's complaints about funding, the LEA is anxious to afford the school the best possible start in its new building. It has identified further funds for the school and is undertaking to fully equip and commission the specialist areas for technology and ICT. This is an arrangement that is in keeping with the principles of best value. Where it is able to, the school does compare its performance with others of a similar kind and it sets targets to improve. In its administration the school makes effective use of information and communication technology.
68. There are insufficient permanently appointed teachers to meet the needs of the pupils. Vacancies are filled by staff on temporary contracts. Overall, teachers' experience and skills do not always match the requirements of the curriculum. The school acknowledges this. Recently, however, lack of timely training has left teachers lacking competence and confidence in ICT. The school had several co-ordinator posts unfilled at the time of the inspection including those for information and communication technology, history, geography, design and technology and music. This has, in some cases, led to the quality of planning, teaching and pupils' achievement being affected. There are sufficient support staff, many of whom are experienced, to meet the needs of the pupils and help their learning.
69. Accommodation is good. However, there is no hydrotherapy pool and the school is actively seeking to have this facility provided.

70. Learning resources are satisfactory, except in information and communication technology and design and technology, where they are insufficient. This lack of resources limits the usefulness of the good specialist accommodation provided.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

71. In order to ensure that the best possible learning opportunities are provided for its pupils, the Governors, headteacher and managers should work together to:
- (1) Raise pupils' achievement in history and geography, which is unsatisfactory, by giving sufficient time to teaching and learning in these subjects and clarifying what is to be taught. Further, improve achievement in ICT for those aged 11 to 14 by developing teachers' knowledge about the subject and providing more planned opportunities for pupils to use computers.  
(Paragraphs 113, 114, 115, 118, 119)
  - (2) Improve the overall effectiveness of the curriculum by making sure that lessons that require the greatest degree of mental effort are timetabled to take place when pupils are at their most alert.  
(Paragraph 35)
  - (3) Improve the quality of teaching and learning by making full use of assessment to plan more effectively what is taught.  
(Paragraphs 23, 28, 56, 57)
  - (4) Improve leadership and management by:
    - Producing a development plan that highlights a few essential priorities that are tightly linked both to the school's target setting and its priorities for professional training.
    - Assigning to named staff members the co-ordination of what is to be taught in those subjects where there is as yet no named curriculum leader.

Governors may also like to consider the following minor matters when they draw up their action plan in response to this report:

- Governors should revise the school's statement of aims so that it is more succinct and can form a benchmark against which the quality of provision can be judged. (Paragraph 64)
- Governors should take a more active role in planning the budget to ensure that spending priorities match educational ones. (Paragraph 66)



## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	60
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	32

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
Number	2	13	27	14	4	0	0
Percentage	3	22	45	23	7	0	0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point [.

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	73
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	56

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	5

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	4.8

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	3
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	2
White	65
Any other minority ethnic group	10

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y14**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	12.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	5.7
Average class size	7.3

#### **Education support staff: Y7 – Y14**

Total number of education support staff	29
Total aggregate hours worked per week	810

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	200/2001
	£
Total income	793,504
Total expenditure	686,137
Expenditure per pupil	9,945
Balance brought forward from previous year	-9,803
Balance carried forward to next year	19,939

### ***Recruitment of teachers***

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	3
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	3
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	1

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	73
Number of questionnaires returned	23

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	83	17	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	30	52	9	0	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	48	43	4	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	4	30	17	17	0
The teaching is good.	52	39	4	0	4
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	48	9	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	65	30	4	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	35	52	0	0	13
The school works closely with parents.	52	39	4	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	61	39	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	35	61	4	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	17	26	39	0	13

## **PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES**

### **ENGLISH**

72. Pupils achieve well and make good progress in English throughout the school. They make very good progress in speaking and listening, including signing when appropriate and good progress in reading and writing. A scrutiny of pupils' work, their individual educational plans and discussion with individual pupils confirm that progress over time is good. There is a wide range of ability ranging from pupils who are developing skills to use symbols to make short sentences, to pupils who have developed skills and confidence to work independently. By the age of 16 all pupils have made significant progress. Pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties make progress in terms of changes in response. These are first noticed by their support workers who are well informed about the progress pupils have made over time. The school is currently in the process of establishing a system that will enable progress to be measured in smaller steps.
73. The school has in place a policy for literacy that outlines the aims of its teaching in terms of speaking and listening, reading, spelling and writing. Many of the pupils on entry lack skills to participate successfully in lessons without additional support, particularly in speaking and listening and so for each pupil a communication profile describing how they communicate, whether it be by non-verbal body language, objects, pictures, signs, symbols or words has been developed. The school recognises the priority of communication. This is particularly evident during group sessions when staff give pupils a 'voice' and develop skills to understand non-verbal communication.
74. Higher attaining pupils achieve well and develop spelling skills and some independent reading. Pupils' work on sounds that rhyme displayed on the wall had clear examples of the emergence of simple writing skills. For example, one pupil wrote, "I was in the hall when my Mum took a telephone call". Pupils' reading skills also develop well. In a lesson for higher attaining pupils aged 11 to 16, for example, each read aloud one line from a poem. Their reading skills ranged from hesitant to fluent but all pupils used phonic skills to pronounce words they did not immediately recognise. At the middle level, pupils are developing skills in overwriting, copying letters with appropriate size and using words to compose news in a diary. During discussion one pupil was keen to show his photograph on a display of symbols, pictures and words distinguishing between public and private access. He said, "The word 'private' means that you can't go in". There was clear evidence of learning and self esteem development. This outcome was also linked to his IEP targets. At the lower levels of achievement, pupils are improving copy writing, building up pictures and symbols linked to sounds, matching pictures to objects and distinguishing between 'yes' and 'no'. Drama is effectively used to develop communication skills, in particular listening to and following instructions, co-ordinating movements and imitating an action.
75. For students over 16, work is organised on a cross-curricular basis with the emphasis upon communication skills. Students are encouraged to use communication skills outside the setting of the school, for example on visits to the library, job centres, museums and shopping trips. One group which was studying the story 'Chance of a Lifetime', developed reading and comprehension skills well because of the lively active approach adopted by the teacher.

76. The quality of teaching is good overall. There is a significant amount of very good teaching, much that is good and, very rarely, some that is unsatisfactory. On the basis of their assessed attainments, pupils are set in teaching groups for English. In each group, pupils range in age from 11 to 16. This enables teachers to work with classes in which the pace of learning is similar but it has the drawback that material of interest to younger pupils might not hold the attention of older ones. Teachers work hard to overcome this difficulty. The organisation of lessons in the set groups is good. The National Literacy Strategy, adapted because of the special educational needs of the pupils, gives a strong foundation to the planning. Teachers manage their classes well and pupils are eager to learn in lessons where the objectives are clear and shared with them. There is plenty of opportunity for them to try out what they learn. Pupils greatly enjoy writing on the white board for the whole class, using simple resources made by the teacher to show their answers.
77. Teachers have good understanding of the inter-relatedness of reading and writing and place a positive, strong emphasis on matching letters to the sounds they make. Lessons run at a brisk pace and, in the best examples, teachers make very good use of questions to draw out what pupils know and assess the quality of their learning. Where teaching is less effective and in the rare instance where it was unsatisfactory, management of pupils was unsuccessful. Aspects of teaching that had the potential to provide interest and reduce behavioural difficulties were weak. For example, in one lesson the teacher asked pupils to recall a previously heard story and sequence events within it, but the resources did not match the plan. No use was made of pictures or enlarged text as in a 'Big Book', to give a focus to attention. As a result, pupils lost interest and the lesson lost impetus.
78. Resources to support the teaching and learning of English are limited, in particular the use of information and communication technology and computers in the classroom. Resource materials and books available in the library are coded in terms of interest levels in pictures and words, but much of the stock is outdated and inappropriate to meet the learning needs of pupils. In addition there are no comics, newspapers or magazines available to develop reading for pleasure. There are no videos, talking book tapes, CDs or tapes to stimulate learning.
79. The co-ordinator for English is very enthusiastic. She has undertaken training on implementing the National Literacy Strategy and has delivered training within the school on the three-part lesson. All teaching and support staff attended a day training session at the school on 'Literature for All', which stressed that access to literature is not dependent on literacy. The introduction of the study of selected books and poetry has broadened the range of literacy experiences for the pupils. The co-ordinator has monitored teaching in English this year and plans to continue this practice. The co-ordinator is aware that the current stock of 'Big Books' and age appropriate material for pupils aged 11 to 16 needs to be reviewed but funds for resources are presently allocated to class teachers and not to her. She attends Liverpool Literacy Team meetings to keep abreast of local and national developments. Links with the speech and language therapy service are very good and the co-ordinator has one day each week to perform speech, language and communication work within the school.

## **MATHEMATICS**

80. Pupils' and students' achievements in mathematics are good throughout the school. Good leadership, very good teaching and a broadly based curriculum contribute to learning and progress. The successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) has aroused pupils' interest and improved concentration in lessons.

Pupils aged 11 to 16 have lessons on space and shape work in class groups. Number and data handling are taught in sets according to attainment. Post-16 students have one number lesson each week taught in sets.

81. Pupils' progress in space and shape work is good. Practical activities are appropriate and designed to support learning concepts. For example, in a lesson on properties of three-dimensional shapes, pupils painted the different faces, corners and sides. In number and data handling, taught in sets, there are wide differences in attainment. Lower attaining pupils can recognise numbers 0 – 6 and classify objects by criteria e.g. colours. Average attaining pupils work with numbers 0 – 20, can count 0 to 100 in tens and they are able to represent given data on a bar graph. Higher attaining pupils understand the symbols +, - and =, and have a mathematical vocabulary which includes more and less. They have carried out a survey of pupils, collected the data and produced a tally chart and bar graph. They can add and subtract numbers to 20 without the aid of a number line. Post-16 students do mathematics as an integral part of key skills and life skills programmes. They learn about the social uses of money on visits out of school including buying food in a café.
82. The quality of teaching and learning is very good for pupils aged 11 to 16. The lessons are planned in accordance with the NNS. Clear targets are set, appropriate activities give a sharp focus to the lesson and support assistants are effectively used to support learning. Tasks are well matched to the different abilities and skills of the pupils which enable all to make progress. Extension work for higher attaining pupils is a good feature of some lessons. Targeted questioning by teachers means that all are included in the lesson and all pupils have the same opportunities for learning. One good lesson was observed in a class for post-16 students. Pupils with profound multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) were working on individual education plans with dedicated help from the teacher and two support assistants.
83. The mental starter session to the lessons makes pupils aware of what they are about to do. Interesting resources such as number cards, clock faces and shapes are used to arouse interest in the subject and to make pupils more alert and ready for the main activities. The plenary or review session at the end of the lesson provides an opportunity for pupils to discuss what they have learned during the lessons. All pupils actively participate in these discussions either by verbal communication or by signing.
84. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good. Teachers use every opportunity to praise and encourage pupils which raises self-esteem and gives them confidence in applying themselves to the tasks set. Every pupil consolidates his or her learning. Behaviour is very good and pupils usually give of their best to make progress. They use practical equipment carefully.
85. The subject has reached a good standard because of the very good leadership and management of the co-ordinator. The mathematics policy is good; schemes of work are well planned and reviewed. Arrangements for assessment of pupils are thorough and on going and assessment is used for future planning. Mathematics IEPs are well structured with clear targets. The co-ordinator took a leading role in the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) in the school. After receiving training by LEA advisers, the co-ordinator ensured that colleagues also received the same training. This resulted in a coherent approach to the strategy by all staff. These are cross-referenced into specific individual targets in lesson planning.

86. To promote the subject further, the co-ordinator would like to train in the use of a new system of assessment. All pupils with more profound needs have been tested using this system and the co-ordinator wishes to build up resources specifically for them. The co-ordinator is working on a policy for numeracy across the curriculum. At present, numeracy is used in a number of lessons e.g. counting the number of beats in music and weighing and measuring in food technology. This is done on an informal basis but a more formal, organised system would prove beneficial for staff and pupils.
87. Calculators are used successfully. Although each classroom is supplied with a computer, in addition to the computer suite, no use of information and communication technology was seen to support learning. New computer software is to be introduced to reinforce learning.
88. Accommodation for the subject is good with light, airy classrooms. Resources are of good quality, appropriate for promoting learning, and they are effectively used and accessible. Each classroom has a plentiful supply of resources. Staff morale in the subject is high due to the confidence built up by training in the NNS. Teachers are monitored by the co-ordinator on a regular basis.
89. The subject is being well taught but to further improve standards a formalised policy of numeracy across the curriculum should be introduced. Facilities for ICT to support learning are, at present, weak.

## **SCIENCE**

90. Teaching is at least satisfactory in science lessons. Progress in science overall is satisfactory throughout the school and there are examples of good and very good progress for pupils of all ages.
91. By the time pupils are 14 the higher attainers know what electrical appliances are used for, have some understanding of the dangers of electricity and they can make circuits using a circuit board. They understand that the earth moves round the sun and why there is day and night. Most pupils have an understanding of insulators, know that some things are hot and others cold and that ice melts to make water.
92. By the time pupils are 16 the majority are able to position models of organs into the body, including the brain, heart and lungs and are able to give a single word to describe their function, for example, they know that lungs breathe. Most pupils are able to recall that food goes in through the mouth, down the throat, into the stomach and waste products are produced. They know that chewing and the action of the stomach mash food. They have studied materials and the higher achievers are able to use words, such as 'hard', 'soft' and 'bendy', to describe them.
93. Pupils over 16 years are offered science as a small part of the Equals 'Moving On' curriculum. They are able to understand the difference between hard and soft and that everyday materials can be changed. They can follow simple instructions and the more able pupils can write their own name and complete a statement for their Record of Achievement about the work they have done. They are able to cut out, colour and stick body parts in place with help. Most pupils with more profound difficulties are able to use single words appropriately to describe things that are wet and hot.
94. Pupils respond well in their science lessons. They show interest and enjoyment in the work and generally concentrate well, although there are occasions when they become distracted because the challenge is not well matched to their ability. They listen and are

tolerant of each other's contributions and freely help and encourage one another. The pupils usually behave well, listen to what the teacher is saying and concentrate on their work. The learning of some pupils is disrupted through having to leave during lesson time for therapies.

95. Teaching is good and ranged from satisfactory to very good during the inspection. Very good teaching is characterised by clear linking with previous work, focused questioning of individual pupils, introduction of subject vocabulary and repetition, good use of resources, using all senses and frequent changes of relevant activities which are related to the pupils' everyday experiences. Planning for lessons is generally good with clearly identified learning objectives and frequent links to previous work to ensure the pupils remember what they have been taught. There is effective use of signing and work sheets are provided with symbols as well as words so that every pupil is able to access information.
96. Teachers know their pupils well and have clear knowledge of what they know and understand. In one lesson about the organs of the body, the teacher explained precisely how the lesson linked with previous work and what the pupils were going to do in this lesson. The questioning was sharply focused and clearly targeted at the level of each individual pupil. Specific vocabulary was recalled, new words introduced and lots of repetition and opportunities to practise using them provided. The messy, tactile activities provided challenge for all pupils and kept them interested and involved. These modelled what happens to food in the mouth and in the alimentary canal and explanations were given about how the body extracts what it wants from the food and excretes the rest. The pupils were expected to talk about what they were seeing and all contributions were valued and used to emphasise teaching points. There were very good relationships between support staff, the teacher and the pupils and the lesson was good humoured with a lot of laughter, without losing its focus. One pupil became tired and he was encouraged to sit quietly until he felt more able to join in, so that the flow of the lessons was not interrupted. The worksheets used were very appropriate to the needs of the pupils and their level of working and used symbols as well as words.
97. The pace of learning in most lessons is good and teachers expect pupils to be attentive and to concentrate well. There is very good use of praise for both behaviour and learning. In most lessons the match of ability to task is good, but there was one lesson when there was insufficient challenge which affected pupil motivation and concentration. In another lesson the pupils were not grouped effectively and expectations were too high so that pupils did little when the teacher was not with them. All staff have good relationships with the pupils, valuing every contribution and raising confidence, which promotes learning.
98. The skilled learning support assistants know the pupils well, are sympathetic to their needs and know how to support their learning and behaviour, further enhancing pupil progress. There is insufficient use of information and communication technology because the computer available in the science room is unable to access the educational programmes that would be very useful for these pupils. Some science is not taught in the science room, because teachers prefer to use their own teaching rooms and consequently the good quality resources there are under-used, which adversely affects teaching and progress.



99. Assessment for pupils up to 16 is done at the end of each topic and again at the end of the year by means of prepared tick sheets, which take account of pupils of different attainments. Teachers and learning support assistants continually assess pupils who are over-16 during lessons.
100. Some lessons are planned to have cross-curricular links, for example, a food technology lesson which linked with science and mathematics. Number work was emphasised in some science lessons when, for example, pupils were asked how many pans would be needed to boil pasta and an egg. The development of literacy is part of all science lessons through the introduction of words with their meaning, use of spoken language and the development of handwriting skills.
101. There is a science co-ordinator for pupils aged up to 16, who has prepared good schemes of work which provide for a range of abilities and progress and cover the requirements of the National Curriculum through topics, although there is little time allocated to investigation. After the age of 16, students' work in science forms a small part of the Equals 'Moving On' scheme of work, which is based on everyday applications of science. There is little attempt made to map the work done by older pupils onto that done lower down the school and so there is little continuity and progression. Better use should be made of the non-contact time provided to programme observations of lessons and improve liaison across the age range.
102. There is a specialist room for science. Resources are adequate and in excellent condition. There is sufficient storage space and all resources are easily accessible.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

103. The quality of provision is satisfactory. Standards achieved are satisfactory for all pupils including those students who are over 16. On entering the school, pupils make papier-mâché boomerangs in bold colours, weave materials using different textures, and do block printing using string and cardboard.
104. By the age of 14, using the stimulus of Impressionist and Post-Impressionist painters, pupils produce coloured chalk drawings of still life. Lower achieving pupils do simple colouring-in offering insufficient challenge. By the age of 16, pupils work together to produce collages of stories such as 'The Pied Piper' using materials of different textures and colours. Linked with work on the human body, they make face and body drawings. Lower attaining pupils produce work showing developing skills. Students who are over 16 make striking Islamic prayer mats bordered in wool, choosing from several Arabic designs. In cross-curricular work connected to Greek myths, they roller print T-shirts in Greek patterns and make papier-mâché vases.
105. Because of timetable constraints, it was not possible to observe lessons for pupils aged 11 to 16, and, therefore, it was not possible to judge the amount of help and support they had received in the completed work that was scrutinised. In the one lesson for pupils over 16 that was observed, teaching was satisfactory. Behaviour was well handled and the teacher showed commitment and enthusiasm, but there was a tendency to over-help the pupils. The point of the lesson on making a goblet as a prop connected with the 'Hobbit' story was not sufficiently clear because there were no visual aids to help pupils realise what they were making.
106. The subject makes a good contribution to cultural learning through encouraging artwork from different countries, including Africa and through links with literature such as Greek myths and other European stories.

107. The art co-ordinator was absent at the time of the inspection. While the curriculum offered a range of experiences and activities, there was not always sufficient focus on standards and progress in the subject documentation and planning, and the art co-ordinator had not observed any of the teachers' art lessons.
108. There is accreditation for artwork for students who are over 16 embedded into cross-curricular work but this focuses on activities being completed rather than standards of work. Information and communication technology such as software to create designs is insufficiently used. Resources for learning are satisfactory, as is accommodation in the specialist art room.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

109. Standards are broadly satisfactory in relation to pupils' needs and abilities. Post-16 students have investigated the properties and suitability for purpose of different fabrics. Projects carried out as part of the ASDAN Transition Challenge contribute well to the consolidation of skills in real life situations. Pupils aged 14 to 16 decorated a corridor in the school. Work on display around the school shows that pupils who are aged 14 to 16 have adequate skills for planning and making models. They show a reasonable understanding of mechanisms. Pupils who are aged 11 to 14 have made good quality wooden boxes with hinges and fastenings. Making models of famous buildings in Liverpool, such as the Catholic cathedral and football stadiums, helps pupils understand their cultural heritage.
110. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. Four lessons were seen involving pupils aged 15 and 16 and students in the post-16 department. Teaching was satisfactory in three lessons and good in one. Design and technology or food technology are timetabled in every class every week. Planning is satisfactory and covers activities on both resistant materials and food studies. A lesson on applying a decorative finish was not as successful as it might have been. This was because the teacher, having given good consideration to individual needs and safety, had not considered the difficulties of working in the open air. Teachers sometimes make good links with mathematics and science. For example, by developing the pupils' understanding of shapes or using simple electrical circuits when designing logos. They make models of houses and other buildings. Pupils and students demonstrated satisfactory attitudes to learning and behaved well in the lessons observed. They understand health and safety issues such as the need for cleanliness in the kitchen, and the need to be careful with tools, and hazards such as fumes from spray paints.
111. Leadership was unsatisfactory at the time of the inspection. This is because the subject co-ordinator had left the school in December 2001, had not yet been replaced and no teacher had been given temporary responsibility for developments. The headteacher stated that the school had advertised for a technology specialist. The previous co-ordinator had produced a good quality file for managing the subject with a good policy, good action plan and good scheme of work derived from National Curriculum, EQUALS and ASDAN materials. There are forms for recording pupils' experiences and achievements, which are satisfactory.
112. The school has two areas specifically equipped for food studies. These are well designed and all the cupboards are clearly labelled with words and symbols. However, all the work surfaces and appliances are at the same height and this makes access difficult for some of the pupils and students. Furthermore, resources in these areas and tools and consumables, particularly for work on resistant materials, are barely

adequate. At present, the lack of a co-ordinator is working against the implementation of the existing action plan and the development of the subject.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **History and geography**

113. Although it was not possible to see any geography lessons during the inspection, one history lesson was observed. There is little evidence of pupils' past work except teachers' records of what has been covered. Achievement in both history and geography is unsatisfactory. Pupils make good progress in the work attempted but not enough is done.
114. The curriculum in both subjects lacks balance. When the previous co-ordinator left the school, good schemes of work and arrangements for assessment were in place. However, some staff feel that the content of these schemes is too difficult for the pupils and are teaching from another scheme of work from another type of curriculum. This is unsatisfactory because there is now no continuity or coherent plan over the years of Key Stage 3, which inhibits pupils' progress over time.
115. Insufficient time is given to history and geography. The needs of the pupils in these subjects are not adequately met. There is a need for greater continuity in their experiences to assist them in their learning.
116. The quality of teaching and learning in the lesson observed was very good. In this case, good planning, appropriate resources and effective use of support staff contributed to pupils' learning.
117. The lack of effective co-ordination, of appropriate time allocation, of an agreed scheme of work and appropriate assessment arrangements is preventing satisfactory learning in these subjects.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

118. Standards achieved are satisfactory for pupils aged 11 to 14, and they are good for those aged 14 to 16 and for those students who are over 16.
119. By the age of 14, higher attaining pupils work with programmes such as 'Paint' and 'Dazzle'. They use a toolbar and icons to choose colours for various parts of a 'house', using a mouse to drag into place parts to make a composite picture. They print their work when it is completed. Sometimes they add text. They operate a tape recorder with little prompting. Pupils with lower levels of previous learning achieve similar tasks but take much longer and require considerable help from the teacher or learning support assistant. Some higher attaining older pupils use the computer keyboard to produce and print text, using word processing software. Using a mouse and keys they select different items, shapes and colours. Lower attaining pupils use switches and respond to sounds and movements but do not always have sufficient opportunity to operate computers. They are not always taught competently, which affects their progress. Students over the age of 16 start and stop compact disc players and video players, sometimes with support and are able to say what they are doing. Higher achieving pupils read the relevant operating buttons and use the equipment accordingly. Pupils over 16 explore 'Clipart' as part of citizenship studies, learning to find out about a dentist and add brief text captions. Higher attaining pupils use word processing

software, setting the font to different sizes for headings and deleting text as appropriate before printing their work unaided.

120. While teaching is satisfactory overall for pupils aged 11 to 14, its quality varies from unsatisfactory to very good. Where teaching is unsatisfactory, while there are appropriate attempts to link the work with that in other subjects such as stories in English, teachers lack confidence and competence in the subject and there is too much time spent setting up and closing down equipment. In unsatisfactory lessons, there is also insufficient challenge, particularly for lower achieving pupils. Where teaching is good, the classroom is well organised and sometimes the computer suite and the adjoining science room are used to create smaller groupings. Pupils respond well when lessons are well organised and behaviour deteriorates when there is insufficient challenge. Teaching for older pupils is good. Again, the good organisation of the classroom and all staff working to keep pupils on clearly specified tasks assist learning. Teaching for students who are over 16 is good overall, although there is occasional unsatisfactory teaching. Clear planning for individual lessons, suitable expectations of what the pupils should do and good management behaviour are found in good lessons. Here teachers give their pupils the confidence to use computers. Unsatisfactory teaching arises chiefly because teachers are not very familiar with the software and they spend far too much time on organisational issues, such as turn taking.
121. There has been no ICT co-ordinator since December 2001 and co-ordination of the subject is unsatisfactory. The curriculum is insufficiently broad and balanced for pupils aged 11 to 16 and makes insufficient contribution to cultural learning. Procedures for assessing attainment and progress are insufficiently developed. For students who are over 16, the curriculum is satisfactory. Lack of timely and systematic in-service training has left several teachers lacking competence and confidence. For pupils aged 11 to 16, the curriculum and assessment structures are not consistently used.
122. While there are too few computers in the school, not enough is done to ensure that existing computers are optimally used. At the time of the inspection, pupils did not have reliable access to the Internet. The ICT suite, which offers an area for dedicated computer work, stands unused for much of the time and opportunities to use computers in classrooms, for example in English or mathematics lessons, are rarely taken.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **Spanish**

123. Spanish is taught throughout the school and pupils make good progress. Both higher and lower attaining pupils make good gains in their Spanish lessons; they develop their social confidence, their ability to collaborate with each other and their knowledge of Spanish language and culture. They practise speaking and listening skills more frequently and achieve more highly in these skills than in reading and writing. Generally there is good challenge in the work. Pupils usually make better progress when they are physically involved in an activity such as touching all the parts of their body as they learned the Spanish words. Pupils who have English as an additional language achieve appropriately.
124. The quality of teaching is good in all year groups. The teacher's knowledge of Spanish is very good and his enthusiasm for the language is passed on to the pupils who learn well as a result of this dynamism. The whole lesson is conducted in Spanish; pupils

and learning support assistants are all involved in the lessons and they all respond well to instructions in Spanish. Good planning and sequencing of activities help the pupils to progress well during the lesson. Time is used well with quick changes of activity, which help to maintain a brisk pace of teaching and learning. Resources such as work sheets and flashcards are of good quality and are used effectively. The teacher checks frequently for understanding and therefore avoids confusion. The course focuses mostly on Spanish language but there are also opportunities to hear Spanish music at the beginning and end of lessons and to taste, smell and generally enjoy Spanish food. This allows high and low attaining pupils to learn well. The lack of a permanent base for Spanish teaching is preventing the good strategies from being even more effective, as resources are limited to those that can be carried around the school.

125. Pupils are interested in making Spanish sounds and in language activities. One pupil particularly liked the sound of 'garganta' meaning 'throat', when naming parts of the body and continued to say the word throughout the lesson. Pupils behave well, work well together, help each other and take turns effectively. Some high attaining pupils can speak some Spanish independently but most need teacher or assistant support. Pupils listen carefully; they understand instructions and classroom routine in Spanish and respond appropriately. They enjoyed tasting Spanish doughnuts and cola cao, a chocolate drink. The relationships between pupils and teacher are very good.
126. The teaching of Spanish is well managed throughout the school. Continuity and progression in the Spanish course are ensured. However, there are presently insufficient opportunities to revise previously learned topics and to widen vocabulary, particularly for the highest attainers. There is a good flexible end-of-course qualification, which permits all pupils to be successful at their own levels. There is little ICT because of poor access to computers. Assessment of pupils' progress is appropriate, but presently lacks a sufficiently detailed analysis of strengths and weaknesses in the pupils' learning.

## **MUSIC**

127. The quality of provision is very good. Standards achieved by pupils are very good for pupils who are aged 11 to 14 and for students who are over 16. For pupils aged 14 to 16, however, there was insufficient evidence to judge standards.
128. Pupils who are aged 13 perform with an awareness of others and enthusiastically produce simple patterns of rhythms and accompaniments. Students over 16 play music in the context of drama, movement and music lessons. They play percussion instruments slower or faster and stopping as appropriate and they play with feeling and sensitivity to what is happening around them. Some pupils previously participated in a weekly choir session, but this was not taking place at the time of the inspection. Assemblies are used as suitable opportunities for experiencing music.
129. Teaching is very good for pupils aged 11 to 14 and the teacher's enthusiasm, good organisation and careful preparation of the lesson helps pupils become involved in the activities quickly, encourages their enthusiastic participation and leads to very good pupil progress. Teaching for students aged over 16 within the context of excellent cross-curricular lessons is very good. The teacher generates supportive relationships and enables all students to take part with sensitivity that complements what other students are doing.
130. The music co-ordinator was absent at the time of the inspection. The curriculum is clear for pupils aged 11 to 16. Music is embedded in other subjects for students who

are over 16 but individual students are not fully assessed in this age group and monitoring of progress is, therefore, unsatisfactory. There are opportunities to visit music venues such as Bridge Chapel and to have musicians such as the group 'Repercussion' in school. Provision benefits from the work of the music therapist who liaises closely with teachers and others. The subject contributes satisfactorily to cultural education by offering music from other countries, such as Arabian music for students who are over 16 but there is insufficient use of technology.

131. Resources for learning are satisfactory and accommodation is suitable.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

132. Progress in physical education is very good at all levels. However, the curriculum opportunities offered to those with more profound and complex difficulties are too narrow. There is no access to hydrotherapy for these pupils, for example.

133. The curriculum opportunities offered to pupils in physical education are extended by the effective use of a local leisure pool and sports centre. Up to the age of 14 pupils cover three main themes - movement, games, (including bat and ball skills), and athletics. Up to the age of 16, pupils continue with swimming and activities at the leisure centre, including gymnastics and trampolining, and movement and dance. Students aged 16 to 19 enjoy a varied curriculum including aerobics, boccia, swimming, and wheelchair line dancing, and activities at the leisure centre. There are additional visits for leisure pursuits such as bowling. They also experience a residential week at a specialist outdoor pursuits centre run by the Calvert trust. The school play areas enable pupils to develop ball skills with supported football, basketball and use of an assault course during the recreation period after lunch

134. The quality of teaching ranges from excellent to satisfactory and overall is good. When teaching is good or better, there are warm up activities to ensure pupils are sufficiently supple to undertake exercise. The teacher and learning support assistant use praise and encouragement effectively to improve pupils' participation and confidence. Standards are established with regard to the wearing of kit and the teachers and support assistants set a good example by changing. Very good individual records are kept with detailed targets and an explanation of the roles of support assistants. Pupils take an active part in the lesson and gain from the excellent facilities at the specialist sports centres. One pupil suffering from developmental delay stated, "It was a great session because I like jumping and pulling and running around fast. I like coming here because the carpet is so soft". When teaching is less than good, the pace of the lesson is on occasions slow, equipment for the lesson has not been pre-checked and instructions to pupils are not always clear, resulting in some confusion.

135. The present subject co-ordinator, although not a physical education specialist, is very enthusiastic. He has benefited from liaison with Merseyside Sport, who have provided funding for the purchase of games equipment used at the school and staffing of the One Small Step recreation club which runs on Tuesday evenings after school. Observation at the leisure pool showed clearly that pupils have improved their confidence in water and swimming skills by their participation in the AQA Water Skills award scheme. There is evidence of pupils' work in gymnastics, including stretching, balance, movement and spatial awareness. There is also evidence of progress in ball skills, particularly throwing and catching linked to small games. The provision of good additional external and internal accreditation for aspects of physical activities at levels to ensure access and success helps to motivate pupils. There are currently only limited cross-curricular links with, for instance, music in line dancing. Cross-curricular links

with numeracy on topics such as time keeping, distances swum, literacy links with key words and science links with personal fitness and diet are insufficiently developed. In addition pupils would benefit from regular short-term targets to more effectively measure short-term progress, particularly in gymnastics and swimming.

136. Physical education is an important area of the curriculum for pupils at the school and this is reflected in the enthusiasm shown by all staff and pupils. For pupils with more profound and multiple learning difficulties, the option choices and planning for physical education are insufficiently monitored. They require access to a hydrotherapy pool and provision of a soft play area.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

137. Pupils' achievements in religious education are good between ages 11 and 14. They produce good quality written work. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement about the achievement of older pupils.
138. By age 14, pupils have studied aspects of Christianity, Judaism, Islam and Hinduism. Twelve-year-old pupils know the story of the Passover and why Jewish people eat special foods at this time. Thirteen-year-old pupils know the story of Zaccheus and the message it gives to Christians about Jesus. Fourteen-year-old pupils learn the story of Rama and Sita and they know the importance of the festival of Diwali.
139. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Lesson activities have a practical bias which helps pupils to learn. Pupils were, for example, given samples of unleavened bread for the Passover and some had samples of hot cross buns, pancakes and Simnel cake to show foods associated with Lent. Lessons, when they are good, are well planned with clear targets so that pupils know what is expected of them. Interest in lessons is sustained by a variety of activities using appropriate resources. The less effective lessons are also well planned but challenging behaviour by some pupils is not always well managed, and learning is disrupted.
140. The scheme of work is based on the Liverpool Agreed syllabus with topics adapted for pupils aged 11 to 14. However, the school felt that the Syllabus for 14 to 16-year-olds and for those over 16 was too difficult to modify. The local education authority has now produced a modified syllabus, which is to be implemented by next September.
141. Weekly assemblies make a contribution to learning. They are well planned throughout the school year and cover festivals of the major world religions. The assembly seen during the inspection used an interactive approach to involve all pupils in the topic 'Welcome'; this was very successful, promoting awareness and understanding.
142. Religious education has a low profile in the school apart from a couple of attractive wall displays, one on the Festival of Eid. No artefacts or pictures are evident and resources are limited and need updating.

## **Post-16**

143. The provision for post-16 students is good. Students achieve well and make good progress in lessons. The quality of teaching is good. There are high expectations for students to learn, with effective planning to provide work matched to attainment. Students are pleased to be in school and react positively to the welcome they receive. Staff attend to students' personal needs, ensuring dignity, so that students are relaxed and confident during the day.

144. The careers programme, which the students follow, is good. It consists of taught lessons, time spent in the environment, in-school work experience and outside work placements. Work experience is well followed-up by students who record details in a diary, an activity which gives them time to reflect on their day and see their achievements. They have also participated in a Liverpool conference for students with special needs, which focussed on their future education and training. The course in school is enhanced by information sessions for parents who are given details of post-19 courses in the surrounding area. Both the school and the careers adviser, who has an overview of local provision, are involved in these meetings. The parents who attended benefited greatly from meeting with several different agencies involved in post-19 provision.
145. The arrangements for transition to post-19 are very good. After consultation with parents and students, provision in the local college has been extended by outside funding and tailored to meet the needs of students; tutors have been trained in the use of PECS and student profiles have been constructed and studied, in order to increase continuity. The college has designed and implemented specialist courses to meet the needs of the greater range of students who will be transferring in September 2002. Students have also been involved in taster days at the college, and visits to exhibitions and drama productions to familiarise them with a new environment.
146. The 16-19 curriculum is good. It is broad and balanced, covering life-skills, key-skills, vocational studies and knowledge and understanding of the world. However, religious education is not taught in this phase and failure to meet this statutory requirement is an unsatisfactory element. The school has begun to use the Equals 'Moving On' curriculum in conjunction with ASDAN units of work to develop more independent learning. These are appropriate strategies for the students currently in school and are providing a good planning framework for all teachers in the post-16 phase. Long-term and short-term plans are very comprehensive and useful in the classroom. Planning also incorporates the matching of work to the learning of the SLD and PMLD students and pupils have equal access to the curriculum. The two final classes each spend one day a week outside the school, developing skills for independent living. End-of-course assessment is appropriate. The post-16 curriculum gives pupils a broad range of learning opportunities in mathematics, English and science but in its present form it does not deepen pupils' knowledge and understanding in these areas very significantly. Insufficient time is given to the teaching of literacy and numeracy to ensure that previously acquired skills are used and improved. In the future, taking into account the more advanced learning of the pupils lower down the school, the curriculum may have to be modified.
147. The post-16 curriculum is well led and well managed. Staff frequently discuss the development of the course and the progress of pupils and make modifications when needed. Resources that are available are used well but there is a lack of resources in design and technology and art. Accommodation is light and airy and students make good use of all facilities. Some monitoring and evaluation of teaching takes place but this needs further development. The relationships with all staff are good. The audit of post-16 provision and the business plan have identified suitable targets such as clarifying objectives, organising training and developing recording of the 'Moving On' curriculum, because this is at an early stage of development. The post-16 teachers and support staff are committed to raising standards and are able to put this into effect.
148. In Spanish, all pupils are helped to make good progress because the teacher builds on the students' strengths. In one activity a pupil who had communication difficulties but who had strengths in numeracy succeeded in matching numbers between 1 and 20



with their Spanish names without support. All students are spoken to in Spanish and their reactions are well recorded. Higher attaining students can answer questions in Spanish and respond appropriately to instructions, at times independently. Lower attaining students need support, but in one lesson were involved in experiencing the sound of the language, the taste of Spanish food and drink and the sound of Spanish music.

149. Teaching of science is generally good. Students are given relevant practical experiences. For example, in one lesson students were looking at materials used for floor and wall covering in different rooms and went around school with adults to feel the textures of different wet and dry materials; they practised key words such as 'hot' and 'wet', which the students learned well. At times, however, the science content is not obvious, as in a lesson that was designated as science in the office but pupils selected office equipment from a catalogue and glued them on to a paper.
150. Students achieve well in ICT. High expectations of the teacher are conveyed through effective planning of lessons, clear instructions and good organisation of activities, which lead to good progress being made by the students. Support assistants work well and help students to maintain their focus on the task and have clear expectations of good behaviour. Pupils have good attitudes to ICT and receive appropriate praise from staff.