

INSPECTION REPORT

ASHGATE CROFT SCHOOL

Ashgate Road, Chesterfield

LEA area: Derbyshire

Unique reference number: 113032

Headteacher: Michael Meaton

Reporting inspector: Alan Lemon
20165

Dates of inspection: 19th – 23rd November 2001

Inspection number: 190893

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
Age range of pupils:	2 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Ashgate Croft School Ashgate Road Chesterfield Derbyshire
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mandy Stafford-Wood
Date of previous inspection:	2 nd December 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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9052	Helen Barter	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
16722	Noreen Buckingham	Team inspector	Personal, social and health education Special educational needs	
19386	Trevor Watts	Team inspector	Mathematics Modern foreign language Foundation stage	
11239	Sue Flockton	Team inspector	History Geography	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils and students?
31963	Malcolm Padmore	Team inspector	Religious Education	
13101	Mike Kell	Team inspector	Science Music	How good are pupils' attitudes, values and personal development?
17681	Roger Sharples	Team inspector	Design and technology Physical education English as an additional language	
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Ashgate Croft School is a special school catering for 178 boys and girls aged 2 to 19. Thirty two of these are students in the further education department and 12 are children in the nursery some of who attend part-time. Fifty four per cent are pupils with moderate learning difficulties and 46 per cent have severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. There is a pattern of increasing numbers of pupils with severe learning difficulties and often with challenging behaviour. Nine pupils are identified as being autistic, 9 have behavioural difficulties and 3 have multi-sensory impairments. None are disapplied from the National Curriculum. All pupils' attainment is very low when they enter school as a consequence of their learning difficulties. Pupils come from a wide area including Chesterfield, the Peak District, Derbyshire Dales and neighbouring local education authorities. Two senior pupils are Pakistani. While English is their second language this does not affect their learning.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Ashgate Croft School makes satisfactory educational provision and, overall, pupils are achieving satisfactorily. The head teacher has given sound leadership to some essential improvements, in particular, the quality of teaching, which is now good. The school is making steady progress towards being more effective. Pupils have good attitudes and enjoy being at school. The school gives satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- The school provides good teaching based upon the approaches common to the literacy and numeracy strategies.
- It makes very good provision in the nursery and good provision in the further education department.
- The team of classroom assistants make a very good contribution to pupils' learning.
- The school provides good personal, social and health education.
- It promotes pupils' positive attitudes towards school and good all round relationships.
- The school finds the opportunities in the community, neighbouring schools and colleges to make a very good contribution to pupils' learning.
- It makes good constructive relationships with parents.
- It has created outdoor areas of the highest quality where all pupils can play and learn.

What could be improved

- The management and development of science and most of the foundation subjects of the National Curriculum
- The assessment of what all pupils and students know, understand and can do and their progress in each of the subjects they are taught.
- The achievement of pupils with moderate learning difficulties.
- The curriculum, in meeting the needs of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, autism, sensory impairments and challenging behaviour; meeting the statutory requirements for art and design and a modern foreign language; increasing the time for science and the overall taught time for senior pupils.
- The use of information and communication technology throughout the curriculum.

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 improvement since the last inspection in December 1996 is adequate overall. In relation to key issues from the last inspection, there has been good improvement in the quality of teaching as a result of monitoring and better teaching methods introduced with the literacy and numeracy strategies. Money has been well invested in improving outside areas, which are now secure and provide high quality environments for play and learning. The recent implementation of a performance management policy and setting performance objectives for all teachers is a sound improvement. The governors' report to parents now includes a statement on the school's Special Educational Needs policy, although it lacks detail. Many subjects have been managed inadequately and this has not improved. More widely, there has been a good improvement in the nursery. The standards pupils' achieve and the quality of educational provision are largely similar to that at the time of the last inspection. Pupils' handwriting was poor then but is now very good. However, progress in science is no longer as good. There have been good improvements from the successful implementation of strategies for literacy and numeracy and in the range of accredited courses for senior pupils and students. The partnership with parents is more effective. Resources for learning which were inadequate have not improved sufficiently.

STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by Year R	by Year 6	By Year 9	by Year 11	by Year 13	Key
speaking and listening	B	C	C	C	C	very good A
reading	B	B	B	B	B	good B
writing	B	C	C	C	C	satisfactory C
mathematics	B	B	B	B	B	unsatisfactory D
personal, social and health education	B	B	B	B	B	poor E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B	B	B	B	

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

Generally, the progress pupils make in relation to their individual education plans is positive and reflects in particular the good provision for literacy, numeracy and personal, social and health education. Elsewhere, pupils and students are making satisfactory progress. They achieve reasonably in a range of accredited vocational courses for developing independence skills and preparing for employment. Because assessment is not a formality, it is not possible to determine any trend in pupils' performance over time although there is a rising trend of results in the increasing range of examinations taken by pupils and students. In the nursery, children are making good progress in communicating and acquiring early literacy skills. They grow in confidence and increase their independence. However, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, autism and visual impairment are not achieving as well as they ought because teachers are not sufficiently expert in meeting their needs. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties are underachieving because teachers are often not setting them challenging tasks. Pupils are achieving satisfactorily in English but junior pupils achieve well. For all pupils, achievement is good in reading and it is satisfactory in speaking, listening and writing. Handwriting is very good. Most know a small repertoire of signs, and, with encouragement, use them to communicate. Pupils are achieving well in mathematics. They know the basics of number and measurement and use these effectively in practical ways. In lessons, pupils are achieving well in history and geography and adequately overall in science, physical education and religious education. Achievement is unsatisfactory between years 7 to

9 in science, overall in art and design, design and technology, information and communication technology and French. However, in art and design, pupils with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties are achieving well. In design and technology, there is good progress in food technology and textiles.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils enjoy being at school and fully involve themselves in activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Satisfactory. While most pupils behave well, a small minority of senior pupils and a very few others who have challenging behaviour as a result of their special educational needs, misbehave in lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils and students learn appropriate personal, social and independence skills, which increases their confidence and self esteem.
Attendance	Good. There is very little unauthorised absence.

Good attitudes and behaviour are being supported by good teaching and effective discipline, which leads to pupils concentrating, being interested and behaving well.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 6	Years 7 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Very good	Good	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 very good in the nursery and good overall in the junior, senior and further education departments. The teaching of signing and using symbols throughout the school is satisfactory. English and mathematics are taught well. Teaching is satisfactory in science and good in personal, social and health education. History, geography and physical education are taught well. Within design and technology, food studies and textiles are taught well. There is no unsatisfactory teaching of any significance. Some good and even better teaching is found in most subjects. Methods learned from the national strategies for literacy and numeracy has brought improvements to all teaching. The many good lessons are lively, interesting and enjoyable and pupils are stretched well in new knowledge, understanding and skills. Teachers and their assistants know their pupils well and constantly check during lessons how successfully they are learning. Where teaching had some shortcomings, teachers lacked subject knowledge and a sufficient understanding of pupils' needs. Because there is not good assessment practice, lesson planning sometimes suffers. In a few lessons learning objectives are vague and pupils learn much less as a consequence.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Overall, the provision is good. It is very good in the nursery. Literacy and numeracy are provided for well. The provision of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and those with additional needs is unsatisfactory. The statutory requirements for art and design and a modern foreign language are not met for pupils in years 7 to 9.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Satisfactory
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Overall, provision is good. Pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. Their moral, social and cultural development is good. Pupils grow to be increasingly self-sufficient and confident.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Overall, there is satisfactory provision for the care and welfare of pupils. It is very good in the nursery and further education departments. Other than in the nursery and accredited courses for senior pupils and students, there is very little assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic progress.

Many contacts within the community extend learning opportunities very well. The very good partnership with schools and colleges also provide good opportunities for pupils to mix with others. Information and communication technology is not used sufficiently in most subjects and there are too few extra-curricular activities to broaden and develop pupils' interests.

There is an adequate policy for promoting good behaviour but it is not yet consistently used in dealing with and monitoring instances of misbehaviour.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory. A clear educational direction is developing but the pace of change needs accelerating. Key areas of the school's work have been developed well but several subjects and other areas are not managed as effectively.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governors fulfil a satisfactory role. They are becoming effective in shaping the direction of the school and in knowing its strengths and weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching is good; while some good monitoring of the curriculum occurs it is, overall, not rapidly pinpointing where improvement is required.
The strategic use of resources	The school plans and uses its resources satisfactorily. It takes reasonable steps to ensure it achieves best value.

Staffing and accommodation are satisfactory. Some teachers lack the expertise in some subjects or have limited knowledge of the more complex needs of pupils. Classroom assistants are very effective in their roles. The school's grounds and play areas are impressive. Spending on learning resources has been low. Classroom materials and equipment are inadequate overall.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Their children's personal development• The school's welcome and close contact• The recent improvements to the fabric of the school	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The arrangements for homework

Inspectors agree fully with the positive views of parents. Inspectors see that they are not given sufficiently detailed reports on their children's academic progress and personal development. Parents are right about homework; the school recognises it as an issue and is addressing it.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Overall, pupils throughout the school are achieving satisfactorily and children in the nursery are achieving well. Very generally, the school has maintained this standard since the last inspection. Pupils are learning well in many lessons and this was aided often by teachers and classroom assistants making good on-the-spot assessments of pupils' progress. However, assessment is not, by and large, formalised through the regular recording of progress nor used systematically in planning. Therefore teachers' intentions for what pupils should learn next are sometimes not well-founded, in particular in relation to those with moderate learning difficulties, who are not making the progress expected. In the junior and senior schools, pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties, autism, sensory impairments or challenging behaviour are often not making the progress they could because teachers lack the expertise to deal with their particular needs effectively. The school sets general targets each year for pupils' progress based on annual tests and teachers' assessments. Further testing measures the progress in pupils' literacy skills over a year but the information gained from this is not detailed enough to plan ways of raising standards for all pupils.

2. By the end of Year 11 and during their years in the further education department, pupils and students achieve reasonably in a range of accredited vocational courses concerned with independence skills and preparation for employment. In 2000, six students passed at the first level in the Youth Award Scheme, 16 achieved 1 to 3 modules in Towards Independence and two Year 11 pupils passed in the Transition Challenge award. The accreditation available is not suited entirely to the full range of pupils' attainments and more challenging Certificate of Educational Achievement courses in English and mathematics have been introduced this year for pupils with moderate learning difficulties.

3. In the nursery, children are making good progress in communicating and acquiring early literacy skills, for example, by holding a pencil and making marks. They practice their speaking, signing and listening constantly. This is supported through all their activities and by the continual encouragement of teachers and assistants. Musical activities are used very well to develop language, coordination, signing and counting skills. Children know a few numbers and have the skill to count with them. This is encouraged through their songs and stories like 'The Three Little Pigs'. Children are beginning to find their way around school and know their timetable divides the day into different parts. They have gained confidence in climbing and running and use utensils like a knife and fork. Children know to take turns and happily co-operate, giving more attention to an adult and what is going on around them. They are imaginative in their use of paints and enjoy exploring with different materials.

4. Pupils throughout the school are achieving satisfactorily in English including literacy although here junior pupils are achieving well. The progress overall in speaking and listening skills is adequate. Pupils develop a small repertoire of signs, and, with encouragement, they use them to communicate. This is particularly helpful to those who have not learned to speak. Pupils with severe learning difficulties are beginning to use single picture symbols and some combinations to show what is in their mind. In relation to all pupils, signing and symbols are not used fluently and teachers, while they urge pupils on in these respects, are generally not yet experts in these methods of communication. In terms of speaking, junior pupils with moderate learning difficulties read aloud confidently and by the end of Year 6 they add some appropriate expression to the words. In regard to pupils with moderate learning difficulties in the senior school their powers of speech are less than expected because, overall, teaching approaches involving discussion are not sufficiently prominent in how they learn.

5. Reading is more of a feature. It is lively and pupils achieve well. Junior pupils with moderate learning difficulties read aloud, some quite fluently and all, despite large differences in how well they comprehend, enjoy the story. Those with severe learning difficulties follow stories by signing key words and using props like toy animals to help fit events together. Others apply phonetic skills to deciphering new words. By the end of Year 11, pupils with moderate learning difficulties make successful efforts to unravel words like 'apprehensive' and 'evacuation' although their progress in reading is largely static between Year 9 and 11 because the lack of good assessment means the challenge to do better is not strong. In writing, pupils achieve satisfactorily. The focus on handwriting from the earliest stage means pupils' form letters well by tracing over and copying words. There is not enough use of electronic word processing or computer programmes to encourage extended writing and composition. By the end of Year 11 there is too little variety in the writing of pupils with moderate learning difficulties.

6. Pupils achieve well in numeracy and mathematics. By the end of Year 2, pupils with moderate learning difficulties have the basics of counting and recognising numerals up to 10. By the end of Year 6, these pupils have extended the range of their counting to 20 and have started to add small numbers together and a few subtract with them. They also recognise the value of coins. By the end of Year 9, they know about simple fractions and perform calculations with numbers up to 100. Money is better understood and used in shopping exercises. The youngest pupils with severe learning difficulties recite numbers and over time they gain further awareness so by the end of Year 9, pupils count to 10. They continue consolidating knowledge of basic number and develop skills in using this in practical ways such as working out money and time.

7. More widely, junior pupils with moderate learning difficulties know the hour and eventually by the end of Year 11 read time to the quarter hour. Students in the further education department apply this knowledge to interpreting train and bus timetables and calculate journey times. The youngest pupils begin recognising a few simple shapes like a square or circle. In the senior school they know some three dimensional forms such a sphere and cube, which they compare. By the end of Year 9, pupils with moderate learning difficulties measure in centimetres and also measure angles. By the end of Year 11, they understand and use co-ordinates on a grid; measure changes in temperature and make a graph of their results. In the further education department, students gain a broad knowledge of financial services like banks and hire purchase. They weigh ingredients in cooking and plan meals on a fixed budget. Junior pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are often aware and occasionally interact in response to visual stimulus. When they are older they attempt making choices between different shapes and colours and experience different textures such as rough and smooth.

8. Pupils' achievement in science is satisfactory overall but they make less progress than expected between years 7 and 9 because their skills of investigation do not develop with time as they should. This is largely because the provision overall is unsatisfactory. Junior pupils with moderate learning difficulties distinguish between living and inanimate things. Those with profound and multiple learning difficulties know operating a switch creates an effect and pupils with severe learning difficulties know some reasons why things are hot or cold. Senior pupils with moderate learning difficulties have tested the strength of different bags although they do not link this to everyday applications.

9. In the foundation subjects of the National Curriculum there is a very mixed picture of pupils' achievements. Pupils are making good progress in geography lessons. Junior pupils know about weather and the changing seasons. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties experience hot and cold. Those with moderate learning difficulties know there are different environments and explain what makes a beach polluted. By the end of Year 9, these pupils point out continents on a map and use a geographical vocabulary. There is good progress in history. Junior pupils understand the passing of time and change. Pupils with severe learning difficulties are aware of their timetabled week. Those with moderate learning difficulties know about the Tudors and their voyages of exploration. By the end of Year 9, these pupils know some reasons why the Domesday Book was made. Senior pupils with severe learning difficulties explore Ancient Egyptian jewellery.

10. Pupils' achievement is adequate in music although the teacher's expectations are too unrealistic for some. Junior pupils enjoy singing and know the names of some instruments. They play un-tuned instruments and, by the end of Year 9, perform with a variety of these. Senior pupils sing together in a large group and, divided in two groups, they sing different phrases simultaneously. While pupils are, overall, achieving as expected in physical education, when they are coached by specialists as in learning to play cricket they make good progress. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties achieve well in co-ordinating movements and enjoy wheelchair dancing. In relation to others, a few swim without flotation aids. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties throw and catch a ball. In cricket they strike the moving ball well and Year 11 pupils, playing basketball, use their skills effectively to develop team tactics. Junior pupils make satisfactory progress and senior pupils' progress well in religious education. Junior pupils with severe learning difficulties respond well to the variety of stimuli enriching the story of 'The Three Bears' and get messages about family. By the end of Year 6, other pupils know 'Diwali' is the Hindu Festival of Light. By the end of Year 9, pupils name some world religions and through discussion with a Moslem classmate know about Islamic beliefs. Year 11 pupils extend their knowledge and understanding of Islam by visiting a mosque and listening to the Mullah.

11. In art and design, aspects of design and technology, information and communication technology and French, pupils' progress overall is unsatisfactory although for some pupils and in some aspects of the subjects there is better progress.

12. In art and design, pupils with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties progress as expected. They explore textures, colour and experiment with paints, for example, by making prints. However, at the end of Year 11, pupils' knowledge of colour is not much greater than that of pupils in Year 6.

13. Until very recently there has not been a teacher in design and technology to teach the uses of wood, metal and plastics. Consequently, the workshop had been closed and pupils made no progress. They do achieve well in other parts of the subject such as textiles and food technology. Junior pupils glue boxes together and build with construction kits. They sew and decorate Christmas stockings in textiles. In food technology they make sandwiches and senior pupils in Year 11 plan and prepare a lunch. Very recently, Year 9 pupils used various tools to make a wooden rack for compact disks.

14. Information and communication technology is not used sufficiently across the curriculum and discrete teaching of the subject is relatively new. Senior pupils and students in the further education department explore the Internet and send mail electronically. There is some repetition of what pupils already know, which slows their progress and the overall lack of communication equipment for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties generally hampers their progress.

15. There are many pupils who ought to be taught a foreign language who are not, which makes achievement in French unsatisfactory overall. However, pupils with moderate

learning difficulties are making the expected progress. They know some French words and phrases and, for example, say what colours are or ask for a drink.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16. Pupils are enthusiastic about the school and have positive attitudes towards work. They take a good interest in lessons and involvement in activities. Their good attitudes in lessons are increased by good quality teaching. This encourages pupils' interest and concentration and focuses them on developing independent living and learning skills. The school's good provision overall for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development also promotes good attitudes and extends pupils' understanding of living and working in a community.

17. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory overall. The great majority of pupils behave well in lessons and demonstrate good awareness of the needs of others. They show respect for each other's efforts and are keen to show what they know, celebrating one another's achievements and success. Good relationships support learning and the pupils themselves provide high levels of mutual support. This support includes class-based activities when pupils work together co-operatively, but it also extends into understanding the additional needs of others. When a Year 9 class of pupils with severe learning difficulties explored the geography of the school the ambulant pupils provided support and helped others move around. However, the school has not maintained the overall high standards of behaviour that pupils were displaying at the time of the previous inspection and in part this reflects the increase in admissions of pupils whose special educational needs involves challenging behaviour. The school's records show there have been incidents of unacceptable behaviour some involving bullying and racist remarks, which were dealt with by the school.

18. Outside lessons there is a calm atmosphere. Pupils are polite and friendly to visitors, approaching and greeting them appropriately. Older pupils and students play indoor and outdoor games with a good understanding and acceptance of the rules so that any disagreements are reconciled quickly and fairly. Other pupils socialise in groups, chatting amongst themselves and with the large number of staff who provide good supervision during breaks and lunchtimes. Younger pupils using the outdoor climbing and other play equipment take turns and respond well to adult support and advice on using the apparatus safely. Older and younger pupils eat in separate dining halls and these are good social occasions with a great deal of conversation between staff and pupils and between pupils.

19. The personal development of all pupils throughout the school is good. All the pupils and students learn appropriate personal, social and independence skills and this is reflected in the increase in their confidence and self esteem. As pupils move through the school they are able to undertake increasing levels of responsibility. Each class has an elected representative on the School Council where the most recent issue discussed has been the quality and choice of school meals. Senior pupils help juniors with reading or other classroom tasks. Students in the further education department travel by public transport as part of their courses. Involvement in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme and the local Peak Award develops good relationships with others and also makes pupils aware of environmental and community issues.

20. Pupils' attendance is good which supports most parents' views that their children like coming to school. Very few pupils are late for school.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

21. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. This is a marked improvement since the last inspection when a significant proportion of teaching was unsatisfactory. The regular observation of teachers at work together with the benefits to teaching of introducing literacy and numeracy strategies accounts in large part for this success.

22. Good and better teaching is now found in the large majority of subjects and this is often accompanied by good quality learning. The strong features common to good teaching are related to what teachers have brought to their classroom practice from their training on using the national strategies for literacy and numeracy. The teaching of literacy is good, which also involves the use of signing and symbols. In one geography lesson, for example, non-verbal pupils had the opportunity to answer questions using signs and symbols, which showed they had learned about the hot and cold parts of the world. Similarly, opportunities for reading aloud, either individually or together and writing are common in many lessons. Numeracy is taught very well and in an excellent lesson, junior pupils started briskly by reciting numbers and, with very good support from classroom assistants, managed the thorough challenge of getting right answers to 'adding-up' problems.

23. Lesson time is used well and there is a clear structure of activities focused on learning that moves pupils forward well in terms of their knowledge, skills and understanding. In an excellent English lesson, pupils with severe learning difficulties began with a lively exchange on what had happened so far in Roald Dahl's story 'The Twits'. This renewed their interest and excitement and when they moved into small groups all worked very productively, learning new vocabulary and signs to describe the different rooms in a house. Careful thought is given to making activities interesting and enjoyable leading to very imaginative use of well-varied resources. A brilliant feature of story-book work is how teachers employ many props like toy animals or paper rain to bring words and stories to life, which consolidates pupils' understanding of characters and plots. This technique is used to good effect in teaching other subjects, for example, in history the teacher used a model of a Victorian house to help pupils develop a good understanding of "then and now". This created great interest and enthusiasm.

24. In good lessons, teachers know their pupils well and generally have a good knowledge of the subject. It is obvious from the interactions between teachers, classroom assistants and the pupils that there are often good informal assessments of what is being learnt. This is achieved primarily by asking questions and testing if pupils have learned something new, for example, do they remember new signs or can they explain the behaviour of the Iron Man. This is helped when teachers bring their class together before the end of the lesson to go through the material and get a flavour of what pupils' know and can do. They often use this knowledge effectively to divide whole groups in relation to their abilities into smaller numbers for part of a lesson and set appropriately challenging work. The combination of short spells of whole class work and activities in small groups sets a lively pace and provides the variety to help pupils sustain their concentration and, largely, they do this well. Teachers and classroom assistants work well together. The success of much small group work can be attributed to this effective partnership and to the knowledge and skills of the teachers' assistants.

25. Teaching and learning are very good for the children in the nursery. Here, planning of lessons has considerable clarity and in the course of activities a variety of learning objectives exist and are pursued effectively, enabling children to achieve widely. So, for example, children are constantly developing their language skills, signing, reading and counting. This succeeds because teachers have a very good grasp of the Early Learning Goals contained in the curriculum for pre-school age children. Also, teachers and their assistants know and relate to children very well and they work very effectively together to promote very good learning. Children become very good communicators using speech, signing or electronic equipment, like switches, to signal a response. Because of this their confidence and independence grows and they are prepared to attempt something new.

26. The features that make teaching and learning less successful relates to some insecure subject knowledge or understanding of pupils' specific special educational needs. Very occasionally, in science, specifically in years 7 to 9, it leads to pupils missing opportunities for experimenting and learning the skills of scientific investigation. In music,

because the teacher has a poor grasp of pupils' special educational needs and their levels of attainment, planning for lessons is over-ambitious and the language used by the teacher too technical, which stops pupils learning at the appropriate pace.

27. Where there are pupils with additional special educational needs like autism, sensory impairments and challenging behaviour in class-groups, teachers are not planning effective strategies for including them in learning as well as they do for many other pupils. Some training to address specific special educational needs has occurred but this is not being brought into effect in the classroom. While many teachers and their assistants build a good knowledge of what pupils know and can do, this is not formalised in regular assessment and recording. This leads sometimes to learning objectives being vague and lessons activities lacking sufficient challenge. As a result, the quality of learning of pupils with moderate learning difficulties, particularly those of secondary age, at times suffers as a consequence. Occasionally, lessons were less good because a few pupils' misbehaviour was not managed and here teachers did not have good strategies for maintaining good discipline.

HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?

28. Overall, the quality and range of learning opportunities are good and they are very good in the nursery. There is an appropriate stress placed on literacy, numeracy, personal, social and health education, information and communication technology and physical education in meeting the special educational needs of pupils. While in most of these areas the provision is good it is unsatisfactory in information and communication technology, which is not promoted sufficiently throughout the curriculum. However, the school has made good progress with the implementation of the literacy and numeracy strategies, which are largely adapted well to meet the needs of the majority of pupils. In English, there is good emphasis on developing signing and using picture symbols to help pupils communicate, which is of particular benefit to pupils with severe learning difficulties. A good variety of literature, well-matched to pupils' age and interests is used to teach reading. However, the provision for writing gives more emphasis to the development of handwriting than to extending pupils' skills in writing stories, reports and letters. In mathematics, there is an appropriate emphasis on number work, with older pupils also focussing on the practical applications of number. There is also a reasonable amount of attention to literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects.

29. Pupils' personal development is promoted well through the personal, social and health education curriculum, which covers a good range of relevant topics. These become more diverse as pupils enter the senior department and topics such as alcohol are discussed very sensitively but realistically. It helps to prepare pupils well for life after school and is aimed at giving them confidence to deal with everyday issues. Provision for careers and work related education is good and there is close liaison with the careers adviser. In Year 8, pupils begin to learn about career choices and in Year 9, they and their parents attend a careers interview, at which plans for the future are agreed. There is a programme of well planned work experience mainly for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. There is less opportunity for the other pupils who could gain experience by, for example, helping in the school environment as a stepping stone to work outside.

30. Since the last inspection there has been a good improvement in the range of courses and accreditation for pupils in Year 10 and 11 and students in the further education department. This year for the first time, pupils with moderate learning difficulties have the opportunity to take a Certificate of Achievement in English and mathematics. They also study for City and Guilds certificates in literacy and numeracy. All of these courses go some way towards a level of work more appropriate to their attainments. In addition, pupils are able to take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and the Peak Award Scheme, participating in activities such as horse care, boat care, and table tennis.

31. The community contributes very well to pupils' learning and has provided very good support for pupils' developing their social skills and independence. Many visits are made by pupils to the local supermarkets, shops, and library. Senior pupils and students have visited the Muslim Association and a neighbouring church as part of their Youth Award Scheme courses. They also entertain people invited to school. The Derbyshire String Quartet, a poet and a storyteller have contributed to pupils learning. Many local firms, through the Education Business Partnership, have sponsored the creation of the school's sensory garden and the outdoor play areas. Local businesses provide pupils' work experience placements, for example, shops and garden centres. People have come to school to talk about their jobs and pupils have visited police and fire stations to see how they work. The local football club has provided pupils with sports coaching.

32. Links with schools and colleges are very good. A number of pupils attend courses at local further education colleges such as bricklaying, joinery, sport and leisure, and metal work. However, these links are limited mainly to pupils with moderate learning difficulties as the colleges have no provision for others. However, a nearby training centre is used for activities such as dance and drama and pupils who need hydrotherapy use the pool at Ash Green hospital. The school has very good links with a number of local primary schools. These give opportunities to some pupils to attend classes in primary schools as well as opportunities for primary school pupils to visit and take part in lessons. A teacher, responsible for developing closer links between schools, offers advice to schools on meeting the needs of their pupils with special educational needs.

33. The special educational needs of most pupils are met adequately and the needs of children in the nursery are met very well. However, the needs of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and the small number of others with additional special educational needs are not addressed effectively because there is not sufficient expertise to plan for them appropriately. While the pre-National Curriculum programme for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties is relevant, appropriate learning objectives are not always drawn from it. These pupils also do not join others for the meal at lunchtime and miss that social interaction. Pupils with autism are not given an effective regime that holds their attention and sustains their efforts, which leads occasionally to some disruption in classes. For pupils with sensory impairments not enough attention is paid to how provide for them in terms of how they are best seated in classrooms and involved in learning.

34. The school's curriculum meets most statutory requirements, but not in relation to a modern foreign language and art and design. In these and some other subjects, because they are not managed effectively, an appropriate range of learning opportunities has not been developed satisfactorily. In science, there is insufficient investigative work and the amount of time allocated to teaching it is very low. While in design and technology there is satisfactory provision for food technology and textiles, there has been until very recently very little opportunity for pupils to work with materials like wood, metal and plastics. Overall, the time for teaching the senior pupils is less than the recommended hours.

Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

35. There is good provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There is time for a thought for the day, which is often effective in helping pupils reflect on and discuss topics. For instance, junior pupils discussed how they helped their grandparents and senior pupils considered how the thoughtless use of words hurt the feelings of others. They also planned ways they could raise donations for a hospital. They listen to the opinions of others and work as a member of a group in many lessons, for example, preparing a meal and in a game of cricket. During meals, pupils are well-mannered and confidently discuss issues with members of staff. They play well together and enjoy social games. Religious Education and assemblies provide reasonable opportunities for the pupils' spiritual development. Senior pupils discuss the reason for marriage and compare the ceremony in the Christian and Hindu faiths. Students in the further education department paid

a visit to a mosque where the Mullah spoke about Islam. A Methodist minister led a senior school assembly and a pupil lit a candle as a symbol of peace.

36. Cultural development is promoted well in many subjects. In music, for example, pupils have listened to Zimbabwean visitors playing African drums. Students in the further education department, as part of their ASDAN wider world studies have made electronic mailing links with schools in other countries. Expressions of interest have returned from a school in Namibia and one in France. In literacy lessons pupils read the traditional Russian folk tale, Peter and the Wolf and Native American tales. In music lessons pupils consider which instruments are used to portray the characters in Peter and the Wolf.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

37. Since the last inspection, the educational and personal support and guidance for pupils has remained adequate. The school promotes good attitudes and there is a positive and caring atmosphere. Parents are very pleased with the improvements in the condition, cleanliness and security of the school. The school gives satisfactory attention to the health and safety of its pupils and staff. Procedures for child protection are adequate. The deputy head teacher is a trained child protection co-ordinator and ensures that all staff are aware of the procedures and their responsibilities. She has a good understanding of the school's responsibilities towards pupils who are looked after and maintains appropriate records. The school nurse supports all pupils very well and has begun to implement more rigorous procedures for medication and other aspects of pupils' welfare. There are also enough staff trained in first aid. The school is well supported by medical specialists who visit regularly for clinics and to discuss concerns with parents. The school has recently been awarded the Healthy Schools Award as a result of its work to improve the environment and the provision of personal, social and health education in the curriculum.

38. There are sound procedures in place to record and monitor pupils' attendance and to follow up any unexplained absences.

39. Monitoring and promoting good behaviour is satisfactory. Members of staff have good relationships with pupils, are good role-models for them and set clear expectations of appropriate behaviour. Pupils value the systems of rewards and merits, appropriate to their age, and these are effective in encouraging improvement in attitudes and behaviour. However, there are inconsistencies in how some manage pupils' behaviour and the policy of positive praise is not always followed. Members of staff have had preliminary training in managing behaviour and are using a new system to record incidents. However, there has been no monitoring of how well these are being used and the impact that they are having on improving behaviour. There are individual behaviour plans for pupils who need them and the school recognises that staff needs training in drawing up these so that the strategies devised are precise, shared with parents and monitored for effectiveness.

40. Overall, the procedures for assessing pupils' progress are unsatisfactory. There are good systems for assessing children in the nursery and students in the further education department but the assessment of all other pupils is left largely to individual teachers and this gives rise to inconsistency. In the absence of systems to moderate assessments, teachers' grasp of standards is insecure. The school has recognised assessment as an area for development and has included it in the school development plan with a commitment to establishing criteria for creating consistency in teacher assessments by summer 2002. Procedures for monitoring the taught programme are satisfactory and undertaken regularly but the monitoring of the progress pupils make is not yet in place. Similarly assessment procedures have not been introduced but all staff know pupils very well and informally note progress. Some pupils have personal, social and health education targets within their individual education plans and this helps to track progress in specific areas.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

41. The school's partnership with parents is good. Since the last inspection, it has improved its links with parents and they are pleased with what the school provides for their children. Many parents contribute well to their children's learning and make a good contribution to the work of the school. The school is involving parents well in their children's education and, for example, it has started a parents' support group. There are occasional courses for parents where, for instance, they learn signing and these are well attended. The school seeks the views of parents and uses questionnaires to canvass them. It has surveyed new parents to get their impressions on the welcome they receive and the information they are given. Links with parents of senior pupils are being developed well by the careers teacher and careers advisor. This helps parents to understand what is available to their children in terms of work experience, college studies or placements in other settings.

42. The quality of information provided for parents is satisfactory. Parents value the daily message book for regular communications between them and school, which helps them discuss the school day with their children. The recent introduction of curriculum bulletins is also good feature, helping parents further to understand what their children are learning. They appreciate the regular newsletters and parents' evenings and feel that the annual reviews are informative. On the whole, school documentation generally is well presented and gives clear information about the school and its organisation. The school brochure won the Times Educational Supplement award as the best in the special school category. However, parents do not receive sufficiently detailed written information about their children's academic progress. There is very little contained in reports about what pupils know, understand and can do as teachers are often not systematic in gathering this information.

43. The school is committed completely to encouraging parents' participation in school life and use a home-school agreement to help boost their children's learning. The school encourages parents to visit the school frequently and support its work. Although not many are able to help regularly in school, parents give good support to fundraising activities, concerts and coffee mornings. Through the concerted effort of parents, the school has been very fortunate in raising a substantial sum of money to improve the playground facilities.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

44. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The headship changed four years ago and since the last inspection. A new deputy head teacher was appointed just less than a year ago. This has created an impetus for change and, to date, an acceptable improvement in the management of the school. The considerable improvement to the school grounds is a clear manifestation of this as is the fundraising that supported it. The head teacher has a clear educational direction and has identified a core provision for meeting the school's wide range of special educational needs based on literacy, numeracy, personal, social and health education, information and communication technology and physical education. Improvement in these areas has been a priority in the last few years and most are now developed successfully. There has also been some recent regrouping of pupils along the lines of their predominant learning difficulties, which provides the opportunity for more focused teaching. The school has achieved Investors in People status and towards this the head teacher re-organised the senior management structure, which is now improving the communications between all staff.

45. The monitoring of the school's work has improved. It was a considerable weakness at the time of the last inspection and is now satisfactory. The approach taken in setting up literacy and numeracy strategies is a good example of well-managed and systematic monitoring and accounts for the effectiveness of these core parts of the curriculum. The respective co-ordinators have well-defined roles for scrutinising teacher's planning and observing their teaching, resulting in them giving helpful support and guidance. The

monitoring of teaching by senior managers more generally is also good and has led to a good overall improvement in quality. However, the school is not finding out as effectively how well it meets the needs of its different groups of pupils. Recent testing of pupils with moderate learning difficulties told the school that they were underachieving and they have this year introduced accredited courses to raise expectations. Beyond this, there is not enough information gathered and action taken to improve the work in classrooms towards better meeting the needs of these pupils, those with profound and multiple learning difficulties and others with sensory impairments, autism or challenging behaviour.

46. The allocation of management responsibilities is unsatisfactory and has not improved sufficiently since the last inspection when it was ineffective. As a consequence, the school's educational direction, its aims and priorities are being hampered and slow to develop. There remain some substantial impediments to the effective management of many subjects of the curriculum. This is either because there is no-one in a co-ordinating role or the co-ordinator does not spend the time away from teaching effectively for management tasks. Likewise, other key areas such as assessment, the provision for the range of special educational needs do not have enough direct oversight.

47. The governing body are doing as well as can be expected given that many governors are a fairly new into their role. At the time of the last inspection the governing body as constituted then was also relatively new and therefore in the intervening time there has not been sufficient consolidation in terms of helping the school in its direction and knowing how effective the school is. However, current governors are active; they meet once every term and the committees overseeing such things as finance or personnel meet three times each term. The chairperson and chairs of each of the committees understand their responsibilities and know their role in relation to the school. They have established satisfactorily a performance management process for the school and all teachers now have performance objectives. The governors are learning about the work of the school from the regular head teacher's reports, monitoring the strategic plan and their visits. While the governing body fulfils most of its statutory responsibilities adequately, they do not in relation to art and design and a modern foreign language.

48. Overall, the use of all of the resources available to the school is satisfactory. The school development plan and the strategic planning process work reasonably well by ensuring that priorities are identified and money is spent in achieving them. Best value is achieved in terms of suppliers' price and their quality of service to the school but judging best value in terms of the impact of spending on pupils' learning is at an early stage of development. The school's budget is closely monitored and accurate information is readily available to the head teacher and governors. The additional funding received by the school in relation to a wide range of national educational initiatives is used satisfactorily. By and large the priorities for each area in the current plan reflect the inspection team's view of where the school needs to improve. The mechanisms for action are clear. Each member of the management team responsible for seeing through a development writes a good action plan, which has led, for example, to the setting up effective strategies for literacy and numeracy and to significant improvements in the school grounds. The use of new technology within the administration of the school is adequate and there is one good development using multi media presentations with a large touch sensitive screen to deliver lessons. Otherwise, the use of information and communication technology in classrooms is less than expected.

49. Overall, the school has sufficient teachers. They are very well supported by a good number of skilled classroom assistants. The school's programme of professional development for all staff has contributed significantly to the improvement of teaching. In particular, the school's training on literacy and numeracy has brought clear benefits in terms of lesson structure and pace. There has been some recent training for teachers on using information and communication technology although its impact is yet to be felt in classrooms. There have been some difficulties in securing experienced teachers in some curriculum areas, which constrains how well pupils' achieve in science, some areas of design and

technology and a modern foreign language. There is a similar situation in relation to teaching secondary age pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

50. The school's accommodation is satisfactory and it has improved significantly in some parts since the last inspection. A vigorous programme of improvement to the external environment has created excellently designed areas for play, social and leisure activities which enrich pupils' and students' experience. A committee of governors is actively involved in the planning for further improvements to interior decoration and repair. The planned movement of teaching areas, in particular for food technology from the upper floor is an early priority as is the restoration of the design and technology workshop. The school has no specialist facilities for the teaching of science, art and music. Accommodation and equipment designed to meet the range needs for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties is inadequate.

51. Resources for learning remain unsatisfactory in most areas of the curriculum. Spending here has been low, rising to average in the current year, but has not yet overcome the limitations identified in the last report. The exceptions are English and mathematics, where the focus on these subjects has improved the quality and range of teaching and learning materials. Nursery junior and senior classrooms are well equipped but the two classes for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties need significant investment in learning resources and in a range of communications equipment.

52. Improvements to the small library area for primary pupils are evident but the library for senior pupils remains unsatisfactory both in terms of its cramped space in an access area and in terms of the quality and range of books. Very few are appropriate to the students' age, interests and reading abilities. Overall, the school does not yet provide a book-rich environment or a range of attractive and accessible resources to support personal learning and interests.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The governors and head teacher should accelerate the trend of improvement already established to ensure they quickly complete the foundation of educational provision and resources needed to have a more effective school. Do this by dealing with:

- (1) Extending the good features of subject management found in the Nursery, English and mathematics to all other subjects to ensure, where necessary, provision is improved in science and in most foundation subjects of the National Curriculum throughout the school.
(See paragraphs 45, 62, 68, 79, 85, 86, 91, 95, 99, 103, 111 and 120)
- (2) Securing an accurate and detailed picture of what all pupils and students know, understand and can do as a consequence of what they have been taught. Do this by teachers and their assistants, under the direction of the senior management:
 - i) putting in place effective procedures for assessing and recording pupils' progress in all areas of their curriculum where procedures are not already effective
 - ii) using the information from all assessments to: monitor, evaluate and report on pupils' gains in knowledge, skills and understanding: to estimate future gains, set targets for individuals and groups accordingly and report all of this to parents
(See paragraphs 1, 27, 40, 46, 67, 68, 85, 95, 99, 103, 106, 112 and 127)
- (3) Raising the standards achieved by pupils with moderate learning difficulties by using assessment information and evaluations to plan appropriate and more challenging learning opportunities.
(See paragraphs 1, 4, 5, 8, 27, 45, 63, 64, 66, 68, and 80)
- (4) Improving the provision for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, autism, sensory impairments and challenging behaviour by:
 - i) further developing the expertise and practice of the teachers and classroom assistants in meeting effectively all of these pupils' special educational needs
 - ii) providing the learning resources and any specialised equipment pupils need in order to access all their learning opportunities and achieve
 - iii) ensuring all pupils who require them have individual behaviour plans and that all teachers and classroom assistants use the school's behaviour management strategies consistently for implementing them.
(See paragraphs 26, 27, 33, 46, 51, 62, 67, 95, and 116)
- (5) Meeting the statutory requirements for teaching art and design and a modern foreign language
(See paragraphs 90 and 108)
- (6) Increasing the time given to teaching science and the overall teaching time for pupils in the senior school to better match the times recommended nationally.
(See paragraphs 34 and 83)
- (7) Extending the use of information and communication technology across the curriculum.
(See paragraphs 11, 28, 48, 68, 79, 99, 103 and 106)

Key issues 1, 2, 3 and 7 above are included in the current school development plan

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

104

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

55

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	6	13	52	28	1	0	0
Percentage	6.0	13.0	52.0	28.0	1.0	0.0	0.0

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

No of pupils

Number of pupils on the school's roll

178

Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals

63

English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language

2

Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission

17

Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving

3

Attendance

Authorised absence

%

School data

7.5

Unauthorised absence

%

School data

0.2

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	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	164
Any other minority ethnic group	

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	9	0
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: UF – Y14

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	19.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	9
Average class size	11

Education support staff: UF – Y14

Total number of education support staff	35
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1139

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
	£
Total income	1636911
Total expenditure	1650405
Expenditure per pupil	9272
Balance brought forward from previous year	88420
Balance carried forward to next year	74926

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4.4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4.6
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	178
Number of questionnaires returned	72

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	69	26	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	61	33	1	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	46	42	8	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	33	33	11	4	8
The teaching is good.	71	25	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	67	26	4	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	82	17	1	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	28	0	0	1
The school works closely with parents.	61	31	7	0	1
The school is well led and managed.	75	18	4	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	67	24	1	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	50	29	4	0	13

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Overall, parents are very pleased with what the school provides and are happy with the progress made by their children. They think the school sets high expectations for pupils and teaches them well. They value highly how easy it is to keep in contact with of the school and how it responds to their concerns. Where parents have a very few concerns it relates to areas already recognised and being addressed by the school such as in the arrangements for homework.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

53. The nursery was considered to be satisfactory at the time of the previous inspection, with some good aspects. There has been a good improvement overall and the nursery is now very good.

Communication, language and literacy

54. Children make good progress in all of the areas of learning. Progress is especially good in learning how to understand other people, and in expressing themselves in different ways. The higher attaining children begin to say appropriate words when asking for things, when telling adults what they have been doing, or when answering questions; and they try to echo the words of songs and rhymes. Many children will make the signs for things they want, or during singing and story times, and they understand many of the signs and gestures that staff make. They start to learn to hold a pencil, pen and crayon as part of learning to write, and they will make circular marks as well as scribble colouring on pictures and plain paper. They all learn to use electronic switches in different lessons, so that when they touch the large, bright switch, it produces a sentence such as "Good morning everyone", or, "I'll huff and I'll puff and I'll blow your house down." Children practise and reinforce their speaking and listening skills in lessons all day, every day, with staff making great efforts to speak clearly, use signing, repeat words, and use songs and rhymes to reinforce the learning.

Mathematical development

55. Children are beginning to develop good awareness of numbers and counting through many different activities using table-top toys and games, pairs of toys such as farm animals and cars, and in stories and rhymes. A recent major story theme is "The Three Little Pigs", which includes a lot of early counting, and repeating the first three numbers; and the songs they sing often include numbers and counting, such as "Ten Fat Sausages", "This Old Man" and "Baa Baa Black Sheep". Children experience different textures, such as when making a bowl of fruit from paper, foam, card and felt, and they are encouraged to count the pieces of fruit as they stick them down. They learn about the shape and other properties of things around them, such as being round, fat, long, big or small.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

56. Their understanding of the world around them increases well. They learn how to find their way around the spacious classroom area for their different lessons, and to move around the school, perhaps to the sensory room, or to the hall for assemblies or games and physical education. Children are taught to be aware of hot and cold, and the weather, and how to dress for the rain or the sun. They use timetables made of symbols to learn that days are made up of time periods and different activities; and they learn that different things happen on different days, such as going to the sensory room, physical activities or assemblies. They play with toys, and handle them with increasing sureness. They explore different textures and surfaces, learning about hard and soft, wet and dry, or rough and smooth, for instance.

Physical development

57. Children gain confidence in their physical skills well. They become more aware of their own bodies, and how to move around the room, and around the apparatus that is set up in the hall each week. They play on the large equipment that is in their play area, climbing up and down stairs and ramps, and using the slides. They also use the large plastic vehicles in their play area. They learn to pick up small things, like little toys, forks and spoons, brushes,

pens and glue sticks; they begin to hold them properly, use them, and place them back down again in the proper place. They use one hand or both hands when holding bigger things, and when drinking, for instance, out of two-handled cups.

Personal, social and emotional development

58. Their learning of social skills is also good. They learn to take turns, for example, when using an electronic switch at "hello" time or playing a drum in a music lesson. They sit together very well, will hold hands when singing, and join in group activities such as singing and story time as a very sociable group, all trying to sign together, or listening to the story. They learn to pay attention to what is being said to them, and they will stick at a task for increasingly long periods. They know who their teachers and other staff are, and the more able children will look at other children when their names are mentioned, or will look up when their own name is called. Gradually, they gain confidence in all kinds of activities, and in their general taking part in the lessons, especially the ones that become routine and familiar.

Creative development

59. Children have a good start to their creative development. They explore textures, shapes and colours in art lessons, using paints, crayons and small stick-on pieces of materials to make patterns and pictures - such as an underwater scene, or a dish of fruit. They have many activities that help their musical awareness to develop, from singing and instrument-playing in the nursery area, to assemblies, and joining in with a group of African musicians that gave a performance for the school. The musical sessions are also used very well in developing children's language, coordination, signing and counting skills.

60. The quality of teaching in each area of learning is very good. During the inspection it varied from good to excellent. The teachers plan their lessons very clearly, with detailed aims for what they want the children to learn, and the activities that will be undertaken. They use a wide range of high quality equipment (including computers and other electronic equipment) very well to make the learning lively, and to keep the children interested and paying attention. Some good resources are home-made or are adapted to the needs of particular lessons. Each lesson is a combination of several different aims; if the main aim is language development, for example, there may also be a lot of counting and number work, and singing and rhyme chanting. One typically very good lesson, for instance, had a language and communication focus, based around the story of "The Three Little Pigs". The teacher had planned and organised the lesson very well, and used a "Big Book" to go through the story. The children were very well encouraged to echo their favourite words and phrases, and to make the signs and gestures. They also were keen to use the Big Mack switch each time the wolf said, "I'll huff and I'll puff..." The teacher used three toy buildings with toy pigs, as well as a big wall display, to illustrate each part of the story. There were several good opportunities to count to three, and the session ended with everyone singing other songs with "three" in them, such as "Baa Baa Black Sheep", "Wind the Bobbin", and "Stepping Stones". The children were enthralled, excited, and keen to join in, make the signs, and say the key words.

61. The teachers, and support assistants work very well together as a team. They know the children very well, and have a very good knowledge of the subjects they are teaching. For example, teachers speak to the children very clearly, and use signing very naturally, expecting and encouraging the children to respond with their own speech or signs whenever possible. This leads children to increasing their understanding what is being said to them. In time it becomes easier for them to learn to speak and to sign and they gain confidence that they will be understood themselves. The children's behaviour is managed very well, as they are not used to sitting still for a time, or being quiet and listening. Teachers and assistants have many different approaches, which are effective in persuading children to cooperate, and take a full part in lessons. Children are given every encouragement to have a go and try to do things for themselves. In only one lesson did staff help the children a little too much with gluing shapes down. Otherwise, the lessons have been very active learning experiences for

the children, very well supported by the whole teaching approach and the balance of well-chosen and well-organised activities each day.

62. The nursery is led and managed very well. The teachers make very clear and detailed plans of what is to be taught in the long term, based on a combination of several official and appropriate schemes, and they develop these particularly well into weekly themes and daily lessons. Teachers develop a very clear picture of each child and the progress they are making, and they use it very well to decide on the priorities for the next term. Staff have very good relationships with parents, and with a nearby playgroup and a nursery where several of the children go for lessons each week. The accommodation and resources are very good, with two bright and spacious rooms that have separate toileting facilities; an exciting playground; newly carpeted areas as well as tiled areas for messy activities; separate “corners” for different activities; and a good range of large and small equipment, games, toys and apparatus. The teachers have a clear plan of how they wish to see the nursery develop in the future.

ENGLISH

63. Overall, pupils of all ages are achieving satisfactorily and pupils in the junior school are achieving well. The implementation of a good literacy strategy, including good training in teaching literacy, has helped teachers approach lessons more effectively. While some teachers have a good idea of what their pupils can do, more generally, they are not systematically assessing pupils’ learning and therefore sometimes not planning appropriate and challenging work. This is affecting pupils with moderate learning difficulties, some of who underachieve and pupils with additional needs such as autism or sensory impairments. The majority of primary age pupils are achieving well as it is here that benefits of the school’s literacy strategy are most felt. However, those primary age pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties achieve less than others. They show good awareness and interact well when the teacher and assistants move around them singing the ‘good-morning’ song. They are much less forthcoming in other class activities, which are not planned effectively to extend pupils’ learning. Students in the further education department achieve well as a result of well structured courses leading to qualifications and based on regular assessments of their attainment.

64. Pupils are achieving satisfactorily developing the skills of speaking and listening. Some communicate verbally while others, because of the severity of their special educational needs, know frequently used signs and symbols. These pupils use a small repertoire of signs to communicate usually following some prompting. By the end of Year 2 this is being encouraged effectively by the teacher and classroom assistants. Most pupils listen to and respond well to stories. Higher attaining pupils read aloud and sometimes accompany this with signs. Lively reading of ‘Polar Bear, Polar Bear’ by the teacher of a class of Year 3 and 4 pupils gets them engaged well in making the sounds and gestures representing the all of the animals in the story. Year 5 pupils know that words in bold type in the ‘Big Book’, like “**very** angry” should be stressed to add expression to their reading. By the end of Year 9, pupils continue to listen with enjoyment as stories are read. The higher attaining pupils read aloud confidently either as individuals or in unison when the opportunity is given. However, these pupils, from Year 7 up to the end of Year 11, are often not engaged enough through a developed discussion to stretch their speaking skills adequately or to build their confidence to contribute and debate. Nevertheless, in one lesson for Year 10 and 11 pupils, group work on developing a script for a play, based on a Native American tale, led to lively discussion and performances.

65. Pupils are achieving well in reading and enjoy a good variety of fiction and non-fiction in class. The whole-group reading activity at the beginning of the literacy hour in all classes up to the end of Year 11 is consistently the strongest feature in English. Primary age pupils are drawn effectively into participating in stories through signing or reading the words. By asking questions and involving pupils in the stories, teachers get a lot in terms of their pupils

using phonetic skills to decipher key words, read sentences and by acting the animals in 'Farmer Duck' pupils deepen their understanding of the story. In a class of Year 3 and 4 pupils, some read simple sentences and pick out the correct word from a list of similar looking words. Lower attaining pupils match letters and their sounds to symbols, for example a C to the picture of a crane. Before they are of secondary age, higher attaining pupils read passages from Jack and the Beanstalk fluently and include some basic signing of key words. Lower attaining pupils know the story and select picture symbols that show they are following it. By the end of Year 9, higher attaining pupils read fluently a passage from the beginning of 'The Iron Man', form a good understanding of the story and suggest how it might develop. By the end of Year 11, the skills of reading have sharpened slightly, for example, higher attaining pupils decipher new words like 'evacuation' and 'apprehensive' by breaking down and blending the different sounds. However, in studying 'The Mystery of the Mary Celeste' they are reading passages of the same complexity as Year 9 pupils and develop a similarly detailed understanding of story lines. Some of the higher attaining pupils in Year 10 and 11 are reading novels in addition to the stories required for lessons. In the further education department, students apply their reading skills to searching for information, for example in a dictionary, Yellow Pages and in advertisements for jobs.

66. Overall, achievement in writing is satisfactory. The quality of pupils' handwriting throughout the school is very good. However, the amount of electronic word processing used by pupils for writing and presenting their work is unsatisfactory. By Year 6, higher attaining pupils use a computer keyboard to type words, select and move objects on the computer screen. There is little evidence of pupils writing at length using word processing except among some Year 11 pupils with moderate learning difficulties. The youngest pupils of primary age and, more widely, pupils with severe learning difficulties throughout the school begin forming letter shapes by tracing their outlines and gradually move onto writing letters freehand and some know where a full stop or capital letter goes. Pupils at a pre-writing stage use a pencil to make controlled marks, for example, shading in an area carefully or pick and arrange picture symbols. By the end of Year 9, pupils with moderate learning difficulties are not achieving as well as they should in writing because lesson tasks are unchallenging and not matched to they already know and can do. Their range of writing is limited and largely made up of short stories based on the theme of their reading. Writing goes slightly further in Year 10 and 11 where there are some good examples of extended imaginative writing and poetry. In the further education department students write for a wide variety of practical purposes such as filling in forms, collecting and organising information.

67. Teaching and learning is good overall. Most teachers are successful in applying approaches drawn from the National Literacy Strategy and this has improved much of the teaching, which now occasionally reaches the very good and excellent in terms of pupils' learning. For example, in a class of Year 7 and Year 9 pupils who have severe learning difficulties the teacher's very detailed knowledge of pupils' abilities leads to effective planning of a variety of activities that provide all-round challenges. A group who could speak use their own words describe what the different rooms in a house are and learn about the loft while others work with assistants learning the signs for garden, house and roof and trying hard to verbalise these. Teachers' assistants are invariably very effective in their support of individual pupils and taking charge of smaller groups. Generally, pupils find their English lessons enjoyable and they invest their work with good efforts. As a consequence discipline in lessons and the pace of work is mostly good. While no teaching seen was unsatisfactory, less successful lessons resulted from a lack of assessments of pupils' learning. This gives rise to some ineffective planning of activities and insufficient awareness of pupils' different learning needs. In an otherwise good lesson involving mainly Year 5 pupils with moderate learning difficulties, two autistic pupils did not take part in reading with the group and caused distractions. There was no plan of how to involve them and they learned very little as a consequence. Otherwise, reading stories together is the most successful part of English lessons. Teachers are expert at enlivening text and bringing in a rich variety of props to achieve this. Stories with animals, for example, involve young pupils roaring like a lion or quacking like a duck, which brings the experience of the story to life. They gain an

understanding of what the story is about and it opens their imaginations very effectively. The subject matter of reading is well varied and develops in appropriateness as pupils get older. In a good lesson for Year 10 and 11 pupils a multi-media presentation projected onto a large touch sensitive screen provided an excellent vehicle for reading about the Mary Celeste, learning new words and their meaning and discussing the mystery. This held pupils' attention very well. But insufficient appreciation of pupils' reading skills and a lack of thorough planning resulted in some having to attempt passages that were too hard or search for words in the dictionary that were difficult to find. The teaching in the further education department that supports students' literacy is based on well planned and assessed vocational courses through which students are learning effectively the use of English in every day situations.

68. Management of English is good, which has led to a satisfactory improvement in the subject since the last inspection. The development of teaching literacy is producing successes. The opportunity provided for the co-ordinator to examine each teacher's planning and to observe them teaching has led towards greater consistency in provision across the school. However, it has not tackled the very patchy use of information and communication technology in English or the poor stock of books, particularly in the library for secondary age pupils. This is to do with the co-ordinator's role not being defined comprehensively enough so that she has a complete overview and accountability for all the provision for English. The introduction of tests of pupils' literacy skills, which also show progress over time, while infrequent, have raised concerns about the underachievement of pupils with moderate learning difficulties. This has spurred the school to introduce a certificate of achievement course this year for those pupils, which can help raise expectations. Overall, the procedures for assessing pupils' progress are unsatisfactory as most teachers are not making regular enough measures and records of pupils' achievements. Consequently, their planning of what pupils should learn for one week to the next is often inadequately informed.

MATHEMATICS

69. Pupils make good progress and they achieve well. This was also the situation at the time of the previous inspection.

70. Junior pupils' long-term progress, like the teaching and the learning in individual lessons, is good overall, but ranging from satisfactory to excellent. Senior pupils' progress, teaching and learning are also good, and with some very good aspects.

71. After a good start in the nursery, pupils continue to develop skills well in the junior school. By the end of Year 2, many of the pupils with moderate learning difficulties can count to ten, point to a given number, recognise a shape such as a circle or a square, and can tell the time to the nearest hour, especially when the situation is about arriving in school, dinner time, or home time. They understand concepts such as "inside", "behind", "on top" and "under", and can match similar objects and pictures. The pupils with severe learning difficulties join in the action songs and number rhymes, and they understand that the days are split into separate time periods or activities. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties focus on the objects in front of them, and watch as bright objects go slowly past their eyes.

72. By the end of Year 6, pupils with moderate learning difficulties are counting reliably to twenty, and can add numbers below ten, and some pupils can subtract numbers as well. They can split collections of toys, for instance, into sets, for counting them more easily (in sets of five, for example), or organising them into groups of things that are the same colour, the same shape, or have the same purpose, such as toy cars and animals. They know the time as far as morning and afternoon, and which lesson is next, and when it is home time. They recognise all of the main colours and shapes, and higher attaining pupils take part in a simple survey, and make a graph to show their results. Some pupils recognise coins and say what their values are, but find it difficult to add different ones together. Pupils with severe learning difficulties are gaining awareness of number, colour, shape and texture through a

range of activities that are either part of the main lessons, or in separate small groups with work that is specifically organised for them.

73. The rate of progress increases a little more for the senior pupils and by the end of Year 9, pupils with moderate learning difficulties are learning about fractions such as halves, quarters and eighths. They can add and subtract numbers to a hundred, and can use money in simple shopping activities. They can measure distances in centimetres, as well as estimating greater distances, and checking them with strides or hand-spans. They recognise a good range of two and three-dimensional shapes such as spheres and cubes, and can say something about what makes each one different. They learn how to measure angles and directions in degrees, and have made simple bar graphs to illustrate surveys such as what their favourite pets are. Pupils with severe learning difficulties continue to develop their skills slowly, but many can count to ten, especially if part of a group of children; they can choose a ball or toy of a named colour, and can choose between large and small, high and low, for instance.

74. By the end of Year 11, pupils' progress is solidly good, helped to some extent by the incentive of having their courses set and checked by official organisations outside the school, so that they receive nationally recognised certificates for their successes. The pupils with moderate learning difficulties can add and subtract numbers over a hundred, can manage money in shopping situations, and can divide large numbers into smaller groups and sets of numbers. They have made graphs to do with their lessons, and can say what they mean, such as which is the most or least popular car. They measure small distances accurately in millimetres and centimetres, and greater distances in metres. They understand and use coordinates on grids, and can tell the time to the quarter hour. They have recorded the temperature several times a day, and made graphs of the results over a period of time. Pupils with severe learning difficulties continue working on early number work, some counting in twos or recognising a few coins. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties attempt to choose between different shapes and colours; they feel items in front of them for differences in the texture, such as rough and smooth, or hard and soft. They slowly gain awareness of numbers, taking turns, and having a choice of drinks, snacks and activities.

75. By the end of Year 11 and beyond, pupils and students make progress that is good, and often very good, largely through a very practical approach, and also through work that is very well planned and taught in school, and checked by organisations outside the school. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties handle money, not only in shops, but also how to use a bank or building society; how to use credit cards, how to work out rates of pay, and why we are taxed. They learn about insurance; how to organise hire purchase; how to look for good value; and how to equip a room, such as a kitchen, with a limited budget. They learn to use weights and measures, such as in cooking, or making craft items, and can keep the score in games. Pupils and students with severe learning difficulties continue with basic number awareness, matching colours and shapes, and choosing activities, snacks and drinks.

76. The teaching of mathematics is good. Good lessons were seen throughout the school. While there was one excellent lesson involving junior pupils, generally they were good and satisfactory in the junior school, and good or very good in the senior school. This is a considerable improvement on the situation at the time of the last inspection, when a quarter of the teaching was unsatisfactory.

77. The teaching is very well based on the government recommendations for the National Numeracy Strategy, and teachers base their long-term plans on this guidance. The coordinator monitors teachers' planning regularly, and the senior managers of the school have watched teachers teaching. This has led to teachers organising the structure of their lessons effectively, with brisk mental warm-up sessions to begin each lesson with some reinforcement of previous learning, and get the pupils in the right frame of mind. This is followed by a main activity that generally includes several groups of pupils doing work at

different levels of difficulty, matched closely to their ability. These activities are well chosen to challenge each pupil to be fully involved, and to encourage good effort in thinking, so that they learn well. The teachers and their assistants know the pupils and the subject well, and they are good at guiding pupils to think, to try harder, and to do their best. In most classes, the teachers and their assistants work very well together as a team to get the best out of the pupils. Lessons end with a good review of what each group has been doing, and looking at what the main messages of the lesson have been. This helps pupils to remember the key points for the next lesson. One excellent lesson in the junior part of the school combined many very good features, with a warm up that saw all of the pupils reciting their numbers, and trying to get the right answers to adding up problems – with some very good support from the classroom assistants. In the main activity, the pupils made different kinds graphs of what pets they all had, based on work in an earlier lesson. Each group had tasks that were very well suited to their level of working, with different cards, pictures and models to help them. One pupil suggested he could make pet symbols on the computer to stick on the graph that he and his partner were making, and he did so with very little help. The lesson was well backed up by work from art lessons and from science and design and technology lessons in which pupils had studied various animals, especially fish, and had made pictures and models of them. The lesson ended with a very clear review of what each group had achieved, with a particular emphasis on what methods they had used, and what their findings were.

78. The pupils enjoy their mathematics lessons in the main, being well motivated by the structure of the different activities in each lesson, and the pace at which lessons run. They try hard to do well, and teachers manage their behaviour and encourage their concentration well, often using resources that enliven the learning, or make it easier for the pupils to understand the point. Computers and other high technology equipment are used well in some lessons, such as one with a white wall board that was worked by pupils on a small computer, working out what rates of pay they might get at a factory. But more often, teachers do not use the technology equipment well to broaden and reinforce their teaching. Instead, many teachers prefer to use worksheets. These were good in each instance that they were used during the inspection, but using them too often with each class leads to a lack of change in the approach, and pupils' learning slows down because they become less interested. The practical approach that is more common towards the top of the school maintains pupils' interest very well. Many teachers, especially in the senior half of the school, have taken pupils out of school to help their learning, such as going to a carpet factory to see the measuring and cutting of carpets, or to a bank and building society, as well as local shops and the supermarket. Some lessons with the least able pupils were short: they ended perhaps half an hour early so that the children could be changed, or could have a drink or snack. This time period should be timetabled as personal and social development, and an additional amount of time given to mathematics at another time of the day or week.

79. Mathematics is led and managed well by an experienced and well-trained coordinator who has introduced a numeracy strategy throughout the school, improving the quality of mathematics teaching. While resources are now good, there is a shortage of up-to-date computer software and teachers are not trained sufficiently on how to use computers in the classroom. This results in information and communications technology not being used effectively. There are good systems in place for assessing how much progress pupils are making, and the annual, formal ones are completed well. They do not, however, include a close look at how well pupils are learning in the short term, with a view to altering the plans for what they will be taught next. Teachers generally have this information in their heads, but they need to keep a record of it as well, so they get a longer term view of exactly what progress has been made. The reporting that goes to parents is often vague, and some reports do not say what progress has been made at all, perhaps being a sentence to say that all areas have been covered, and the pupil has enjoyed it. The coordinator has an action plan that includes changing the assessment systems, as well as developing more lively plans for the teaching of the lower attaining pupils.

SCIENCE

80. Overall, pupils' achievement in science is satisfactory, although in years 7 to 9, progress is unsatisfactory. The factors that contribute to pupils making less progress than expected are the continued wide variation in teachers' subject knowledge and the very minimal time given to teaching science. As a result, pupils have limited opportunities to develop their knowledge of the living and physical worlds and their understanding of scientific investigations and the skills required to carry them out. There is limited evidence of pupils' work in science over time and, together with the inconsistent assessment of pupils' progress, particularly those with moderate learning difficulties, pupils are not advancing in science as much as they ought. The improvement in science since the last inspection is unsatisfactory as most of the factors currently impinging on pupils' progress were present at the time of the last inspection.

81. By the end of Year 2, pupils begin to develop a growing understanding of themselves and the world around them. They record what they have seen and done. For example, drawing plants they have grown from seeds such as poppies, which they draw showing the hairs on the stem. Pupils sort objects to make sets of living things and know the differences between living and non-living things. They also examine physical processes, such as sound, as they make simple musical instruments. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties use switches to operate powered toys and demonstrate their understanding of cause and effect through gesture, eye contact and eye pointing. By the end of Year 6, most pupils know about pollution by clean and polluted beaches. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties measure shells, recording the dimensions in the correct units. Pupils with severe learning difficulties name some parts of the body and have some understanding of the concepts of hot and cold through multi-sensory experiences with different objects and foods.

82. By the end of Year 9, the science curriculum has not placed enough emphasis on experiments and pupils finding out things for themselves. However, when investigations have taken place pupils with moderate learning difficulties have extended their scientific skills of prediction and observation and their understanding of the physical world. They know some of the characteristics of a fair test having investigated the varying strength of plastic bags of different thickness, and understand the differences between soluble and insoluble substances. However, attention is not always drawn to the application of scientific principles to everyday situations such as the use of insoluble materials as building materials. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties respond to light from a variety of sources such as torches and mirrors and, through sensory play, optic fibres. In the further education department, students show features of personal autonomy and a developing positive self-image. They know the importance of personal qualities such as honesty and understand forms of behaviour, such as touching and other forms of physical contact that are either acceptable or not acceptable depending on the context in which they occur. They also understand through role play how to demonstrate their responses to actions and their right to say 'no' to comments that might be made to them.

83. In the lessons seen, science teaching was satisfactory overall. When teaching is of very high quality a combination of carefully chosen activities and skilful classroom practice that balances direct teaching with carefully targeted questions promote very effective learning for all pupils. In these instances, pupils achieve very well because teachers' classroom management skills and the effective support of classroom assistants allows them to provide learning experiences that meet the needs of different groups of pupils. These activities build on pupils' existing knowledge by extending and reinforcing ideas but they also promote the acquisition and implementation of investigative skills. For example, a class of sixteen and seventeen year olds made very good progress in their understanding of cause and effect through activities and resources that were very well chosen and planned to match the needs of different groups. Activities that focused on demonstrating how actions can cause a change to take place required higher attaining pupils to make electrical circuits that incorporated a simple switch. These high teacher expectations challenged this group of pupils very well to find out things for themselves. Others were suitably challenged in other

ways such as learning how to plug in an electrical iron, switch it on and use it. Text and symbols were used skilfully to reinforce learning and to assess pupils' understanding and there was good emphasis placed on health and safety issues throughout.

84. There is no science specialist and sometimes pupils' learning is limited by teachers' insecure subject knowledge, for example, by being given too much direction so that they do not have the opportunity to explore for themselves. On these occasions pupils observe investigations rather than carry them out themselves. Experiments lack scientific rigour and pupils do not learn the importance of fair tests. Some important basic detail is missed such as ensuring the same amount of hot water is poured into the different cans being used to evaluate the insulating properties of different materials. The school's own portable learning resources are limited and there is no specialist science accommodation, which restricts the learning opportunities of the senior pupils and students. However, the well designed sensory garden is a very good facility that offers pupils a number of sensory experiences through the variety of plants that have scents and leaf textures. The community is used well to extend pupils' learning experiences by going pond dipping and taking trips to science museums. Visitors to the school such as the 'electricity bus' also make effective contributions to extending pupils' learning.

85. The co-ordinator tries very hard to manage science throughout the school but with limited effectiveness. As there are no opportunities to monitor the classroom practice of colleagues and the plan of what to teach in science is unsatisfactory, it is hard to for the school to achieve a broad and balanced curriculum or see the impact of teaching on pupils' progress. In addition, assessment and recording procedures are inconsistent. This results in reports to parents being often much too general and failing to describe pupils' scientific skills, knowledge and understanding.

ART AND DESIGN

86. Pupils' progress is unsatisfactory overall, although for pupils with severe learning difficulties or profound and multiple learning difficulties, their progress is satisfactory. Generally, pupils are achieving less well now than at the time of the last inspection, which means the subject has suffered deterioration. During the inspection it was only possible to observe two lessons. Judgements have been informed by the analysis of teachers' planning, which is limited, displays of pupils' work around the school and some photographic evidence. At present, there is no co-ordinator for the subject, no policy, or scheme of work to support teachers' planning, although some use is made special curriculum guidance from a pre-National Curriculum scheme.

87. Although art appears on the timetable for all classes, pupils' achievement is less than expected because little direct teaching takes place and it is often linked to other subjects such as English, or textiles. As a consequence art is used more as a vehicle for illustrating other subjects rather than one in its own right. This detracts from pupils' learning art as a whole, especially those with moderate learning difficulties. For example, skills such as drawing are not taught and little attention is given to the study of different artists and styles. Throughout the school there are attractive and well presented displays that celebrate pupils' work and are noteworthy for their lively colours and vibrancy. However, some displays give little information about how much work the pupils actually did themselves while others include good photographic evidence of pupils' working.

88. Pupils enjoy art and behave well. Many are interested in their work and concentrate for long periods of time. A few are understandably unable to sustain their concentration for very long and occasionally their behaviour deteriorates. Junior pupils work well with paint although the drawing skills of senior pupils up to the end of Year 11 are immature and show a lack of technique and style. Pupils have few experiences of working with different medium such as clay, although good use was made of a computer paint program that junior pupils used to depict seashells.

89. The quality of teaching in the two lessons observed was satisfactory. However, pupils' learning over time is unsatisfactory, although for those pupils with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties throughout the school, their learning experiences are satisfactory. For these pupils the deputy head teacher's planning shows progression and is often taught through a sensory approach. For example, pupils touch and feel the texture of spaghetti, then that of paint before mixing the two together. Staff then support and encourage pupils to press paper onto the mixture to create a print. Pupils have also experienced other man made materials such as bubble wrap, corrugated card and textured wallpaper plus some natural materials such as pine cones and conkers. The lack of planning assessment and learning targets for most pupils results in a fragmented approach to the subject. For example, pupils in Year 10 and 11 have recently been mixing paints to experiment with colour, while some junior pupils by the end of Year 6 describe why they prefer hot colours to cold ones. In the one lesson observed with Year 10 and 11 pupils, the teacher had assembled a very good range of artefacts for them to draw. Pupils found this motivating and some improved their drawing skills during the lesson, although for many their attempts were still very basic. Classroom assistants are used effectively to support individual pupils. They contributed to pupils' success by sensitively supporting and encouraging pupils, often celebrating their achievements with teaching staff.

90. There is no policy for art and little support for teachers, who themselves have limited knowledge and experience of the subject. Few elements of the National Curriculum programmes of study for art are followed. Pupils' experiences are limited to basic techniques and materials such as pencil, paint and crayon. Occasionally clay is used to create three-dimensional models such as tea light holders. Pupils in the senior school do not have satisfactory access to a sufficient range of different materials or the opportunity to study different artists, styles or techniques and this detracts from the effectiveness of teaching and learning.

91. The subject is not co-ordinated with a named teacher responsible for its development. Learning resources are limited and have been allowed to dwindle since the last inspection as no one has responsibility for auditing current resources or replenishing stock, despite a budget being available. There is no whole school approach to teaching art or what pupils will learn during their time at the school. The school is aware of this difficulty and intends to appoint a new teacher with suitable art experience. In the meantime the deputy head teacher has taken responsibility for those pupils with more complex needs, throughout the school and is effectively providing suitable experiences for these pupils.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

92. While pupils' achievements in food technology and textiles lessons are good, their progress in other areas of design and technology is unsatisfactory. There are few learning opportunities to continue building on pupils' skills in designing and making with materials such as wood, plastic and metal. The workshop, which contains a range of machines and tools has until recently been redundant and the subject's provision has deteriorated since the last inspection. The appointment very recently of a part time teacher has improved the situation; some pupils are now learning and beginning to make progress in using a range of materials and tools in the workshop.

93. By the end of Year 2, pupils explore the different ways of combining cardboard boxes and materials to form structures, such as models of figures and the ways of creating collages which emphasise colour, relief and shape. Later on, they draw a plan and build a model ladder with a construction kit and rolled newspaper. More widely they sew large stitches in textiles and peel potatoes and carrots in food technology. By the end of Year 6, pupils weave different fabrics and select fillings for sandwiches. A pupil with moderate learning difficulties knows brown bread is a healthier food than white bread. In Year 8, pupils

sew and decorate Christmas stockings. Year 11 pupils cook and eat lunch. Very recently, in the workshop, Year 9 pupils have made a rack for compact disks involving wood and plastic. They use hand tools to complete the project. Year 11 pupils are planning and making bracelets by using strips of copper plate and by twisting copper wire.

94. Overall the quality of teaching is good and ranges from satisfactory to excellent. Strong teaching is linked to food technology and textile options. In the best lessons the teachers and classroom assistants provide pupils with good support. This support and the good subject knowledge of the teachers enables the pupils to develop new skills, such as using the sewing machine to make a Christmas stocking and to learn the correct and safe method to use a knife when cutting vegetables and fruit. The pupils can adapt these skills to their independent work; for example a 16-year-old pupil makes a good attempt at cutting an onion when making coleslaw. The pupils are given different choices to assist them in the design process, including the use of the computer when making their Christmas stockings. In all the lessons seen the pupils show keen interest in the well-organised activities and are willing to attempt answers to the challenging questions that the teachers pose. In food technology and textiles lessons the pupils are encouraged to evaluate what they have learned and the older pupils complete their own record keeping sheets. Pupils are expected to work as a group in a food technology lesson on 'survival' cooking and this they achieve successfully, finishing the lesson by eating together and calculating if they have made the meal within their budget of £1.50 per head.

95. The methods of ensuring the pupils are offered suitable learning activities and the assessment and recording of their achievements and progress as they move through the school is unsatisfactory overall. With the help of an adviser the co-ordinators for food technology and textiles are piloting a system to overcome these problems but without a permanent co-ordinator for the whole subject there are no procedures in place that all the teachers understand and use. The co-ordinators do not spend time monitoring the subject. The food technology classroom is on the first floor of the building and this makes access to the room very difficult for pupils with mobility problems.

GEOGRAPHY

96. Pupils study Geography until the end of Year 9. The evidence from pupils' work, from display and from teachers' records is insufficient to make a judgement about pupils' achievements over time. In lessons, however, pupils are making good progress overall.

97. By the end of Year 2, pupils have begun to learn about the school environment and are beginning to learn their way around the school. They are becoming aware of the weather, and the more able know about the changing seasons. By the end of Year 6, pupils with moderate learning difficulties know about different environments, such as the seaside, and are able to identify what makes beaches clean or dirty. They learn about hot and cold climates, and show understanding of the types of clothes which people would need to wear in different climates. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties learn to identify hot and cold, as they touch and taste different items. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties help to draw up a plan of the area around the school, while others join in making a model of the area. By the end of Year 9, these pupils can identify the continents on a map, and they begin to develop use of geographical vocabulary such as mountains, oceans and continents. They learn the names of some other countries such as France, and the names of capital cities and rivers. Pupils with severe learning difficulties learn to find their way around the school independently, and some try to draw plans of various areas of the school, such as the playground.

98. In the lessons seen, teaching and learning is good overall. This is an improvement from the last inspection. Where lessons were very good, lessons are clearly introduced so that pupils know what they are going to do, and how the lesson links to previous lessons. Good use is made of classroom assistants to support pupils and to ensure that they behave

appropriately and can complete their work. Activities are planned to meet the different needs of pupils. For example, during a lesson in which pupils were learning their way around the school, all took part in going round in a group with an adult. Following this, some pupils were asked to guide the rest to various locations, and finally the higher attaining pupils were asked to describe how to get to different areas of the school. Each activity reinforced learning at appropriate levels for the pupils. Very good use is made of signing and symbols to support the learning of those with limited communication skills. Pupils are encouraged to be active learners, for example, in a very good lesson on hot and cold climates, these pupils selected clothes appropriate to the climate of different countries. They quickly understood that the weather was cold at the North and South Poles and hot at the Equator, and chose clothes appropriately. The activity was very well adapted for the different pupils, with more complex instructions given to higher attaining pupils. The lesson was thoroughly enjoyed and pupils made very good progress in their understanding of the subject. Teaching and learning are less effective where the objectives of lessons are not clear in the teacher's mind nor communicated well to classroom assistants and pupils. On some occasions, pupils take a long time to settle at the beginning of a lesson, or when an activity is changed at which point their behaviour sometimes disrupts the learning of others. Good use is made of the local environment to support teaching in geography.

99. The role of the co-ordinator is very limited, with little opportunity for monitoring either other colleagues teaching or their curricular plans. As a consequence, pupils sometimes repeat topics and do not always develop their learning as might be expected. For example, pupils in a number of classes were looking at weather, but there was very little difference between the ways in which this was developed for junior and senior pupils. As in the last report, there is still no agreed system of assessment and recording pupils' progress, so that it is difficult for teachers to see their progress and plan accordingly. Resources are being developed, but at present these are insufficient for the demands of the curriculum and much too limited use is made of information and communications technology.

HISTORY

100. In lessons, pupils make good progress overall. Evidence available from pupils' work, from display and from teachers' records is insufficient to make a judgement about pupils' achievements over time.

101. Pupils study history up until the end of Year 9. By the end of Year 2, pupils begin to appreciate the passage of time through looking at their own personal histories, and their families. Pupils of with severe learning difficulties begin to show awareness of the week's activities. By the end of Year 6, pupils know facts concerning Tudor times, being able to name Henry VIII and Elizabeth I. They know about the voyages of exploration and talk about the goods which were brought back to England. They talk about rich and poor people in Tudor times, and know that richer people were educated. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties are beginning to develop a sense of past and present as they learn about life in Victorian Times, and compare it with the present day, for example, in looking at houses, clothes and games. By the end of Year 9, these pupils have heard about the actual Domesday Book, and have compiled their own "Domesday Book" of the school. Some of these pupils understand why the book was compiled. They know about the houses of the rich and poor people in the Middle-Ages, and are able to explain the differences between a cottage and a manor house. Pupils with severe learning difficulties have been introduced to the subject of Ancient Egypt, through a variety of experiences such as making jewellery.

102. Teaching in history is good overall, with lessons seen ranging from satisfactory to excellent. This is an improvement from the last inspection. The best lessons are well planned to meet the needs of all the pupils in the class. Good question and answer strategies check pupils' recall of previous lessons, and ensure that all have an opportunity to respond. Pupils are well organised and understand how they are expected to behave in the classroom. Very good relationships between adults and pupils provide an atmosphere in which pupils are

confident to try their best. Resources are very well used to ensure that pupils understand what is being described. For example, in an excellent lesson on the Victorians, the teacher used a model of a Victorian house to enable pupils to identify the differences with the present day, and then produced a range of Victorian toys with which pupils were able to play. These activities aroused great interest, excitement and enthusiasm among the pupils, and allowed them to develop a good understanding of "then and now". Good support for individuals ensures that they are able to complete tasks, for example, in writing about artefacts at which they have been looking as part of a lesson on Tudor exploration. Lessons are well rounded off as pupils talk about what they have achieved in the lesson. In less successful lessons, management of pupils' behaviour is less effective and disruption to lessons prevents other pupils from concentrating. Long explanations of topics contain too much information for pupils to remember. Good use is made of the local area in the study of history, with visits to places such as the local museum, Sudbury Hall and Chatsworth.

103. The role of the co-ordinator is limited and there is no clear way of ensuring continuity in the curriculum. As a result, pupils appear to have spent several years learning about topics such as the Tudors, while other topics have been omitted. As in the last report, there is still no assessment system for measuring and recording pupils' progress, which makes it difficult for teachers to see in detail what pupils achieve. Resources, including artefacts are being collected, but at present these are insufficient for the demands of the curriculum. Limited use is made of information and communication technology, although some pupils use word processing to record work, and a few have used the Internet for research.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

104. The school has started to address the shortcomings in information and communication technology provision highlighted by the previous inspection although the improvement overall since then is less than expected. While there is very little evidence of pupils' progress in the form of their previous work or in records of assessments, the small amount of evidence gathered from a few lessons it was possible to observe indicates that progress remains unsatisfactory overall.

105. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties in Year 10 and 11 and students in the further education department use the Internet to search for information. The students prepare electronic mailing on information about the school and send it to students in cities abroad, twinned with Chesterfield. They also use the Internet for research and they collate, with the use of a computer, scanned and digital photographs. The achievement of these senior pupils and students is limited by having to repeat what they already know and, for some pupils, by their difficulty reading and understanding text on the screen. Students with severe learning difficulties are well supported by their teacher and the classroom assistants, but their learning is hampered by the lack of suitable specialist equipment. Throughout the school, not all pupils who would benefit from dedicated communication equipment have access to it. For example, the quantity and range of basic switch technology for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties throughout the school is inadequate. As a consequence, where they depend on communicating by way of a switch, they often achieve poorly.

106. The quality of teaching and learning in those few lessons is satisfactory overall. However, there is too little teaching through information and communication technology in lessons overall and this is unsatisfactory. There are some good instances of computers being used well, for example, in the Nursery supporting mathematics and in some junior groups using a paint programme to make shell drawings in art. The teacher co-ordinating the subject creates good multi-media presentations for his lessons, for example in English where the text of a story was projected onto a screen and enlivened with imagery. Some teachers have good subject knowledge and they are confident in using new technology in their lessons and teachers more generally express keenness to promote pupils' learning through the use of information and communication technology. Where they do so, they have a good rapport with pupils and approach lessons in ways that engages their interest. Technical problems

occasionally get in the way of computers being used effectively. There is no technician to support teachers and maintain equipment. While there is a scheme of work to guide teachers planning, there is no system for assessing pupils' progress. As a result, it is not possible for teachers to plan their teaching effectively.

107. The school has identified information and communication technology as the main development priority for the current year, and this provides the impetus needed to raise the quality of teaching and learning. A small computer room has been created, which has increased the equipment available to teachers and pupils. Information and communication technology is now taught as a discrete subject to senior pupils and students in the further education department. This development is beginning to raise standards in the subject for older pupils. Teachers are currently being trained in the educational uses of new technology, which is funded through the national New Opportunities Fund initiative. A recent training session has enhanced teachers' interest and confidence in approaching the subject. Usefully, classroom assistants have also participated in the training.

FRENCH

108. Pupils' progress is unsatisfactory overall. A foreign language is not taught to about half of the pupils who should be learning one; these are the pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties in the senior school. The school is therefore not meeting statutory requirements in this respect.

109. Pupils with moderate learning difficulties in the senior school are taught French, and they achieve as well as expected. They know some of names of items they buy when shopping in the butchers, bakers, grocers and supermarket. They know, for example, basic greetings, and how to ask for a drink in a café. They say some numbers and colours in French, the days of the week, and what other members of the family are called. Higher attaining pupils sometimes remember the words and the phrases, and they try to say them with a French accent. In some other lessons, they learn about the geography and culture of France.

110. The teaching is satisfactory overall. It was good in one of the lessons seen during the inspection. Lessons are prepared and organised well, and the better teaching shows good confidence with the language, and a lively approach. One lesson, for instance, saw the teacher using a selection of fruits and vegetables spread out like a market stall, and she involved all of the pupils in identifying them, naming them in French. As the lessons are only half an hour long, there was not time to develop the lesson by getting pupils to actually ask for the items, as in a shop or at a market. The pupils enjoyed the lesson, and responded well to the questions, trying hard to remember the words and to pronounce them well.

111. The leadership and management of French are unsatisfactory. There is no-one responsible for organising the subject as a whole; and the school has not gone through the formal process that allows them stop teaching the subject to any pupils. The plans of what will be taught each year are out of date and under-developed, and so are the resources: teachers rely mainly on a small selection of books and videos, and the resources that they make themselves. The senior management team does not monitor the planning or the teaching of this subject. At the time of the last inspection, the subject was considered to be satisfactory, as it was then taught to all of the pupils in the seniors. It is now unsatisfactory.

MUSIC

112. The improvement in music since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. All pupils, up to the end of Year 9, achieve satisfactorily during lessons but there was insufficient evidence of pupils' work or assessment records to determine whether they make the positive progress over time that was indicated in the previous inspection report.

113. By the end of year 2, pupils enjoy singing. Some make reliable choices, through echoing gestures and words accurately, about which songs to sing. They also show good awareness of the nature of the songs and demonstrate their understanding and involvement through their actions, such as gesturing independently whilst singing 'Heads, shoulders, knees and toes'. By the end of Year 6, pupils know the names of musical instruments, such as the violin and cello, and recognise high and low sounds these instruments make. Some relate these sounds to everyday events, such as the ten-year-old boy who described the cello as sounding 'like a ship in the fog'. They play un-tuned instruments such as shakers and some show good listening skills as they maintain a simple beat. By the end of Year 9, pupils know how different sounds are composed to enhance a story. They perform in front of others playing a variety of un-tuned instruments and are beginning to develop the listening and watching skills that are required to accompany others when performing as a whole class. Pupils in Year 10 and 11 and students in the further education department are not taught music and there is no statutory requirement to do so. However, they join other pupils from year 7 to 9 for singing. They are very enthusiastic in their singing and listen well. Pupils follow tunes closely, both signing and singing. They elaborate their performance by singing oppositions when the whole group is divided in two. Some suggest new lines for songs such as 'Thank You Lord' when requested to volunteer and this encourages their continued participation and involvement.

114. Music is taught by a specialist and the quality of teaching in the lessons seen is satisfactory. Relationships are good and classroom management is generally effective so that pupils do improve their learning in terms of exploring, responding and controlling sounds. Generally, classroom assistants provide significant support for pupils' learning. They do this by ensuring pupils can participate in the full range of activities, such as providing physical support that enables them all to handle instruments and by maintaining their continued engagement through effective communication strategies. Lesson planning identifies learning outcomes for pupils but sometimes these are over-ambitious and too technical, which reflects the teacher's inexperience of pupils' special educational needs. Consequently, some vocabulary is too advanced, such as *crescendo* and *pizzicato* and learning over-demanding in addressing different styles of producing notes, such as plucking and bowing, on stringed instruments.

115. The procedures for assessing and recording pupils' achievements are not effective and curricular plans are at the very early stages of development. In its aims, music is not addressing ways of meeting the range of pupils' special educational needs, for example, by seeing how it can be more relevant to the learning needs of pupils with severe, profound and multiple learning difficulties rather than concentrating on teaching the technical aspects of the subject. Music makes an important contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development through the school's visits to local performances and visitors into school. The recent class workshops taken by a Zimbabwean drummer also provided valuable insights into the culture of another society.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

116. The pupils' progress in lessons is satisfactory overall. The progress of pupils is good when teachers with good subject knowledge teach them, for example, when outside coaching staff for cricket and basketball is used. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory although a range of suitable activities to meet the needs of the pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are still insufficiently developed.

117. By the end of Year 2, pupils in a class for profound and multiple learning difficulties make good progress in their development of movement when taught by the subject co-ordinator. Good use is made of a parachute and music to stimulate different moods in the lesson. The positive response to music is also seen in a wheelchair-dancing lesson. By the end of Year 6, pupils find the idea of moving as aliens in a dance lesson more difficult to understand. Those with moderate learning difficulties at this stage throw and catch a small ball with accuracy and consistency. All pupils progress as well as expected in these skills when they receive help from the classroom assistants. The coach sets high expectations in cricket. The pupils hold the bat the correct way and this helps them to strike a moving ball. Pupils play as a member of a team. They are patient while waiting their turn to bat and appreciate the effort of others when they hit the ball. Pupils develop the skills of the leg kick action during a swimming lesson. While the majority of the pupils wear flotation aids, a small number are beginning to swim a few strokes without assistance. By the end of Year 9, pupils are developing good quality skills of throwing and catching in a basketball lesson. In a similar lesson for Year 11 pupils they show good progress in the adaptation of these skills to a games situation. They are also developing the skill of shooting with the ball with a fair degree of accuracy.

118. The school makes use of community facilities to extend the pupils' learning. This includes football matches against other special schools and by entering pupils in the Derbyshire youth games. Students in the further education department spend three days involved in gorge walking and problem solving activities alongside representatives of a local business.

119. The quality of teaching is good overall. Good use is made of a warm-up session at the beginning of the lessons but only in one case were the pupils asked why they needed to start with these activities. The teacher explained it was to warm up the muscles to prepare for the exercise. There is a good level of activity and the teachers extend the quality of the learning of the pupils, for example the insistence on the method of pushing the ball from the chest and extending the arms when passing in basketball. The pupils are well supported by the classroom assistants during the lesson, for example in a dance lesson where they work alongside the pupils to illustrate the movements of an alien. In a circuit session in the hall individual and small groups of pupils are withdrawn from other lessons to participate in the range of activities aimed at improving the balance and co-ordination of the pupils. There is a lack of purposeful direction in this session with no guidance for the classroom assistants on the targets for individual pupils. One pupil is left unattended to bounce on a sloped trampette that is placed on a single gymnastics mat. The sides of the trampette are unprotected. In one lesson a member of staff is wearing shoes with high heels at the same time as assisting the pupils. Both these incidents constitute a health and safety risk

120. There is no system to record the achievements and progress of the pupils in the subject and there is lack of training of staff in the areas of dance and physical education for pupils with profound and multiple difficulties. The well-informed co-ordinator is aware of these needs but has no space on the timetable to monitor and support the teaching of the subject.

121. The indoor facilities are satisfactory. The outdoor areas for the subject are very good, such as the purpose built adventure playground and the hard surface facility for basketball and football.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

122. The progress of junior pupils in religious education is satisfactory. Senior pupils make good progress.

123. Pupils with severe learning difficulties in the junior school respond appropriately to the role play set up for them to explore caring relationships within the family. They make satisfactory progress in identifying objects and photographs supplied by their carers. Teachers and assistants use a sound range of stimuli including singing and porridge to tell the story 'The Three Bears', which reinforces messages about family. Pupils respond well to this and obviously enjoy it.

124. By the end of Year 6, pupils' knowledge is as much as expected of world religions such as Hinduism. They know, for instance, that Diwali is the Festival of Light and that candles are used as part of the celebrations of this time. Year 8 pupils make good progress in recalling and talking about symbols of peace and love such as the white dove. Some are able to give some detail from the story of Noah and the Ark. By the end of Year 9, pupils are making good progress recalling previous work about belonging to groups. They remember the symbols used by some religious groups such as the fish in early Christianity. They are able to identify a small number of other religions such as Islam. The class includes a Muslim who gives the others useful insights into the dress and other traditions of Islam. Through skilful questioning the teacher draws out from the pupil a good picture of the daily impact of religion on a Muslim's life making topical reference to the feast of Ramadan.

125. Pupils in Year 10 and 11 make good progress. They know the Seder plate, used by Jews in the celebration of Passover has symbolic value. They offer some good suggestions as to the significance of the salt water and the egg. In a visit to a local mosque, pupils in the senior school make good progress learning about Islamic religious beliefs and practices. They ask some very good questions which build very well on their previous study of the religion.

126. Teaching and learning of religious education are satisfactory up to the end of Year 6. They are mainly good in the senior school. Teachers and classroom assistants enjoy good relationships with pupils and this helps to establish the conditions for learning. Lessons are mostly well ordered and happy. Teachers plan well and share this planning effectively with classroom assistants and others. Classroom assistants make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. Preparation is always at least satisfactory which leads to lessons and learning that proceed as planned. For example the preparation for the visit to the local mosque was very good. All pupils had brought their own questions for the education officer at the mosque and the answers to these contributed a great deal to the good progress in knowledge and understanding of Islam. Teachers use language well to stimulate and maintain interest and learning. Most teachers handle question and answer effectively. This is especially well managed with the senior pupils. Teachers adapt their language appropriately to individual levels of understanding to make sure that each pupil makes the progress of which he or she is capable. The assessment of pupils' progress is good in Years 10 and above. In earlier years, assessment is left to the classroom teacher and the lack of cross checking of standards among teachers leads to inconsistency and unreliable information.

127. The subject is well co-ordinated. The teacher who has responsibility for the subject has produced a good scheme of work that follows the locally agreed syllabus while being well adapted to the special needs of pupils at the school. Religious education in the school is inclusive in nature because it is taught well to each pupil and it explores a wide range of faiths. She recognises the need for more reliable assessment procedures. Teachers make good use of a number of places in the locality to further advance studies in religious education and local clerics visit the school and take part in or lead acts of collective worship that are closely linked to the schemes of work for religious education.