

INSPECTION REPORT

STONY DEAN SCHOOL

Amersham

LEA area: Buckinghamshire

Unique reference number: 110579

Headteacher: Graham Newsholme

Reporting inspector: Rosemary Eaton
15173

Dates of inspection: 26th February – 1st March 2002

Inspection number: 191209

Full inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	11 to 18
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Orchard End Avenue Pineapple Road Amersham Buckinghamshire
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Catherine Smith
Date of previous inspection:	13/01/1997

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13462	Roberta Mothersdale	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
14691	Jenny Hall	Team inspector	Science Personal, social and health education Equal opportunities English as an additional language Post-16 provision	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Stony Dean is a special school with day and boarding provision for boys and girls aged 11 to 18 with moderate learning difficulties and speech or communication difficulties including autism. Currently, 127 pupils attend, only 21 of whom are girls. There are eight post-16 students, who spend one year in the sixth form in order to help them to become more mature and ready for further education, training or the world of work. When they enter the school, pupils' attainment is very well below average. They all have statements of special educational need – 88 for moderate learning difficulties. The 39 with speech or communication difficulties are attached to the school's specialist provision – the Language and Communication Enhancement Centre. Pupils' needs are generally much more complex than at the time of the previous inspection. The school has identified 26 as presenting challenging behaviour, eight of these having emotional and behavioural difficulties. The majority of pupils are white, with 16 being black or of Asian heritage. Six have English as an additional language, with Punjabi and Urdu being the languages most frequently spoken in their homes. Currently, 39 pupils are boarders from Monday to Friday during term-time. Pupils' homes are mainly in the Chiltern, South Buckinghamshire and Wycombe areas. The school has great difficulty recruiting staff. During the inspection, a small number of subjects were taught by unqualified teachers and there was no teacher of music. All pupils are disapplied from learning a modern foreign language. At the time of the previous inspection, pupils joined the school when they were 12 years old and the boarding provision was only available to boys.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Stony Dean is a good school with many very good features. Pupils and students make good progress and achieve well overall, particularly in English. The quality of teaching is good and the school is very well led and managed. It provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- There is excellent provision for pupils to develop their literacy skills.
- The Language and Communication Enhancement Centre is very effective in meeting the needs of the pupils it supports.
- Teachers are very knowledgeable about the subjects they teach.
- There are excellent procedures for managing pupils' behaviour.
- The impact of the school's belief that 'If you're a trier, you're a winner' is seen clearly in pupils' very positive attitudes.
- The staff team is very committed and hardworking, following the examples of the headteacher and deputy headteacher.

What could be improved

- The curriculum for post-16 students emphasises academic subjects at the expense of the provision for careers and vocational education and personal development.
- There is no written, structured programme of work for personal, social and health education.
- Aspects of the accommodation are unsatisfactory – especially the library and the facilities for post-16 students.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was previously inspected in January 1997. Since then, it has made very good progress. Pupils now make better progress in most subjects and have increased opportunities to have their achievements accredited through public examinations. This has been possible because the quality of teaching has also improved very well. Teachers with specialist skills have been recruited for a number of subjects and this has had a very good impact on pupils' progress.

The previous report identified a good many areas for development. These have all been tackled thoroughly, with consequent improvements made in each one. For example, the curriculum for pupils

in Years 7 to 11 has improved significantly, as have the systems for finding out about the quality of teaching and how well pupils are achieving.

STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by Year 11	by Year 12	Key	
speaking and listening	A	A	very good	A
reading	A	A	good	B
writing	A	A	satisfactory	C
mathematics	C	C	unsatisfactory	D
personal, social and health education	C	C	poor	E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	C		

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

The school sets challenging targets for pupils to achieve. In 2001, the target was for 66 per cent of Year 11 pupils to gain one or more GCSE pass at Grades A* to G. In fact, 71 per cent achieved this, so the target was exceeded. This percentage is very much higher than the average in schools for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. In Years 7 to 11, pupils make very good progress and achieve very well in English, science, art and physical education. In all other subjects, their progress and achievement are at least satisfactory and often they are good. In music, pupils in Years 7 to 9 are currently making unsatisfactory progress, because there is no teacher for the subject. Pupils make good progress in individual personal, social and health education lessons, but there is no structured programme of work to make sure that they build on what they have learned already. They make satisfactory progress over time. Post-16 students make good progress and achieve well in the courses they follow. Their independence and personal development are restricted by the lack of opportunities offered by their curriculum and accommodation. Boys and girls with speech and communication difficulties, English as an additional language and higher and lower attainers all make good progress and achieve well.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and are keen to be involved in lessons, activities and clubs.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. The majority of pupils behave very well, particularly during lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils grow in confidence and are willing to take on responsibilities. Relationships between pupils and with adults are very good.
Attendance	Good – above average for a school of this type.

Pupils are usually very enthusiastic during lessons, keen to succeed and have their efforts acknowledged.

Boys and girls and pupils from different cultural backgrounds all get on well together. Pupils support each other very well during lessons – for example, listening to other people's opinions. This gives them confidence and encourages them to get involved and try hard.

Members of the school council take their responsibilities very seriously. They represent the views of other pupils very effectively and organise a range of fund-raising events.

Pupils are relaxed and happy in the residential setting. Each week, pupils set themselves personal targets, which they review with their friends and teacher. As a result, they are aware of how well they are getting on and where they need to improve.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

English and science are taught very well, as are the skills of communication, including literacy. Teaching in mathematics and numeracy is satisfactory. Personal, social and health education lessons are taught well. The school is very successful in meeting the needs of all pupils. Their strengths and weaknesses are carefully identified and then teachers tailor the work to suit them. The work of the Language and Communication Enhancement team – of teachers, therapists and support assistants – and other support assistants is very effective, enabling pupils to play a full part in lessons or providing individual teaching. Teachers are nearly all specialists in the subjects they teach, so pupils make good progress in skills and knowledge. Teachers often plan interesting activities, so pupils want to be involved and try hard. Occasionally, lessons are slow and dull and pupils become bored and restless.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good for pupils in Years 7 to 11 and satisfactory for post-16 students.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils are supported well by a specialist teacher, the Language and Communication Enhancement Centre and the English department.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school provides very well for pupils' moral and social development. Their spiritual and cultural development is promoted well. A great many aspects of the school contribute to pupils' very good personal development – for example, they lead warm-up sessions in physical education.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. There are very effective procedures for ensuring that pupils are safe and secure, and able to make the most of their time in school.

The school works very well in partnership with parents.

There are detailed programmes of work in almost all subjects, helping pupils to learn well in lessons and over time.

A wide range of lunchtime clubs is offered, with more good quality activities for residential pupils.

Careers and vocational education are good for pupils in Years 7 to 11, but not enough time is allowed for post-16 students to work on these aspects.

Links with the community and other schools are good and support pupils' learning well. College links are less successful and do not have enough priority in the post-16 curriculum.

Child protection and health and safety procedures are very well organised. Staff training in these issues is very effective.

A very good track is kept of pupils' academic progress and personal development, with any necessary support provided quickly. There are excellent systems for helping pupils to manage their behaviour and to prevent bullying.

Residential pupils are cared for well.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher, with the deputy headteacher, leads and manages the school very well, so that it operates as far as possible as a small mainstream secondary school. Many of the staff with management responsibilities are very dynamic and forward-looking.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Very good. Governors are becoming increasingly actively involved in deciding priorities and tracking progress towards these. Their links with particular subjects and aspects are an especially strong feature of their work and provide them with first-hand evidence of the school's performance.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. A variety of sources is used to compare the school with other, similar ones. A range of effective measures provides information about the quality of teaching and how well individual pupils are getting on.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. There is a very close link between the school's priorities and its spending. Effective use is made of grants for particular purposes. All spending is managed very well.

The school makes a good effort to see that it gives good value for the money it receives, applying the principles of best value.

Developments are considered very carefully before they are put in place. For example, the school's approaches to inclusion and literacy teaching have been planned very effectively to meet the needs of its pupils.

Senior staff delegate responsibilities and tasks but maintain a close overview of how developments are proceeding. Administrative and financial support staff are very effective.

The school has an adequate number of teachers, but is short of qualified staff in several areas – notably, music. Resources are satisfactory and the accommodation is broadly so, but the library and the post-16 accommodation are both unsatisfactory.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school. • Behaviour in school is good. • Children are making good progress. • They are taught well. • The school has high expectations. • It works closely with parents, who feel able to ask for support. • The school is well led and managed. • It is helping children to become more mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • About ten per cent of parents expressed concerns about the provision of homework. • A smaller number feel that they are not kept well enough informed about their children's progress. • A few are dissatisfied with the range of activities provided outside lessons.

The inspectors agree with parents' very positive views of the school. The policy on homework is very clear: work is provided if parents request it. The school provides good quality information about pupils' progress and tries hard to meet parents' individual requests – for example, if their children have particular communication difficulties. Activities outside lessons (for example, lunchtime clubs) are good – varied and interesting.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Overall, pupils make good progress and achieve well. This represents a very good improvement since the previous inspection, when progress was satisfactory overall and ranged from good to unsatisfactory. This improvement is mirrored by a similar rise in the quality of teaching, which is the principal reason for pupils' increased success. The improvement is especially significant in the light of the changing nature of the pupils' needs. They are becoming increasingly complex and severe – the current Year 7 pupils are very different to those in Years 10 and 11. This is demonstrated graphically by the number of pupils attached to the Language and Communication Enhancement Centre – now 39. In 1997, only eight pupils needed this degree of support.
2. Nevertheless, the school sets challenging targets for pupils to achieve. In 2001, the percentage of Year 11 pupils expected to gain one or more GCSE passes at A* to G was exceeded. This achievement – 71 per cent – was very well above the average for schools for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. The target for the current year is 46 per cent, which is an indicator of the changing intake, not of lower expectations by the school. When they leave school at the end of Year 11, pupils may have been successful in up to eleven externally accredited courses, including GCSE and Certificate of Achievement. All those who left in 2001 achieved at least one nationally recognised qualification. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection.
3. Pupils enter the school with very low levels of attainment. They achieve very well and make very good progress in English, science, art and physical education. Progress and achievement are good in information and communication technology and religious education, and in geography for pupils in Years 7 to 9. In mathematics, progress is satisfactory, although a small number of pupils achieve success in a GCSE course. Progress and achievement are also satisfactory in history. In design and technology, pupils are currently making good progress, due to recent improvements in teaching and the curriculum, which have not yet had time to have an impact on their long-term achievement. Similarly, the good progress in personal, social and health education lessons is not guaranteed over time, because of failings in curricular planning for the subject. Pupils are currently making unsatisfactory progress in music. Records show that they were making at least satisfactory progress until this year, when lessons ceased temporarily, due to staffing problems.
4. Students in the sixth form make good progress overall and achieve well in the courses they follow. They gain a range of certificates – for example, in communication, computer skills and a Youth Award scheme. However, all accreditation is below GCSE standard (even though a few of the students have achieved this level in Year 11) because this is not possible in one year, in a crowded timetable.
5. Pupils have excellent opportunities to practise and apply their literacy skills across the curriculum, and these enhance significantly their progress in English and communication. In each subject, teachers consistently emphasise and promote speaking and listening, reading and writing. They have high expectations for pupils, because the English department makes them aware of pupils' needs and which skills they should be working on. In information and communication technology and numeracy skills, pupils make satisfactory progress in lessons in other subjects. In

many cases, teachers take advantage of suitable openings in lessons, but there is not the same consistent and informed attention paid as is the case with literacy.

6. The pupils with language and communication difficulties make equally good progress as other pupils. They benefit from the specialist expertise, including speech and language therapy, offered by the Language and Communication Enhancement Centre. Because of the support they receive in the Centre and in lessons across the curriculum, pupils gain confidence and are willing to attempt to communicate. Other pupils are very supportive and encouraging, allowing their friends time to answer. Lessons in English also make very good contributions to pupils' progress, including initiatives such as 'Getting on at Literacy' and decoding (reading) lessons, where groups are often very small and so pupils get high levels of support.
7. Only a very small number of pupils have English as an additional language, but they, and the pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, receive effective support and are very well integrated into lessons and school life. As a result, they make progress at the same rate as other pupils. The small number of girls also make good progress, because the school is very aware of them and makes sure that they have equal opportunities to participate and learn. This is a good improvement since the previous inspection, especially as far as physical education is concerned. Girls now have special activities and teams, plus access to mixed gender sessions.
8. Teachers try hard to ensure that the needs of the least and most able pupils are met, so that they can make progress at different, but equivalent rates. With just a few exceptions, they are successful in this – very occasionally, higher attaining pupils could achieve a bit more. Pupils with challenging behaviour have their needs met very effectively indeed, so they – and other pupils – are able to benefit from lessons and make good progress.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Pupils' attitudes are very good. They enjoy coming to school and are eager to arrive in the morning and start their activities and lessons. There is very good attendance at lunchtime clubs and residential pupils' after school activities. Pupils enjoy the range of activities provided by the Friday afternoon 'options' lessons. For example, in the lesson on first aid, the whole group volunteered eagerly to be bandaged or pretend to go into shock and displayed an impressive breadth of knowledge, built on by their enthusiasm for the topic. Pupils are very pleased when their work is selected to be included in the weekly 'Goodly Works' assembly and cannot wait to hand in their evidence, to be entered in the special book. A spontaneous chant heard in lessons and assembly when pupils are trying especially hard, 'If you're a trier, you're a winner', exemplifies their very good attitude to their work. Pupils make very good efforts to follow their teachers' instructions and although they are often competitive over their work, it is not in an aggressive fashion, rather that they just want to succeed. Where, very rarely, pupils' attitudes to work are less enthusiastic, it is invariably associated with lessons that proceed at a slow pace – for example, when too long is taken over the introduction or when the work is not challenging enough and pupils don't have to try hard. When they are keen to succeed, they work without let up. For example, a small group of pupils, improving their physical education skills during a therapy session, repeated and practised their exercises and improved their co-ordination. The small number of girls are confident and secure, happy to join in any activities – for example, football or rugby. Post-16 students have a positive view of the school and appreciate being able to use their classroom at breaks and lunchtime.

10. Overall, pupils' behaviour is good. It varies from very good and excellent, to very challenging and indicative of the special needs of a minority of pupils. Parents are very impressed by the high standards of behaviour. Pupils' own accounts of the reasons why they feel they have been sent to the Pupil and Staff Support room show that many accept responsibility for their actions and are keen to improve and manage their behaviour better in future. They feel that staff deal with them very fairly. Most often pupils are polite and courteous, and their behaviour in lessons is of a higher quality than they display around school. For example, a number are very high spirited when on the yards, which can result in arguments. The majority of the pupils are very well behaved and there is no indication of any racism or sexism in the school. Boys and girls and pupils from different cultural backgrounds all get on well together. Nearly one-third of the pupils have achieved the school's Grade One certificate, earning them special privileges and demonstrating the very good behaviour of many. There were five fixed-term exclusions during the last year, involving four pupils. The school would not tolerate the behaviour that they displayed. Two of them have since left, and the other two have responded very well to the school's consistent approaches to managing their behaviour.
11. Pupils' personal development is very good. Parents feel strongly that the school is helping their children to become more mature and responsible, with greatly increased confidence. They are keen to help the staff. For example, each morning, the boarders take charge of setting out chairs for assembly, and afterwards, pupils queue up patiently to take the chairs back into the dining room. Pupils are very willing to support others less fortunate than themselves – for example, by contributing to charities. The school council organises a recycling project, involving pupils collecting and separating paper and cans, in order to raise funds for items such as videos or cues for the pool table. Pupils are enthusiastic about the awarding of the weekly 'BODS' award (for better overall dress sense) and proud of their recently adopted uniform, having themselves selected the design and colour of the sweatshirts. The school council provides very practical opportunities for pupils to learn about citizenship. Its members are extremely serious about their role in representing the views of the pupils and are very conscientious about their responsibility to report back to other pupils the reasons behind staff's responses to their ideas. They are occasionally not able to do this, because they haven't been given sufficient explanation.
12. Relationships between pupils and with adults are very good and have a very positive effect on learning. For example, in an English lesson in the library, where Year 8 pupils were carrying out research into their own projects, they co-operated very well when using resources such as the paper guillotine. They respected the effort that had gone into each project and were careful not to disturb the evidence gathered on each desk. Pupils were keen to show their work to the staff and listened carefully to the advice they were given about methods of presenting their work. They thought the lesson had gone too quickly, because they had enjoyed it so much. In a design and technology lesson, Year 10 pupils were very kind to each other as they exchanged protective aprons, helping with the fastenings. Similarly, in an art lesson, pupils of the same age were appreciative of each other's efforts and complimented them on their sculpture – 'I like that little hat that you've given him.' Because of the support they receive, pupils are confident to attempt difficult tasks, such as leading warm-up sessions during physical education lessons. Pupils learn to take responsibility for their own learning. In a lesson where Year 10 pupils had to take apart a commercially produced pie and comment on its contents, they worked very hard – for example to think out explanations for pastry being so thick in a cheap pie – and took care over the presentation of their answers and drawings.

13. In the residential provision, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. They are relaxed and happy and get on together very well. For example, boys and girls sit in the living room, looking at catalogues or watching videos. They take responsibility for small tasks, such as setting tables and clearing away after meals, but have only limited opportunities to develop independence skills. For example, they look after their belongings and personal hygiene, but are not able to make themselves hot drinks and snacks.
14. Attendance is good and above average for a school of this type. The percentage of unauthorised absence appears relatively high in comparison to other schools of this type, but the school has been required to admit a number of pupils who are non-attenders and their unauthorised absence has had an adverse effect on the figures. Pupils who do attend are punctual, unless the school transport is late. A few pupils are independent travellers, and their attendance is usually good and punctual.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

15. The quality of teaching is good overall, with more teaching that is very good or better than is merely satisfactory. This represents a very good improvement since the previous inspection, when teaching was sound in general and unsatisfactory in 15 per cent of the lessons observed. At that time, criticisms included too much use of worksheets and missed opportunities for pupils to work independently, together with a lack of expertise in some subjects, notably physical education and information and communication technology. The school has worked very hard to improve these aspects. Well thought out procedures have been introduced in order to identify teachers' strengths and areas for development, with staff working together on issues such as increasing their confidence in the use of computers. In some subjects – for example, science, physical education and design and technology – new teachers have been recruited. The school has taken great care to ensure that these are subject specialists, with mainstream experience, so they bring a wealth of knowledge and expertise in their particular field. More established staff have benefited from the extensive programme of staff development and regular visits from local education authority advisory staff, keeping them informed about current developments.
16. Today, teachers' knowledge of their subjects is one of the strengths of the teaching. During lessons, they are able to answer questions, quickly present examples to illustrate the points they are making, and simplify difficult ideas, so that all pupils can appreciate them. Their expertise means that they teach skills very effectively. For example, in a design and technology lesson using resistant materials, Year 10 pupils were learning to solder a copper ring, one of the components of candle holders they had designed. The teacher paid extremely good attention to health and safety issues, because he had assessed the potential risks very carefully. After a demonstration to the whole group, pupils carried out their practical work individually. In addition to checking that they wore leather aprons and gloves and visors, the teacher anticipated where difficulties might arise. For instance, he reminded pupils that, after heating, the dull-looking copper was still extremely hot. Because this safe environment for learning was established, the teacher was able to encourage pupils to be independent, carrying out as much of the task as they could and making decisions – for example, about whether or not the copper had been heated enough. Pupils reported that they had been rather nervous – for instance, when the blowtorch flame was roaring – but had confidence in the teacher's skills and so were able to complete the task and make very good progress. Where teachers are unqualified or are not subject specialists, the school makes sure they have suitable support and guidance – for example, help with planning work or experienced staff to be on hand during lessons. As a result, the

presence of unqualified staff does not have a significant effect on the overall quality of teaching or pupils' progress.

17. Alongside their knowledge of their subjects, teachers are extremely aware of the needs of pupils, and they make very good use of both when they plan lessons. In the best instances, they tailor the tasks to suit the pupils, so that whatever their ability, they are able to work as independently as possible. Lessons in English often illustrate this very well. For example, a lesson for higher attaining pupils in Year 9 began with each member of the class putting capital letters at the start of sentences. This immediately reminded them all about the teacher's high expectations for accuracy and presentation. They then moved on to individual tasks, which were very closely matched to their individual needs in literacy. The two highest attainers were reading a passage, establishing its meaning and then answering written questions, in preparation for the forthcoming National Curriculum tests. They found the task difficult, but understood clearly what they needed to do and they supported each other. Other pupils, for instance, sequenced the instructions for a recipe, read statements in order to make a decision about the causes of a road accident, or read sentences and selected the correct missing words. Because of this very careful planning, which took account of what each pupil had already learned, they were all able to accomplish their tasks, with just the right amount of effort on their part. The teacher and support assistant provided any necessary help or directed pupils to dictionaries, and marked their work as it was completed, so pupils could see immediately the progress they had made or where they were going wrong. Pupils were all very well focused on their work and not at all distracted by the different tasks going on and the movements of staff and pupils. Their attitudes and efforts were very positive and they made very good progress in their literacy skills.
18. In a minority of lessons – often where teaching is satisfactory, rather than good or very good – pupils are not stimulated sufficiently by their work. They appear unconvinced of its relevance to them, because although the teacher's intentions are worthy, the presentation is dull and time seems to drag. For example, in a mathematics lesson for higher attaining pupils in Year 8, the 'mental warm-up' was slow and laboured. At the end of the lesson, the teacher played a game with them, using number cards. They enjoyed this very much, but it would have been more suitable as a warm-up to a more challenging lesson. Such instances are quite rare, because teachers are usually very successful in choosing activities that motivate pupils to try hard. This is one reason why managing their behaviour often appears deceptively easy – in most lessons, pupils want to work and they do. The very positive relationships between staff and pupils are further factors in this. Pupils respect their teachers and are keen to win their approval.
19. In many lessons, support staff make very important contributions to the quality of teaching and hence to pupils' progress. Support assistants are very skilled and teachers make full use of their abilities by planning carefully who they are to work with and what they are to do. This represents a very significant improvement since the previous inspection, when teachers' management of support staff was considered to be a weakness. It has been turned into an especially fine art in the case of the staff from the Language and Communication Enhancement Centre, who have great expertise in getting the best from the pupils. As a result, teachers can plan lessons in the knowledge that they can rely upon these staff to support pupils' language needs – for example, by rephrasing questions or encouraging them to take part in discussions – or to help them to manage their behaviour. In a food technology lesson with Year 7 pupils, half of the class were supported by the Centre. One pupil in particular, with autism, needed individual and constant support to enable him to benefit from the lesson and be no risk to himself or other pupils. The support assistant managed him

very well. For instance, when he was unhappy about a sequencing task, repeatedly shouting 'I don't want to stick,' she skilfully diverted his attention. After peeping at his apple crumble in the oven, his mood changed and he was prepared to do some sticking after all. In this same lesson, the specialist teacher supported a pupil with English as an additional language very effectively. She gave him help with unfamiliar vocabulary and encouraged him to contribute answers during a discussion. She quietly supplied 'baking tray' to replace 'thingy' when he was struggling. Because the support staff know pupils so well, they are able to adjust the demands they make of each one, promoting independence but not pushing them too far. The staff attend meetings of the departments in which they spend most of their time. This means that they have a solid understanding of what teachers are hoping to achieve and so can work in similar ways.

20. For instance, the teacher in charge of the Language and Communication Enhancement Centre teaches science to a small number of pupils who are not able to cope with the pressures of working in the laboratory. Instead, they are withdrawn to the more familiar environment of the Centre, where they can concentrate more easily. Distractible pupils flourish in the calm climate of this classroom, behave very well and make very good progress. For example, a Year 10 pupil, with autism, developed his understanding of the effects of forces by using a stopwatch to time model cars as they rolled down a slope. With patience and persistence and references to his previous experiences, the teacher gradually enabled him to predict that friction from carpet would slow down the vehicles.
21. Parents are virtually unanimous in their approval of the teaching. 'Dedicated', 'work miracles' and 'enormously skilled' are a few of the ways in which they describe teachers. However, the questionnaire shows that a significant minority have some concerns about the provision of homework. The school's policy is quite clear – it is provided on request, following discussion between the school, parents and pupils. In practice, homework makes only a small contribution to developing pupils' independent study skills. In a few instances – for example, GCSE art candidates – pupils willingly undertake work outside lessons. When pupils are prepared for mainstream experiences, they receive support to enable them to cope with the increase in expectations. The school is very happy to discuss individual requests from parents.

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

22. The quality of the curriculum is good overall and has improved considerably since the previous inspection. It successfully meets the both the school's own aims and National Curriculum requirements. Detailed programmes of work in almost all subjects help pupils to learn well in lessons, make good progress, and achieve their best in examinations. The curriculum is most effective in subjects such as English, science, physical education and art. It is least effective in personal, social and health education, where planning and co-ordination across the school are unsatisfactory. The school is successful in ensuring that all pupils have equal opportunities to learn and make progress. Their needs are met very well through their individual education plans. Each pupil is set a small number of targets, to be achieved by the following year. Subject co-ordinators then produce more detailed targets, showing how their work – for example, in science – will contribute to meeting the overall targets. Subject plans then take account of these, aiming to ensure that the work covered is suitable for all pupils. The school is careful to ensure that pupils receive the specialist support they need – for example, physiotherapy – and works closely with other professionals. There is a very well planned programme to identify pupils who are ready to work in mainstream schools and to provide flexible support for them.

23. Almost one-third of pupils have significant language and communication difficulties. In the Centre for Language and Communication Enhancement and in the English department, the plans for meeting the needs of these pupils are very good. Pupils develop the basic literacy skills required for good access to the same subjects, National Curriculum assessment tests and examination courses that are found in mainstream secondary schools. This is so important not only for pupils' academic achievement but also for their self-esteem and confidence. Plans for meeting the needs of six pupils whose home language is not English are also successful because they involve all teachers and classroom assistants, plus expertise from the Language and Communication Enhancement Centre, specialist teacher and English department. As a consequence, these pupils make as good progress as other pupils, and can barely be distinguished from them in lessons.
24. The curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is planned well as a typical secondary mainstream curriculum. It is unfortunate that music provision is currently suspended because of recruitment difficulties. Resolution of this problem is expected later this term. All pupils are disapplied from French, a decision taken by the governors in consultation with staff, parents and pupils. This decision has narrowed the curriculum. It is one of the rare missed opportunities to boost pupils' self-esteem, by giving them the skill to speak a modern foreign language. The school has discussed how to make best use of the modern foreign language teaching skills of existing staff, by offering, for example, one lesson each week as an option. Plans cannot yet be implemented, however, because of the current heavy teaching commitments of the staff concerned. In Year 9, pupils begin a careers education and guidance programme in line with statutory requirements. There are good links with the careers service to support this programme through to Year 11.
25. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum builds well on that of the earlier years and leads to external accreditation in most subjects. The continuing strong focus on language and communication and proficiency in literacy supports examination work across the curriculum. Pupils have the opportunity to study to GCSE standard in art and science, for example, and gain Certificates of Educational Achievement in many subjects. In Year 10, pupils begin to study a nationally accredited Youth Award Scheme, with the aim of developing their independent learning skills. The amount of careers education and guidance is increased, with continuing good involvement of the careers service, and with the local Education Business Partnership, which organises work experience effectively. Pupils successfully complete placements in a wide range of settings – for example, shops, factories, farms, hotels, hairdressers, kennels, and nurseries. Employers are very supportive and these work placements sometimes lead directly to employment.
26. The post-16 curriculum is satisfactory. It includes a broad range of subjects for students who are not ready by the age of sixteen to transfer to college, training or employment. Only eight students enrolled this year for the one-year course. The post-16 curriculum is not, however, distinctive enough. It is barely different in character from that provided for pupils in Years 10 and 11, and all students follow broadly the same course of study. It does not take sufficient account of the very different learning needs of these students as they are about to leave school and move on to further education, training or work. There are so many subjects on the sixth form timetable that progress in important aspects of independence training – for example, managing money – is not as good as it could be. This year, not even the highest attaining Year 12 students will have made enough progress to be entered for a Managing Money certificate. There is too much emphasis on academic subjects, at the expense of careers and vocational education and personal development.

27. A wide variety of good quality lunchtime activities is available daily. The programme is well developed and much improved since the previous inspection. Activities are of necessity only about twenty minutes in length, but are well attended, and pupils enjoy themselves. A model building club for pupils with communication and language difficulties is very successful. It not only promotes pupils' fine motor and social skills but also develops their speech as the staff member cleverly guides discussion whilst pupils build their models. A science club hones the interests of Year 7 pupils who do not yet have sufficient science practical skills to join the Young Scientists option class. The girls' rugby group is popular as well as the football and badminton clubs. In a dance club, pupils and staff practise a historical court dance to perform to the rest of the school. A 'body awareness' and movement session in the hall helps pupils improve their spatial and body awareness, confidence and self-esteem.
28. In the last year, the school has introduced the National Curriculum citizenship programmes of study. This has involved a change in role for staff, with the effect that there is no longer a clarity about the overall planning for personal, social and health education and citizenship. The provision for sex education is not yet secure for this year. A pilot programme was planned and taught last year by the science department and the school nurse but arrangements for this year have still to be finalised. Introduction to college life should be an important part of personal, social and health education as preparation for the next stage in pupils' lives. However, college links have declined and are now made very late in the school/college year in Years 11 and 12.
29. However, overall, provision for pupils' personal development is very good and has improved well since the previous inspection. A great many aspects of the school contribute to this. For example, the school week closes with two very successful lessons. In the first, all pupils aged 11–16 review how well they have met a personal target that they set themselves the previous week. The target could be related to a particular subject, or behaviour, or about personal organisation, for example. Pupils evaluate their own progress, and they provide evidence that helps other pupils to judge how well they have met their targets. In the second lesson, pupils choose a subject to study for half a term. The options include science, art, textiles, climbing, computers, games, drama, and model building for example. The option lesson is for all pupils, with mixed age groupings and regardless of a pupil's individual stage of development. The option lessons promote subject skills and knowledge but additionally, in all cases, they help to develop pupils' confidence and social skills as they learn to work in different groupings.
30. Spiritual development is good, although there are missed opportunities in assemblies for pupils to be reflective and music is not a feature. The lack of music is especially significant when linked to the current absence of music teaching. Assembly themes are mirrored across the school and encompass celebrations and festivals from Christianity and other faiths. Pupils are encouraged to share the values of staff and to think about how their actions and thoughts affect their own lives and those of others. This is very apparent in the Pupil and Staff Support room, where the immediate aftermath of an incident can cause pupils to think hard about their actions. Pupils value each other's work and can draw inspiration from the talents of others. For example, a pupil has shown particular talent in writing and illustrating a series of books. These are favourites of younger children, who take great pleasure in reading and looking at them, admiring the skills of the author and illustrator.
31. Moral and social provision is very good. The school's code of conduct is given a high priority and is set out in language that is easily understood by all pupils. Assemblies have a strong moral theme. For example, during the week of the inspection, the theme

was 'Anger', with assemblies emphasising the need to control and direct this emotion. Pupils are encouraged to understand citizenship and the work of the school council has a high profile in the school. For example, its waste recycling project promotes a strong social message of respect for the environment. Participation in a large number of sporting events in the area promotes teamwork and fair play and offers pupils the opportunities to meet others of the same age. Residential pupils visit a local youth club and are offered a good variety of evening activities – for example, outings to football matches or to go swimming. The annual activity week offers all pupils a very good chance to work together on a range of projects with a common theme.

32. Pupils' cultural development is promoted well. Links with the community are good and make an effective contribution to the curriculum. Visits to the theatre – for example, the Globe, to watch a Shakespeare play – the ballet, opera, cinema, museums and pantomime extend the curriculum. Actors give performances, about the history of science, for example. A singer and members of the British Legion visit for the school's Remembrance Day service. Art lessons make very strong contributions to pupils' knowledge of a wide range of artists. Religious education lessons develop very effectively pupils' understanding of different faiths and the cultures of other countries.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

33. The school's procedures for ensuring the safety, care and well-being of pupils and students are very good.
34. Health and safety issues are very carefully addressed. The school has ensured that there are specific areas of responsibility for staff where this is appropriate – for example, in the testing of fire alarms and holding of emergency evacuation drills. There are very stringent procedures for out of school visits and risk assessments. The care for pupils' health is underlined by the regular visits of the school nurse and the work of a learning support assistant, who is a qualified nurse. She dispenses medicines and is regularly available for pupils to 'drop in' for medical advice. All members of staff have first aid qualifications, which are updated on a rolling programme. The school is especially vigilant where it has identified a potential health and safety risk. For example, staff and governors are concerned over the danger posed to pupils in the morning when vehicles have to make a tight turn in the school's playground. In lessons, planning includes a risk assessment where an element of danger exists for pupils. For example, in an art lesson, care was taken to avoid pupils inhaling dust from pastels.
35. The arrangements for ensuring that procedures for child protection are up to date and effective are very good. The designated person is highly qualified in child protection procedures and the school works hard to ensure that all staff are trained appropriately and can identify who is responsible if they have concerns about a pupil or student. The school liaises closely with the local area child protection committee. A missed opportunity in the provision is the absence of displayed telephone numbers to enable residential pupils and students to contact independent agencies such as Childline.
36. Good quality care is provided in the residential setting. Girls each have an identified 'key worker' but all boys have not yet had these allocated. Staff know pupils and their individual needs very well. The younger pupils receive firm, clear guidance and support. Older pupils are given some privileges and opportunities for independence, but these could usefully be extended – for example, opportunities to make hot drinks and snacks. Communication between the residence and the school is effective, regular and detailed. Pupils' dignity and privacy is respected at all times. Routines – for

example, at breakfast – are very structured. They are not regimented, but do lack a homely or family touch. Food is good quality and pupils enjoy it. Rightly, one of the targets in the new school development plan is to consider the school's practices in the light of the draft national minimum standards for residential special schools.

37. The school has excellent procedures for managing pupils' behaviour, ensuring discipline and eliminating any bullying and oppressive or racist behaviour. Without exception, pupils and students commented on how safe they feel in the school. They know exactly what to do and who to speak to if they ever have concerns about another individual's behaviour towards them or to others. At the heart of the school's procedures is the Pupil and Staff Support provision. Based in a central room, it acts as a haven, sanctuary, meeting place, internal exclusion base, detention room and chief reporting base for 'goodly works'. There is no stigma attached to being in the room. Pupils who are out of lessons for disciplinary reasons are expected to continue their class work. At the same time, others will arrive voluntarily to find work if, for example, they have finished a therapy session just before the end of a lesson. Records and reasons for pupils being in the provision are contained in a bound incident book, and are scrutinised and analysed on a regular basis by the deputy headteacher and support team. Anger management courses are run for identified groups of pupils and individuals, and are extremely effective for pupils who have displayed anti-social and challenging behaviour. Staff carry out regular checks of pupils' behaviour around the school, helping to maintain an oversight of their progress and personal development. Specialist approaches to behaviour management are regularly reviewed to ensure that these match exactly the needs of the pupils. The school liaises regularly with outside behavioural specialists in the education psychology service – for example, when setting up the anger management courses. The individual needs of pupils and students are well known to staff and they use this knowledge very effectively to guide and monitor pupils' personal development. Staff are made aware of the opinions of pupils by the concerns and suggestions brought to the attention of the school council. The merit award scheme is used very effectively to highlight to pupils their areas of success. Additionally, the successful 'log' session at the end of each week enables pupils to look back and judge if they have met the targets that they set themselves the week before.
38. There are very effective procedures for assessing pupils' academic progress. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection. When they arrive at the school, pupils' first half-term is considered to be an induction period and, during this time, very detailed assessments are carried out, to establish how well they are achieving in literacy, oracy and numeracy. Where they have additional speech, language or communication difficulties, the staff of the school's special facility carry out further assessments, so that they can draw up individual programmes to support them. Here, the school's provision of its own speech and language therapists, attached to the specialist Centre, is of very great value. They ensure that pupils receive the support they need in order to make progress in their academic work and personal development. In the main school, each subject has thorough procedures for checking how well pupils are performing – such as regular tests for pupils in Years 7 to 9. The examination course work of older pupils is marked very thoroughly and the information gathered is used to help them to move forward. The school uses the results of assessments when grouping pupils into classes for English and mathematics. As far as possible, they work alongside pupils with broadly similar levels of ability, so teachers have to plan for a narrower range of needs. Assessments have indicated clearly how the school population is changing, with pupils' needs becoming more complex. As a result, teachers are constantly reviewing the courses they offer, particularly the challenge posed by accredited courses. Pupils' achievements are gathered together effectively in Records of Achievement, which are high quality.

39. Attendance is very effectively monitored and promoted. Computerised records of pupils' punctuality and attendance patterns help the school identify any absences that need to be referred to the education welfare service. The school has a few pupils on roll who came as non-attenders, and works hard to encourage them to attend if it is at all possible. Records of good attendance are celebrated in assembly. Attendance checks on pupils who are late to school are linked to checks on the punctuality of school transport. Class registers are taken at the start of every lesson to encourage pupils to be punctual and to check that they are where they should be.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

40. Parents' views of the school are very positive and there is a very strong partnership in existence. Parents feel that the school provides a happy and caring environment where their children are challenged academically, reach their potential and where their individual needs are well known to staff. They support and applaud the school's ethos of 'a trier is a winner', and are very pleased with the progress that their children are making.
41. A small number of parents are not completely happy about the amount of information they receive about how well their children are getting on, especially when they are not able to communicate this easily. The parents of pupils attached to the Language and Communication Enhancement Centre can negotiate with staff as to the type and frequency of the information they receive – for example, a few pupils have home/school books. Parents can go into school at anytime – the Centre offers them a weekly time slot for visits. However, practical difficulties caused by work and distance from the school, preclude many parents from coming in on a regular basis. The school nurse frequently telephones parents to enquire about pupils who are absent, and also to let them know when there are medical or first aid concerns. The school administrator, a representative of the school's pupil/parent partnership, is in touch with many parents on a day-to-day basis and is a well-known first point of contact with the school. Annual review reports (which also form the annual report on pupils' progress) and transition plans are of good quality, personal and informative. They contain useful examples of what pupils know, understand and are able to do, and their progress since the previous year is identified clearly. They provide parents and pupils with an evaluation of how they are getting on in terms of their attendance, effort and behaviour. Parents, relevant professionals, education and residential staff are all involved in the review process, and pupils are invited to attend and contribute to meetings.
42. Parents are very pleased with the school's high expectations for their children's behaviour. They like the fact that pupils are encouraged to help one another and to respect individuals. They especially praise the initiative shown by the school council in raising funds for the school, and for others. Parents are aware that the behaviour of some pupils can be very challenging, because of their special needs, and they approve of the school's methods – such as the use of the Pupil and Staff Support room – to manage their behaviour.
43. Parents are active fundraisers for the school through the Parents and Friends Association. A small number of parents, through their initial voluntary help, have become members of staff, and the school welcomes this positive commitment to their work. A few parents also provide work experience placements for pupils. The school works hard to ensure that the views of parents are being represented effectively. To this end, questionnaires are sent out to seek their views on a range of areas.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

44. The school's leadership and management are both very good. The headteacher has established a very clear vision for the school, which is evident in its daily life and is supported strongly by parents. All staff promote consistently the importance they attach to pupils doing their best and the school concentrates many of its efforts and resources towards supporting them – for example, through the Pupil and Staff Support System and Language and Communication Enhancement Centre. This is another factor in promoting pupils' self-esteem and hence the progress they make. They feel, as one pupil reported to his parents, that they are attending a 'real school'. This is achieved in part by the school constantly looking outward, observing what is current practice in mainstream schools and keeping up to date with local and national initiatives and priorities. Because such developments are considered very carefully, in the light of their suitability for Stony Dean's pupils, staff have confidence in the school's leaders – they feel valued and supported. The school is happy to spend time and effort in adapting and modifying systems so that they meet the needs of its pupils – for example, the National Literacy Strategy, its approach to inclusion, and individual education plans. The headteacher has been very successful in building a team that shares his values and goals. This means that responsibilities can be delegated, in the knowledge that staff will be working with the same sense of purpose. Staff are very committed and hardworking, following the examples set by the headteacher and deputy headteacher. As a consequence, and with the firm steer from its leaders, the school has made very good progress since the previous inspection, at the same time as adapting to meet the increasingly complex needs of its pupils.
45. The deputy headteacher takes significant responsibility for the day-to-day management of the school and has oversight of a number of key aspects, such as the curriculum, the development planning process, health and safety procedures and staff training and development. This demanding task is possible, because of the well thought out supporting structures that have been established. For example, the responsibility for the curriculum is handed down through the co-ordinators for Years 7 to 9 and 10 to 12, to the subject co-ordinators and their departments. In such a small school, it would be possible for some staff to feel isolated, but strategies have been developed in order to avoid this – for example, by including support staff in departments. Staff are given responsibilities, together with support – for example, time – to fulfil these, and space to get on with the job. The arrangements for checking on developments ensures that senior staff are kept well informed about how these are proceeding and open communication channels mean that staff are able to ask freely for advice and resources. In many subjects, the work of their co-ordinator is a strength – they are very well led and managed. Some, including English, science, design and technology and physical education, are very dynamic and forward-looking. However, support is needed to ensure that personal, social and health education is better organised. Additionally, responsibility for the post-16 provision has recently been reallocated and roles need further clarification.
46. The school has effective systems for finding out about the quality of teaching, and this represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection. These run parallel to the statutory procedures for performance management and can involve staff at all levels of seniority. For example, any subject co-ordinator can ask for time in which to visit classrooms, although in practice, it is the larger departments – notably English – where this happens most often. The headteacher often substitutes for teachers who are involved in these activities or who have other management tasks to perform. This enables him to find out at first hand about, for example, the quality of teachers' planning and pupils' attitudes to particular subjects. Good use is made of the wealth of information about pupils' achievement and progress – for example, to allocate the

resources of the Language and Communication Enhancement Centre or to identify pupils who might be able to support placement in a mainstream school. The school prides itself on being inclusive and approaches this in a number of ways. For example, pupils attached to the Language and Communication Enhancement Centre benefit greatly from its support, but spend most of their time in classes with other pupils, so that their social development is not affected adversely. The school's policy sets out clear criteria for identifying pupils who might benefit from links with mainstream schools and there is a carefully structured but flexible framework for achieving these, supported by resources such as staffing, to help smooth the way.

47. The governing body makes an increasingly effective contribution to helping to establish the school's direction and to supporting its leaders, staff, pupils and parents. For example, each governor has individual responsibilities, as well as being a member of committees. Through their links with subjects or areas of the school – for example, the boarding provision – governors are acquiring more detailed knowledge and understanding of particular aspects, which they feed into committees and hence into the full governing body. This means that when decisions are made – for instance, about the allocation of resources – there will be someone who can present a case or provide additional information. Governors were instrumental in opening the boarding provision to girls, because they saw this as an opportunity to increase their numbers overall, in order to allow the school population to reflect more accurately that of society in general.
48. The school has a very good system for planning how it will spend its money. The headteacher works with the rest of the senior management team – including the deputy and the finance officer – to work out how much is available. They discuss various options with the governors' finance committee, and recommendations and options are discussed by the full governing body. The process also involves teachers who are responsible for different subjects, as well as therapists, residential staff, and premises personnel who all put together their plans and hopes for future developments, including the costs involved. The planning process moves back and forth in a positive way to finalise details of what will be the priorities for each year. There are times when factors beyond the school's control affect decisions, or delay them – such as a possible review of the school's role by the local authority, and the lack of available money to spend on extending the buildings. The finance officer manages the spending very well during each year, and the governors also keep close track of the income and spending, especially in the committee responsible for the finances. The school's systems and reports are clear, easily understood, and are readily available for the governors to base their decisions upon them.
49. The school makes a good effort to see that it gives good value for the money it receives. The pupils' standards are examined through their course results and through comparisons with other similar schools. There are frequent meetings with other schools for working together on matters that concern them all, sharing resources and expertise, and planning for the future. Staff are expected to evaluate the training courses that they have been on, and there is some expectation that they will evaluate how effective their spending has been on major items of equipment. Effective systems are in place to ensure that the school gets good value from the goods and services that it receives from local education agencies or from other traders and contractors. The school receives various grants, gifts and donations for particular purposes – such as staff training, computer upgrades, and extra-curricular activities. These grants are always allocated carefully and the systems for checking this are very good.
50. The overall staffing position is good. The school has an adequate number of teachers who are well qualified and experienced. However, there is a shortage of qualified

expertise in several areas. There is no-one to teach music, for instance, despite the efforts of the school to find someone. A particular strength of the school's senior managers is their ability to identify the potential of staff and to make the most of this. As a result, unqualified staff make significant contributions to the curriculum and pupils' progress, enabling subjects such as food technology to be taught, in spite of the serious problems in recruiting teachers. Teachers have several periods each week in which to manage their subjects and to cover for absent colleagues. This is an effective way of using their time, as it provides the school with capable staff who know the pupils well, instead of relying on emergency staff to come in if someone is suddenly ill. The many educational support staff are well qualified and experienced, whether they work mainly in classrooms as teachers, or alongside teachers, or in the Language and Communication Enhancement Centre with small groups or individual pupils. The school also employs very effective qualified therapy staff to help pupils with their speech and language difficulties. Occasionally, lessons would benefit from classroom support, but none is available. The residential staff are well qualified and experienced. They fulfil their primary role in the care and extended education of the pupils well. In wider support of the pupils' education, the school also employs staff who are very effective in financial and administration roles in the offices, as well as conscientious and capable premises staff.

51. For each group of staff, there is a very good programme of support and introduction to the needs of the pupils and the requirements of the school, as well as essential health and safety matters. As they become established, they join in the system for ensuring their effectiveness as teachers or assistants. This works very well, and it has been in operation for many years, in different forms. Senior members of staff have regular formal meetings with other staff, discussing areas of expertise to be developed, in line with the needs of the pupils, the school, and the professional development of the staff members themselves. Staff find the system to be a positive experience, and it is well linked to the school's programme for training. A recent school-wide target has been, for instance, to develop the use of information and communication technology in all subjects. This is successfully improving the use of computers from a poor level at the time of the last inspection, to a satisfactory state now, with some subjects using computers particularly effectively.
52. Learning resources are at least satisfactory in all subject areas. Resources in science, physical education and information and communication technology are much improved since the last inspection. However, there is still some old and unreliable hardware in the refurbished information and communication technology room and the science room lacks adequate storage facilities for the new resources.
53. Overall, the accommodation is satisfactory. The information and communication technology and science rooms have been refurbished and now provide good quality specialist accommodation. As reported in the previous inspection, access to the library is restricted as this is also a teaching room. This is unsatisfactory as it prevents pupils browsing or carrying out research during lesson times. Teaching accommodation for post-16 pupils is unsatisfactory and they have no social area in which to make snacks or relax. There is also a lack of sufficient small rooms for purposes such as literacy support.
54. The accommodation is well used, as are learning resources. Good efforts are made to ensure that new equipment is not bought without a sound reason. The school makes good use of new high technology equipment and systems – for example, office staff rely on a range of computers for all manner of organisational tasks such as report writing, pupil records, staffing files, salaries, ordering goods and services, and keeping track of the school's overall budget.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

55. In order to raise standards further, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

1. Improve the balance of the curriculum for post-16 students. In particular:
 - provide more time for careers and vocational education;
 - develop better college links so that students are able to make earlier and more informed choices about future courses;
 - make sure that the curriculum meets students' individual needs – for example, building on their achievements in Years 10 and 11;
 - offer more opportunities for students to develop and practise the skills they need for independent living;
 - review the appropriateness of including so many academic subjects with so little time allocated to each one.

(paragraphs 4,26,120, 127,128)

2. Develop a structured programme of work for personal, social and health education, including sex education.
 - Ensure that this enables pupils to build on what they have already learned. This should take account of the contributions made by other subjects – for example, science – in order to avoid repetition or omissions.
 - Distinguish between the provision made for personal, social and health education and for citizenship.

(paragraphs 3,28,116)

3. Continue to work with the local education authority to improve the accommodation. Pay particular attention to:
 - the location of the library;
 - the accommodation for post-16 students.

(paragraphs 53,127)

In addition, the following issues should also be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

4. Carry out the planned review of the residential provision in the light of the draft national minimum standards for residential special schools.
Ensure that the telephone numbers of independent agencies are displayed for pupils' information. *(paragraphs 35,36)*
5. Finalise and implement the co-ordinator's plans to improve the effectiveness of the curriculum and teaching in mathematics, in order to raise achievement to the same very high level that is found in English and science. *(paragraphs 3,18,68)*
6. Develop the programme of college links for pupils in Years 10 and 11.*(paragraph 28)*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	88
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	58

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	30	38	19	0	0	0
Percentage	1	34	43	22	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	127
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	31

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.9

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.6

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	4
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	6
Indian	0
Pakistani	5
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	0
White	111
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	1	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	4	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y12

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	13.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	9.3
Average class size	11.5

Education support staff: Y7 – Y12

Total number of education support staff	21
Total aggregate hours worked per week	553

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	1125438
Total expenditure	1102693
Expenditure per pupil	9506
Balance brought forward from previous year	30594
Balance carried forward to next year	53339

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2.1
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
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.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	14	3	17

GCSE results				1 or more grades A*-G
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	Boys			11
	Girls			1
	Total			12
Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified	School			71

GCSE results		GCSE point score
Average point score per pupil	School	3.4

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	127
Number of questionnaires returned	65

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	74	21	5	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	63	31	0	2	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	57	38	2	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	29	15	5	9
The teaching is good.	78	18	2	0	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	54	31	15	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	82	15	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	85	15	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	64	27	6	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	82	18	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	69	26	0	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	53	22	11	2	11

Where totals are less than one hundred, this is because some parents did not respond to every question.

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

ENGLISH

56. The provision is very good with several excellent features. Pupils of all ages make very good progress and achieve very well. This is because teaching is consistently at least good and is often very good, and because of the excellent strategies used for teaching literacy skills.

Key strengths

- The quality of teaching is very good.
- The co-ordinators have excellent subject knowledge which they use to promote literacy throughout the school.
- The subject is excellently managed.
- Teachers' planning and use of assessment is very good.
- The contribution made by the Language and Communication Enhancement Centre, Getting on at Literacy strategy and decoding (reading) lessons in supporting and developing literacy is very good.

Areas for improvement

- The library needs to be re-sited to ensure that all pupils have access during lesson times.
- Opportunities should be provided for pupils in Years 7 to 9 to have timetabled lessons in the computer room.

57. The English curriculum is very well planned and now includes drama for all pupils in Years 7 to 9. This is a good improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers use the school's curriculum and elements of the National Literacy Strategy very effectively in helping pupils achieve and make very good progress in reading. Pupils benefit greatly from the Getting on at Literacy initiative, support from the Language and Communication Enhancement Centre and a structured decoding (reading) programme. Each of these is very effectively linked to the school's curriculum and, where appropriate, pupils have withdrawal lessons identified in their individual education plans. The delivery of the Getting on at Literacy initiative is excellent and the monitoring of its effectiveness is very good. The quality of teaching in the subject is always at least good and is usually very good. The very good teaching takes careful account of individual needs, engages pupils well and increases their confidence in their ability to achieve their full potential. The subject is excellently led and managed by the English and Literacy co-ordinators. Pupils are able to use the library for lunchtime activities, but its use as a teaching base prevents it from being used effectively during lesson times.

58. Throughout the school, standards of speaking and listening are very good. Teachers and support staff provide very good speaking and listening role models for pupils and expect pupils to listen to their teachers and each other. In all lessons, pupils are confident to ask questions and contribute to discussions. This is because teachers and support staff encourage them to join in and genuinely value what they have to say. Questions and prompts are used very effectively to help them organise and express their ideas. The 'Young Scientists' Friday option group has made public presentations at regional and national levels. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have opportunities to use their speaking and listening skills in a wider range of settings, including literacy skills tests and externally accredited Certificates of Achievement. For example, pupils in Year 11 prepared talks on topics of interest to them ranging from 'The Planets' to

'Motorbikes'. The teacher stressed the need to interest the audience, and one pupil commented that 'It's no good talking if people are too bored to listen.' One pupil gave a very informative talk on kick boxing, which the teacher recorded and replayed to the group for them to discuss. They listened attentively and asked suitable questions – for example, 'What weight division do you fight in?'

59. Drama is now taught to all pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. Pupils participate fully in lessons and enjoy taking part in role-play. They take pleasure in the language and rhythm of stories. For example, pupils in a Year 7 lesson were able to follow part of the poem 'Hiawatha' and take part in acting out walking silently through a forest, tracking animals. In this lesson, music with sounds of a forest was used very effectively, to set the scene for pupils. Pupils in a Year 8 group planned how to act out a short scene from the 'Labours of Heracles'. One commented, 'It's difficult to walk and fight in slow motion,' adding, 'it's hard to control your leg muscles.'
60. Pupils make very good progress in writing. Teachers encourage them to be as independent as possible and the English co-ordinator has developed resources that support them and help them to write at length. Skills are taught carefully and pupils are provided with a variety of opportunities to use them in lessons. Tasks are very well chosen and are often relevant to pupils' current and future lives. For example, higher attaining pupils in Year 10 were asked to write a letter to a newspaper, about pollution in the area. Their particular challenge was to use persuasive language. The teacher made sure they were very clear about what they had to do, keeping them focused with questions such as 'How would you attract the editor's attention?' The pupils represented a wide range of learning difficulties and great care was taken to involve each one. For example, a teacher, in the lesson to support a pupil with a hearing impairment, working with this pupil and two others, was equally aware of what they were intended to learn and the level of support required by each one. All staff encouraged pupils to be independent – they were required to find words in a dictionary. Staff enabled them to complete their tasks, but did not do the work for them. Throughout the school and in all subjects, teachers encourage high standards of effort, accuracy and presentation. In information and communication technology lessons, pupils are given opportunities to redraft work, choose print styles and add text to pictures for PowerPoint presentations. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are timetabled to use the computer room for one English lesson per week and it would enhance the provision for those in Years 7 to 9 if they could also use this facility on a regular basis.
61. Pupils enjoy reading and take pleasure in stories and poems. The majority read with confidence. They are proud of their achievements and they understand why they are asked to undertake reading tasks. Pupils take great care with such work because of the sensitive and encouraging support they receive, and they always try their best. The books teachers select for their classes to read are well chosen to interest them. For example, pupils in Year 7 responded well to the opportunity to read and write about books of their own choice. The teacher had planned very carefully to ensure that the written tasks were closely matched to pupils' needs and the available staff was targeted suitably. As a result, a higher attaining pupil was able to complete a review sheet about 'Hot Stuff', by Wendy Wren, and wrote 'I enjoyed the story. It was exciting.' Not all the words were spelled correctly, but he made a very good attempt and joined the letters as he wrote. Through sensitive questioning, a member of the Language and Communication Enhancement team enabled another pupil to recall major events in his book – 'Poles Apart' – and to identify aspects of the story he liked. All staff were very encouraging and positive in their attitudes. This meant that one pupil, who at one point had screamed out in frustration, was able to continue with his work after the support assistant had reassured him and calmed him down.

62. In Year 8, the teacher captured the imagination of higher attaining pupils through her exciting descriptions and choice of excerpts from 'The Call of the Wild', by Jack London. More able readers read aloud passages from the book, whilst others read selected sentences projected onto a screen. The teacher established a very productive atmosphere in the classroom – relaxed but promoting discussion of the work. As a result, they compiled a 'fact file', comparing working dogs – such as huskies – with domestic animals. This lesson demonstrated teachers' ability to bring together different aspects of the subject, so that pupils practise speaking and listening, reading and writing, when working on a particular project. Consequently, they are able to appreciate why they need to learn certain skills and knowledge, and this enhances their work and behaviour. A lower attaining class in Year 11 thoroughly enjoyed writing about an incident from 'Gregory's Girl' – again, well chosen to appeal to their age and interests. Responding to the teacher's very effective questioning, they all contributed to compiling a list of 'strong and interesting' words, which would motivate a reader. In this instance, a passage about boys looking at a nurse undressing, pupils suggested very suitable words, such as 'amazed', 'blushed' and 'embarrassed'. They worked very hard at their individual tasks – to produce three paragraphs of original writing, describing the scene. The teacher and support staff provided very good encouragement – for example, 'You helped a lot with our Powerful Word list. Can you use the words you thought of, in your story?' Answer – yes, he could.
63. The school places particular emphasis on pupils acquiring literacy skills not only during English lessons but also across other subject areas. Owing to the in-service training they have received, all staff are able to support and develop literacy skills. All subject teachers are provided with excellent information to enable them to plan work and ensure that pupils are challenged at an appropriate level. In science lessons, regular use is made of 'word walls', where pupils have to choose answers to scientific questions from a set of phrases. For example, where pupils have to decide which phrases represent temporary or permanent changes less able pupils are given 'heating water' as a temporary change and more able pupils 'dissolving sugar in a cup of tea'. This school-wide emphasis on literacy provides consistency for pupils and has a positive impact on their acquisition of speaking and listening, reading and writing skills.

MATHEMATICS

64. The teaching and overall provision are sound, leading to satisfactory progress and achievement by pupils throughout the school. This is not as good as at the time of the previous inspection.

Key strengths

- Teachers assess carefully what each pupil has learned and use this information to alter what will be taught during the following lessons.
- The co-ordinator has very good levels of subject knowledge and expertise.
- Where lessons are well planned to meet their individual needs and move along quickly, pupils concentrate well and make good progress.
- Support staff make strong contributions, by working with groups or with individual pupils.

Areas for improvement

- The plan of what should be taught in the long term has not kept up with the changing needs of the pupils.
- A minority of lessons have a slow pace, and lack a real challenge, resulting in pupils who are bored and restless.

65. During Years 7 to 9, pupils learn about all the necessary aspects of mathematics, particularly number. They become increasingly able to recognise numbers and to add and subtract them in small amounts, perhaps using money in practical exercises. The higher attainers learn to multiply and divide numbers up to twenty, and they can tell the time to five minutes. The least able pupils struggle to recognise the hands on the clock; they need a lot of help to remember the meaning of signs when adding or subtracting numbers; and they forget which coins are which, and what they are worth. More able pupils learn to measure distances in metres and centimetres, to weigh small objects in grams and kilograms, and to measure the capacity of jugs of water. They learn about different shapes such as triangles, circles and rectangles, and measure the various angles. They work out simple coordinates on a grid or spreadsheet, and they draw simple line and block graphs. The school's own analysis of pupils' progress echoes the inspection findings – that it is satisfactory.
66. This steady progress continues during Years 10 and 11, so that a small number of pupils achieve GCSE passes at the end of Year 11. Pupils reinforce much of their learning about numbers and money. The higher attaining pupils are able to count, add and subtract up to about a hundred, and to recognise and use all of the coins, making the correct amounts to buy things using coins of different values. They multiply and divide numbers with some difficulty, but are mainly able to do this well with small numbers. The most able pupils understand simple decimals, fractions and percentages, but others have a great deal of difficulty in changing one form into the other, such as converting £1.20 into pence.
67. Much of the work that pupils do shows a good breadth of study, especially for the more able pupils, who work towards accreditation through GCSE and Certificate of Educational Achievement. Whilst each of these is very good in its own way, and for its own purposes, they are not necessarily the most appropriate courses for these pupils to be following. Pupils tend to work from the course books and the teaching methods become repetitive week after week, as the teachers push to get the pupils up to the required standard for the course awards. Teachers do assess their pupils' progress very well, and they use the information to guide their teaching in the following weeks. What they have not done, however, is to act upon the long-term trend that they have observed – that the pupils entering the school are less able than the older ones that the school has traditionally taken. The co-ordinator is considering various options, such as discontinuing the GCSE course, running it only for the most able few pupils, having a mathematics course that is more related to vocational and life skills, or grouping pupils into three classes instead of two. Several matters have wider implications – such as where to get the staff for three sets of pupils, and which rooms could be used – but there is a need to take action soon to make the teaching more relevant to the needs of an increasing number of pupils. One lesson, for higher attaining pupils in Year 9, about changing centimetres into units of metres and centimetres saw pupils calling out and fiddling with rules and pens as the teacher worked with them from a book and at the whiteboard. Being too generous in her praise of their efforts did not improve the pupils' attitudes, and their learning became slow towards the end of the lesson. There was a clear need in this lesson and in others observed during the inspection, to make the subject more relevant to pupils' needs, and to increase the challenge to them.
68. The leadership and management of the subject are good overall. The co-ordinator has seen the problems, and has formulated plans to deal with them in the long term. The plans of what is to be taught each term are very detailed, as are those for each lesson. Good support is organised through the Language and Communication Enhancement Centre and through one-to-one sessions with a computer program which helps to develop mathematics skills. Since the previous inspection, there have been some

good improvements. For example, resources have been built up well, support assistants are well used now with individual pupils and small groups, lesson planning has improved, and there has been no unsatisfactory teaching this time – but equally, no very good teaching, either. The National Numeracy Strategy has been adapted satisfactorily, although more use could be made of the ideas that it recommends – for example, lively warm-up sessions. Similarly, computers are used soundly in some lessons, but there is scope to increase and refine this use, such as in work on spreadsheets and graphs. Numeracy skills are supported in subjects as diverse as geography (the population density of different areas of England), history (the size of different armies in the Great War) and physical education (counting throws, passes and runs; checking the time; estimating distances). Much more of this kind of practical mathematics could valuably be brought into the timetabled mathematics lessons.

SCIENCE

69. Provision for science is very good. Pupils make very good progress from Years 7 to 11, and achieve very well. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection.

- Key Strengths
- The achievement of pupils who represent the school in national science competitions is excellent.
- Pupils achieve very well. The higher attaining pupils in Year 11 are working towards Grade C in single award science at GCSE level.
- Very positive attitudes and safe, mature behaviour in the laboratory contribute to the very good progress that pupils make.
- Excellent leadership and management by the science co-ordinator are significant factors in the success of this department.
- The quality of science teaching, and the support from the science technician, the language support staff and the classroom assistants, are very good, leading to pupils' success in nationally accredited examinations and competitions.

Area for improvement

- The rate of a pupil's progress (it may be better, worse or as expected) during a lesson, is hard to measure because expected learning outcomes are set for groups, not named pupils.

70. During Years 7 to 11, all pupils have lessons in science. In Year 11, all pupils follow nationally accredited courses in science and nine pupils achieved GCSE lower grades in the single science award last year. Pupils learn a very good range of practical skills, knowledge and understanding across the breadth of the National Curriculum programmes of study for science. They also learn about famous scientists from the past when they watch performances by actors who visit the school. Higher attaining and average pupils begin to draw conclusions about what they see when they carry out investigations. The lowest attaining pupils find this skill particularly difficult, even with the very useful resources provided by the teacher. In Year 8, pupils tested a range of foods to find the amount of energy each contains. They began to draw conclusions from the results they recorded. The higher attaining pupils were able to evaluate how to make their experiments more accurate and fair. Since the appointment of a new science co-ordinator four years ago there has been a huge increase in the amount of investigative work done by pupils – so much so, that the storage of equipment, chemicals and materials is now a significant problem. There is not enough storage space; not enough space in the stock room and the laboratory is

beginning to look cluttered. There is no room allocated for the technician to prepare and clear equipment.

71. Pupils increasingly use appropriate scientific language as they progress from year to year. In Year 7 they begin to use the correct names for animals with and without backbones, with examples of each. They use this knowledge in their work on animal habitats and progress to naming food chains and food webs in these habitats. They go on to apply what they have learned by 'designing' an imaginary animal adapted to be 'a survivor'. By the time they reach Year 11, the lowest attaining pupils are using the periodic table to find the position of zinc and calcium, for example. The higher attaining pupils in Year 11 have a good understanding that elements form compounds. They begin to suggest the names of compounds and their chemical formulae. Pupils are now benefiting from very good specialist science teaching that was not available to pupils at the time of the last inspection. Lessons are very well planned, resources are very effective and there is plenty of professional good humour. The methods used are varied and interesting and pupils always have plenty to do. They report that they enjoy coming to science lessons and it certainly shows on their faces. They behave very well, working safely with chemicals and equipment, and they want to participate. Planning could be developed even further if the planned learning outcomes were assigned to individual pupils rather than to groups, only identified as 'all', 'most' and 'a few'. In this way a pupil's progress against expectations could be more accurately measured and evaluated.
72. In science lessons there are many opportunities for pupils to practise their literacy skills. The almost daily use of a 'word wall' helps pupils to read, talk about and consolidate their learning from previous lessons. Pupils who have language and communication difficulties, and pupils whose home language is not English, make very good progress in science. This is because the language and science teachers, the science technician who also supports in class, and the classroom assistants all provide very effective support and make up a strong, well briefed team. Whole lessons are devoted to the development of pupils' research skills and they use the Internet confidently. In Year 10, for example, pupils searched the Internet to find the size of the gravitational fields of the planets. They used their numeracy skills to put this information into size order.
73. The best evidence of pupils' achievements in science is seen in the work of those who attend the Friday Young Scientists option class. Pupils from Years 8 to 11 have investigated the effects of marinade on different cuts of beef in their project, 'Something to chew on'. In 'When the pod goes pop', they investigated the factors that control the growth of peas. They are at present researching the dye obtained from red cabbage. They have asked themselves the question 'Does placing the cloth in the red dye and heating it at different temperatures affect how much dye is taken up by the cloth?' Their concentration during this lesson is intense, all have different tasks to perform as part of this shared activity. Pupils have represented the school in national competitions for chemistry and biochemistry and have presented their investigations, conclusions and evaluations to the judging panels for national awards for creativity in science and technology. They are the first special school to participate in these awards and the headteacher and staff are justly proud of the pupils' achievements. To be able to compete with mainstream pupils on an equal footing is a great credit to the pupils and boosts their confidence, self-esteem and social skills. Credit must go to the science co-ordinator who has been instrumental in bringing about the very good improvements in science since the last inspection. Her leadership and management of the science department are excellent. She is very well supported by the science technician and the learning and language support staff. Very strong and energetic

teamwork is contributing to the success of this forward looking and innovative department.

ART AND DESIGN

74. Pupils make very good progress and achieve very well. This is because the provision, including the quality of teaching, is very good.

Key strengths

- Higher attaining pupils in Year 11 are successful in GCSE examinations.
- During Years 7 to 10, pupils learn to express themselves using a wide variety of skills and media.
- The teacher has very high expectations and structures pupils' learning very carefully.
- Art makes a very strong contribution to pupils' cultural development.

Area for improvement

- There is no accreditation for lower attaining pupils in Year 11.

75. During Years 7 to 10, all pupils follow a programme that provides them with a thorough grounding in the subject. They learn a variety of techniques – such as drawing, painting, printing and sculpture – and develop an understanding and appreciation of, for example, colour, line and texture. The work they produce is of a very high quality, because they are taught very well. For instance, during one lesson, Year 7 pupils drew an egg in an egg cup, building on their earlier experiments with pastels. The teacher's own skills and knowledge were very apparent, as she encouraged the pupils to look closely at the eggs, pointing out where the light was coming from and asking them to describe what they could see. As a result, they gradually came to notice and describe subtle changes in the colour – one side was darker, because of the shadow. A quick demonstration showed pupils how they could use shading to achieve a three-dimensional effect. They were then asked to practise selecting colours and making marks, smudging and blending, before tackling their drawing. This illustrated well the teacher's ability to give pupils confidence – when they began their final piece, they were not daunted by the empty paper, but were ready and eager to start work. Over half the class were from the Language and Communication Enhancement Centre, and support staff made important contributions to their progress – for example, by making sure that they understood and followed instructions, such as to look hard at their egg. The teacher was very successful in encouraging the pupils to share her high expectations, involving them in deciding where they needed to give more attention. They held up their drawings at arms' length, and thought carefully about their work, responding to the teacher's questions – 'Can you see the light and dark?' Pupils were proud of their outcomes and happy to show them to each other. Their self-esteem is boosted further, by seeing their work displayed, both in the art room and around the school.
76. Pupils learn to use their imagination – for example, in Year 9, to create paintings of fantastic birds. They become familiar with the work of an extensive range of artists and craftsman and women, from a wide variety of cultures and periods in history. Again, the teacher's knowledge is put to very good use – she frequently dives into the many reference books that surround the room, drawing pupils' attention to the similarity between their work and that of others. For example, during a Year 10 lesson, where higher attaining pupils were working on clay figures, they were prompted to interpret abstract sculptures, such as Barbara Hepworth's 'Mother and Child'. Pupils know that they too are sculptors, and that people would buy figures such as theirs, as ornaments.

They can distinguish between modern and realistic sculpture and express their preferences, referring to visits they have made – for example, to the National Gallery. Pupils' own work is detailed and demonstrates their skills of observation, meeting the teacher's demands: 'I want to be able to tell whether the shirt is tucked in or not.' Their concentration is intense, as they attempt to represent hair or the folds in clothing.

77. At the end of Year 10, pupils decide whether or not to attempt the GCSE examination in Year 11. By that time, they have sufficient skills and knowledge to be able to choose how they will interpret a subject – such as a collection of objects to represent 'Beginnings.' They tackle their work – for example, a water colour sketch of hyacinths – with confidence, because they are now applying the skills they learned in earlier years. Most find it difficult to come up with their own ideas, so the teacher provides very good individual support, enthusing pupils and encouraging them to experiment and make decisions for themselves. Pupils' course work demonstrates clearly their ability to develop themes using a wide variety of media, including information and communication technology, referring to art and craft from a very broad range.
78. The art provision is very well organised. The very high standards reported previously have been maintained and new developments are planned – for example, increasing the use of computers, which is currently satisfactory.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

79. The provision, including the quality of teaching, is good. Pupils are currently making good progress. However, pupils in Years 9 and 11 are working on projects similar to pupils younger than they are, because they are catching up on experiences they have missed previously. Their achievements are satisfactory.

Key strengths

- Pupils make particularly good progress in resistant materials technology lessons, because they are taught very well.
- Pupils in Year 10 have begun working towards external accreditation in resistant materials and food technology.
- Pupils work very hard, because they are very interested in their lessons.
- Teachers have very high expectations.
- The subject is very well led and managed and is moving forward very quickly.

Area for improvement

- A detailed programme of work is not yet complete for all material areas – for example, textiles.

80. Because of staffing difficulties, pupils have had a disrupted experience of the subject. However, they are now benefiting from a broad curriculum, involving, in Years 7 to 9, resistant materials, food, textiles and control technology. The curriculum is well structured and teaching is good, and, as a result, pupils are making much better progress than at the time of the previous inspection. This is a consequence of the very strong leadership and subject expertise of the co-ordinator.
81. During Years 7 to 9, pupils are gaining a good understanding of the stages involved in designing and making products, using a broad range of materials. Their practical, making skills are developing particularly well, because the curriculum rightly places more emphasis on these. However, pupils are also learning to generate ideas and to set these out clearly. For example, in a resistant materials lesson, Year 7 pupils – over half of them from the Language and Communication Enhancement Centre – were

designing a mirror surround for a young person's bedroom. The teacher had planned very thoroughly, so that he was very clear about what the pupils were to learn and how the staff were to support them – for example, 'Only intervene when B... either asks for assistance or is really struggling.' This clarity meant that pupils worked as independently as possible – one was given a model to copy, others had to produce four or eight ideas, depending on their ability. Instructions were explained carefully and broken down into small steps, so pupils knew exactly what was required of them. Additionally, both support assistants were aware of what the teacher expected the pupils to achieve, and so their messages were consistent – for instance, to shade in only one direction. Pupils were all able to represent their ideas for frames, based on, for example, the Taj Mahal, a tree, Bart Simpson, or the Sydney Opera House. They could indicate which parts would be cut out to form the surround. In another very good lesson, pupils of the same age used computers to control a screen turtle, in order to draw shapes. This was challenging work for them and they tried very hard, only asking for help when necessary. The teacher had ensured that the lesson built on what they had already learned, so the task was achievable, provided they did their best. The subject makes satisfactory and increasing use of computers.

82. Pupils in Year 9 appreciate particularly the opportunities they now have, because they have had such a disjointed experience of the subject. They are now learning to work with a much wider range of materials – such as metal, acrylic and textiles – and to be more independent and discriminating. For example, in food technology they are learning to evaluate and compare products such as different types of bread or commercial and home-made quiches. Pupils have not previously worked with textiles and find these skills difficult. However, they are becoming familiar with simple tools and equipment, and learning to make functional products such as bags or decorated T-shirts. This area of the subject is most in need of further development.
83. In Year 10, pupils are working towards Entry Level Certificates in food and resistant materials technology. Year 11 pupils are completing similar projects, but will not have their work accredited because there is not enough time for them to cover all the necessary units and reach the required standard. Teachers have very high expectations and set these out clearly. Pupils respond very well, enjoying the challenge of work that makes them think hard and act responsibly. For example, in a good food technology lesson, a higher attaining Year 10 group investigated commercially manufactured pies, carefully separating out ingredients such as carrots, chicken and peas. Although a minority needed support, most worked very independently. These highest attainers could work out why, for instance, the pastry was so thick – because it's cheaper and makes a firmer casing. They could explain the function of ingredients such as pepper (flavour), chicken (protein) and pastry crumb (soaks up juices), because they recalled a previous lesson, when the teacher had carried out a similar investigation. Lower attaining pupils in Year 11, making a CD rack from wood, were encouraged to be as independent as possible – for example, to collect their own tools and carry out tasks such as planing surfaces and finishing them with sanding blocks. However, those with the most complex needs required considerable help in order to cope with the work and support assistants made significant contributions to their progress. Pupils are having the satisfaction of producing functional products – such as the copper candle-holders they made recently – and learning to use hand tools and machines.
84. The co-ordinator's intention is to 'totally regenerate' the subject. He has made an excellent start. Most members of the department are unqualified, inexperienced teachers, which places a disproportionately heavy burden on the co-ordinator, compounded by the lack of a technician to support in the workshop. Staff, particularly the food technology teacher, are receiving very effective support and are working hard

together to develop the subject and their own skills. The accommodation for food and resistant materials is adequate, but in great need of modernisation. The room being used for textiles is wholly unsuitable, as it is too small for practical work.

GEOGRAPHY

85. Pupils make good progress in geography. This represents a good improvement since the previous inspection, and is because teaching is at least good and sometimes very good.

Key strengths

- The subject knowledge of the teacher in Years 7 to 9 means that the programme of work starts from ideas that are familiar to pupils and then expands out from there.
- Pupils have good attitudes to geography, linked to the teacher's high expectations for them to achieve and behave well.

Areas for improvement

- Suitable external accreditation for the oldest pupils has not been identified.
- Computers are not used sufficiently to enhance pupils' learning.

86. Geography is taught during Years 7 to 9 and as part of the humanities course in Years 10 and 11. During the inspection, it was only possible to observe lessons in Years 7 to 9. In Year 7, pupils study the British Isles and the growth of settlement and villages. They can distinguish between different types of settlements, for example, a market town and an industrial town. In one very good lesson, pupils extended their enquiry skills and their understanding as they learned to chart the development of a local settlement. The teacher had established very good relationships with the pupils. His encouraging manner meant that they were prepared to try to answer questions – for example, about the previous week's lesson, on the most suitable place to build a settlement. At the same time, pupils knew how they were required to behave and responded by raising their hands and not calling out when answering. The written work they were presented with was matched very well to pupils' particular needs, so, with support, they were able to complete their tasks and achieve success.
87. A lesson with pupils in Year 8 demonstrated the very effective links between teachers and the Language and Communication Enhancement Centre. Both support assistants were very clear about their role, with the member of the specialist team responsible for reporting back on how well individual pupils had understood the work – about rainfall. The teacher used questions effectively, challenging pupils to think carefully. Again, very good relationships encouraged them work hard to link together what they had learned. By the end of the lesson, pupils could describe how clouds are formed and rain produced. In Year 9, pupils extend their knowledge of settlements as they study more global issues. They understand why centres of population develop. During one lesson, pupils considered the need to sustain developments, by growing crops. The teacher again achieved a good response from them – for example, one described how fertile soil is 'rich' and 'makes growing easy' and another, how a hot climate is all right for a holiday but not to work in. Pupils were enthusiastic and tried hard to meet the teacher's high expectations.
88. Geography is well led and managed. Lessons and projects are planned carefully, but without specific reference to the use of computers. The geographic aspect of the Year 10 and 11 course is not externally accredited.

HISTORY

89. The overall provision, including the quality of teaching, is satisfactory. This is a sound improvement since the previous inspection, when some unsatisfactory lessons were observed. Pupils' progress and achievement remain satisfactory.

Key strengths

- Planning for history and the provision of resources have both improved.
- In most lessons, pupils have good attitudes to their learning.

Areas for improvement

- Teachers should consider how to improve the pace of lessons, make sure that tasks match the needs of all pupils and questions are used to assess pupils' knowledge.
- The oldest pupils do not have their achievements externally accredited.

90. During Years 7 to 9, pupils find out about people and events from a suitable range of periods from history. They learn to appreciate how living conditions have changed over the years. For example, in one lesson, Year 8 pupils developed their understanding of the causes and impact of the Black Death. The teacher's effective description of how people lived in the Middle Ages provoked strong reactions. One pupil remarked how conditions were 'unhygienic and dirty' and another commented 'No wonder there were so many rats, when people threw rubbish into the street!' The teacher then expanded on these thoughts, to develop further pupils' knowledge of how it would have been to live in a crowded city during this period. However, the written tasks that followed were not especially stimulating and higher attaining pupils completed these very quickly. The teacher missed the opportunity to bring pupils together at the end of the lesson, to enable her to check, by questioning, how well they had learned. This was also the case in a lesson for Year 9 pupils, about the causes of the First World War. There was a brief outline of what would happen in the next lesson, but no time to review what the current one had accomplished. In fact, the teacher had initially tackled a difficult subject in an interesting manner. Pupils took part in role-play, acting out a story about two cousins who persuaded friends to gang up on each other. This was then related to Edward VII and the Kaiser. However, the subsequent discussion about the causes of the war was too lengthy and the teacher's questions did not check all pupils' understanding of terms such as the 'Triple Alliance' and 'Triple Entente'. As a result, the lower attaining pupils found it hard to follow what had happened, in spite of good support from a classroom assistant and Language and Communication Enhancement Centre team member.

91. In Years 10 and 11, pupils study history as part of a humanities course. The modules they follow are assessed by the school and certificates are awarded to pupils to place in their Records of Achievement. They include a study of the North American Plains Indians. Year 10 pupils have sound awareness of the lives of the Indians and know that atrocities were carried out upon them. They can refer to contemporary accounts of the massacre at Sand Creek and understand that different accounts can give different views of the same event. Again, after a good discussion, the task that followed did not sufficiently challenge the higher attaining pupils, who began to chat together after they had finished. Where pupils are challenged, they show considerable interest and make good progress. For example, in a good Year 11 lesson on the life of Florence Nightingale, pupils learned to appreciate the very poor conditions that wounded soldiers had to endure during the Crimean War. They were able to compare conditions before her arrival and after she had put in place nursing reforms. The pupils could also discuss changes in medical provision for wounded soldiers up to the present day. Here, the lesson moved on quickly, with good opportunities for pupils to carry out

research using the Internet. In general, more advantage could usefully be taken of computers to support pupils' learning.

92. The subject is satisfactorily led and managed. The shortfall in resources identified in the previous inspection has been remedied, although more artefacts are still needed. History makes a good contribution to the development of pupils' speaking and listening skills.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

93. Pupils make good progress and achieve well, because the provision, including the quality of teaching, is good. This represents a very good improvement since the previous inspection.

Key strengths

- Lessons are well-planned and prepared and focused on developing specific skills.
- Teachers make very effective use of a digital projector to enhance pupils' learning.
- Pupils are provided with good opportunities to develop and practise skills, in subjects such as English and design and technology.

Areas for improvement

- The use that teachers of other subjects are actually making of computers in their lessons is not checked.
- More imaginative tasks could be used to enliven some lessons.

94. By the end of Year 9, most pupils have learned to open new files and ones they have previously saved; they enter text, and bring pictures into their work, perhaps from clip art programs or from the Internet or CD ROMs. The more able pupils find their way around the Internet when looking for information, such as about the weather around the world. Less able pupils need a lot of help doing this, and do not always understand what they have found, or know how to bring the pictures into their own work. Pupils change the size, colour and style of their writing, and the more able ones will make alterations to spelling and grammar to make a best copy of their work. They will create and add ornate titles to their work using a graphics program – such as when making covers for their next project or for the menu for a restaurant. Many pupils have begun to use spreadsheets to work out simple mathematical problems, such as the prices of chocolate bars in a tuck shop, or the prices of items in two different supermarkets, and the more able ones can produce a graph to illustrate their findings. There is a need to find or create more imaginative and relevant topics to have as the subjects for the spreadsheets. This is because, at present, pupils sometimes lose interest when using formulae to manipulate facts and figures and their attitude and behaviour can deteriorate as a result.

95. By the end of Year 11, pupils have gained better skills in, for instance, creating a poster with an ornate title, a decorative border, some text, and one or more pictures from different sources. The teacher and several support assistants are very good at giving support at the times when the pupils are getting on with their work. The teacher has very good subject knowledge, and the assistants are well capable of helping pupils with their reading, their understanding of the screen displays, and much of the computing side of the lessons as well. There is very good use of a digital projector, which displays the computer programs onto the large whiteboard at the front of the class. The teacher demonstrates and explains very well, asking searching questions – and all without the pupils having to crowd around one computer several times each

lesson. Their learning is much enhanced by the use of this equipment, as they remain settled at their own computers. Most pupils log onto the Internet and begin a search for the information they want, and they drop pictures into their own files ready to insert into their pictures later. A number are creating a sequence of pages using PowerPoint, with passages of text, titles, sound effects, some moving sequences and different backgrounds. The most able pupils need some help and guidance doing this, and other pupils need a lot of help throughout such work. Recently, pupils have begun to make such joined pages about topics such as 'Theme Parks', and disasters caused by extreme weather conditions. In one such lesson, for instance, the pupils were accessing the Internet and CD ROMs looking for pictures and other information about tornadoes, avalanches and floods. The more able pupils saved several pictures, added them to a PowerPoint page with a title and some text saying what the pictures were about. A few pupils needed to be guided at each step, as they were likely to find themselves looking at pages to do with football or cars, partly because their reading skills were not good enough for them to be sure what they were finding. Although most pupils are interested in the work, and some are keen, many show little initiative when they are stuck – they sit and wait for help – and this slows their learning considerably, especially when the teacher and assistant are busy with other pupils doing the same thing.

96. Outside of the specialist lessons, other teachers use the computer room for some lessons, such as a mathematics-related one, in which the teacher was showing pupils how to put a formula into a spreadsheet. In design and technology lessons, pupils in Years 7 to 9 use the computer room to learn about control technology. More often, teachers use the computers in their own rooms to enrich their lessons for one or two pupils at a time. This is particularly so in English lessons, where pupils often use computers to write and re-draft their work, and to make it very presentable. Similarly, art lessons have been enhanced by the use of some painting and drawing programs, as well as opportunities for pupils to find information about artists on the Internet and CD ROMs. In science, pupils use spreadsheets, and make graphs to illustrate their work. Many subjects use the Internet and CD ROMs for information, including geography, religious education and history. Such use not only enriches the learning of each subject, it also extends and uses the pupils' skills with the computers. At present, teachers make satisfactory use of information and communication technology across the curriculum.
97. There has been a considerable improvement in this subject since the last inspection when there were very limited opportunities to use the equipment, poor resources and limited staff knowledge, all leading to restricted progress by the pupils. These have all been improved by the co-ordinator, who has good knowledge and who has organised the computer room, and the school-wide network, very well. There is now a good plan of what should be learned, along with an effective system of assessing how much progress the pupils are making. The co-ordinator has a clear and well-thought out set of plans for developing the subject – such as checking how much use is made of computers in other lessons, wider training for staff and the purchase of more hardware.

MUSIC

98. The specialist music teacher left at the end of the summer term in 2001. Since then, despite strenuous efforts, the school has been unable to recruit a suitably qualified, experienced teacher. Music was not being taught at the time of the inspection.
99. There is an up-to-date policy for the subject and a programme of work for pupils in Years 7 to 9. The school anticipates that a new teacher will join the staff very shortly.

100. Scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' records indicate that pupils were making at least satisfactory progress until the current academic year. This represents good improvement since the previous inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

101. Since the previous inspection, the provision, including the quality of teaching, has improved very well and is now very good. As a result, pupils achieve very well and make very good progress.

Key strengths

- Pupils of all abilities make very good progress and gain a variety of accreditation across a wide range of activities.
- Teachers have high levels of subject knowledge and understanding of pupils' needs.
- Excellent use of pupils to lead the warm-up part of lessons builds their confidence and self-esteem.
- Pupils develop very good attitudes to sport and an understanding and appreciation of the benefits of regular exercise.
- Teachers provide a wide range of opportunities for pupils to experience sporting activities, involving the community, both in and outside school.

Area for improvement

- Written curricular plans are not yet in line with the most recent National Curriculum requirements.

102. In the wide range of lessons seen during the inspection, pupils of all abilities made very good progress. This is due to the very high quality teaching, very good relationships and particularly the way in which teachers ensure that each pupil's needs are met. Each lesson is designed to take pupils forward in small steps to achieve their aims. For example, in a dance lesson with a Year 8 class, pupils were encouraged to build up their sequence of movements to match music from a James Bond film. Lower attaining pupils were given support to help them move suitably and to ensure that they remembered the sequence they had developed. Their completed routine did not contain the range or number of movements their more able friends had produced, but each pupil's progress and achievement was judged taking into account the degree of their ability or difficulties.
103. In two lessons for pupils in Years 8 and 10, the teachers organised classes of over twenty pupils, plus visitors from local rugby clubs. The management of these lessons was very good. As a result, pupils worked extremely hard in a safe environment, improving their rugby skills, benefiting from not only the teachers' expertise but also that of the visiting players and coaches. During the lessons, pupils were keen and enthusiastic, very well behaved and showed positive attitudes to improving their skills.
104. In lessons, the teachers' specialist subject knowledge considerably enhanced the quality of teaching and ensured greater understanding and participation by the pupils. Planning takes full account of pupils' special needs, so tasks are suited to what they can achieve, with effort and, sometimes, additional support. With this degree of consideration, for example, girls play tag rugby and pupils with significant physical co-ordination difficulties pass and receive a ball. Activities are broken down into smaller steps to accommodate less able pupils. For instance, in a badminton lesson, pupils started by using the racquet to hit a balloon, then moved on to a fluffy ball, before

progressing at last to a shuttlecock, when they had developed the necessary hand to eye co-ordination.

105. All lessons start with a vigorous warm-up. From Year 7, pupils are encouraged to lead the class in this. By the time they reach Years 10 and 11, they are proficient at doing so. As the pupil instructs and demonstrates to the class, the teachers constantly question pupils as to how and why they are doing certain exercises. Pupils have good knowledge and understanding of why they need to warm up, and can identify by name some of the muscles they are using. They use the correct vocabulary and pupils increase their language skills, because teachers identify these key words in their planning, and reinforce them consistently. Teachers are very careful to ensure that all pupils have equal opportunity to lead the class, including those with language and communication difficulties. In one lesson, a Year 9 pupil whose home language is not English led the warm-up and was well supported by the rest of the class. Taking the lead in this way builds up pupils' confidence and self-esteem most effectively.
106. Pupils are involved in a wide range of sporting activities in and out of school. They take part in competitions with other schools – for example, in football, swimming, cross-country and athletics. There are plenty of outdoor and adventurous pursuits – for instance, orienteering, climbing, raft building and other water sports, and camping in the New Forest. They learn squash and tennis at local clubs and many pupils take advantage of evening visits to swimming baths, an ice rink and to go ten pin bowling. This provision makes a strong contribution to pupils' social and cultural development.
107. Physical education is well led and managed. The co-ordinators are keen to ensure that their plans match the latest curricular requirements and are aware of the need to continue to update them. In the subject action plan is a request for a laptop computer. This would be a valuable asset – for example, to help teachers analyse data about pupils' performance.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

108. This provision, including the quality of the teaching, is good. This results in good progress and achievement by pupils throughout the school.

Key strengths

- The teacher has very good levels of subject knowledge and expertise.
- She makes very good use of her own excellent range of artefacts in order to enliven many lessons.
- The subject makes a very strong contribution to pupils' moral and cultural development.

Areas for improvement

- The school needs to buy more of its own resources.
- Lessons could be further enriched by having visitors into the school, or by making greater use of visits in the community.

109. Pupils' good progress indicates that the subject has improved well since the time of the previous inspection, when their progress was satisfactory. By the end of Year 9, pupils have learned about several different religions – such as Islam, Jainism, Sikhism, Judaism and Christianity. They understand the main customs, beliefs and symbols of each religion, and they compare these with their own ideas and the symbols that they are familiar with – for example, the school badge, flags and commercial logos. In one lesson, Year 8 pupils explored symbols associated with Hindu temples. The teacher had prepared very well, with a wide range of artefacts for pupils to examine – a prayer

cloth, figures of gods such as Shiva, a candle, bell and incense. Her very good knowledge of the subject enabled her to demonstrate clearly the importance of each object, using photographs of temples to help to bring these to life. Nearly all pupils were very interested and were careful as they handled the resources. They made good progress in learning about the customs and beliefs of Hinduism. From such lessons, the pupils also learn the moral messages that the different religions have – such as being tolerant, not being prejudiced, not hurting other people or animals, and looking after each other. Pupils' ideas of other cultures are also very well expanded by the class discussions in many lessons, as they learn about the dress, food and homes of people in other lands. They compare their own celebrations and special events, such as Poppy Day, Christmas, winning a football match, birthdays, and harvest, with celebrations in other religions and cultures.

110. In the next two years, the pupils follow a course leading to the Certificate of Educational Achievement, learning more about Christianity and Judaism. In one very good lesson with Year 10 pupils, the teacher began by discussing how they felt when dressing in their uniform for school, or their kit for an important football match. She illustrated this with her own hockey goalkeeper's uniform, with the pupils talking about being focused and 'psyched up'. As a result of her enthusiasm, one pupil volunteered to be a model for the clothing that a Jewish man would wear for prayers, so that all the pupils could appreciate how he would be focused and well prepared for his prayers. They examined the clothing with interest and respect, and learned the names of each item. They ended the lesson with written work to show what they had learned, with the teacher assisting the less able pupils, whilst the more able ones settled quickly, concentrating on their work very well.
111. The subject is well led and managed by the co-ordinator, who does all the teaching. She is very well organised, very well qualified and experienced, and has undertaken further training whilst at the school. She has a clear view of pupils' standards of achievement, and has developed a good system of assessing how well the pupils are learning. She has a realistic plan for how to develop the subject further. The resources are being built up soundly, and the plan of what is to be taught each year is good and based on the local Agreed Syllabus. Computers are used satisfactorily – for example, when pupils want to find information from the Internet or from an encyclopaedia program.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION

112. Pupils learn well in designated personal, social and health education lessons, because the teaching is good. Their progress is also good in the personal and social education aspects of other subjects - for example, science and the Youth Award Scheme in Year 11. However, the overall provision and pupils' progress over time are merely satisfactory, because there is no suitable programme of work or overview of what pupils are learning about. The subject was not reported at the last inspection so comments about improvement are not possible.

Key strengths

- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' very good personal development.
- Pupils make good progress and achieve well in individual personal, social and health education lessons.
- The co-ordinator has very great respect for the pupils and all their contributions.

Areas for improvement

- The planning for personal, social and health education is weak.
 - The distinction between citizenship and personal, social and health education is unclear in policies and on the timetable.
113. During the timetabled personal, social and health education lessons, pupils make good progress and achieve well. For example, in a Year 7 lesson, the themes of trust and responsibility were discussed. The pupils responded very positively to the games that the teacher presented to exemplify the theme. Pupils were very keen to participate in this lesson. A pupil whose home language is not English was integrated very well in the class and made many relevant and accurate contributions to the discussion. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 sensibly discussed the theme of responsibility. They enjoyed participating in role-play – for example, about someone losing money belonging to a friend. In Year 10, pupils created their own hypothetical, potential young offender, and discussed how he could have avoided trouble. This was a very good example of the respect that pupils have for each other's contributions in class. Pupils listened to each other very well, and suggested a wide range of scenarios that might have led to their man becoming a young offender. They discussed their ideas until they agree on a host of characteristics for the man – his name, personal circumstances, background, job, age, education, home life, type of home, and the name of his girl friend, for example. In an interesting citizenship lesson about government, democracy and dictatorship, Year 11 pupils were well taught, they made good progress and were very well behaved.
114. In addition to the good quality and distinct personal, social and health education lessons on the timetable, aspects of this subject are also taught successfully in science, in the First Aid option and as part of the Youth Award Scheme. Every Friday afternoon, all pupils in Years 7 to 11 attend 'log' lessons, where they review their success in meeting a personal target set the previous week. Pupils then set themselves a new target for the following week. The lessons are lively and other pupils provide evidence to help an individual decide if they have achieved their personal target or not. These are good lessons, and their place on the timetable is an important contribution to pupils' personal and social development. Targets may be about individual subjects, behaviour, or personal organisation, for example. In one excellent Year 10 'log' lesson, pupils discussed the school's current weekly theme – 'anger'. The support staff contributed with some excellent role-play.
115. A particular strength in personal, social and health education teaching is the attention given to extending pupils' vocabulary. There is also good promotion of their numeracy skills through work on money matters. Computers are well used for research, as part of Youth Award Scheme projects, for example. Pupils enter data, word process documents, and search web sites, for information on 'Should drugs be legalised?' for example.
116. Leadership and management of the subject are weak. Pupils' progress over time is not guaranteed, because there is no long-term curricular plan to guide lesson planning. Many relevant aspects of personal, social and health education and citizenship are taught through other subjects, but there has not yet been a check made to ensure that, for example, pupils do not repeat topics.

POST-SIXTEEN EDUCATION

117. The provision for students over the age of sixteen is satisfactory. The character of the sixth form has changed since the previous inspection, so that comparisons and judgements about improvement since then are difficult to make. The provision is now for students who are not ready to transfer to college, training or employment at the end

of Year 11 and who need time to develop independence skills, maturity and self-confidence. Students stay for one year.

Key strengths

- Students make good progress and achieve well in the subjects they are taught.
- Students with additional language and communication difficulties make very good progress because they receive very good quality support from the specialist staff.
- The overall quality of subject teaching in Year 12 is good.
- Almost all students have a very positive view of the school.

Areas for improvement

- The post-16 curriculum is not distinctive enough from that for pupils in Years 10 and 11 to prepare students for college, training or work. There is an over-emphasis on academic subjects at the expense of careers and vocational education and personal development.

118. The post-16 accommodation is unsatisfactory as a base for learning, leisure and practising independence skills.
119. Co-ordination of post-16 provision is currently being transferred from one member of staff to another, with a consequent lack of clarity about who is responsible for which aspects.
120. The post-16 curriculum is not distinctive enough. It largely mirrors that for pupils in Years 10 and 11. There is, however, a significant absence of careers education post-16. A range of accreditation is offered including certificates in communication, numeracy, computer skills, science, and the Youth Award to bronze standard. No GCSE courses are offered post-16 and all the accreditation is below GCSE standard. The small number of post-16 students who have already achieved GCSE grades in Year 11, broaden their knowledge, in science and art, for example, but do not work at higher levels. Post-16 students have more time for the Youth Award Scheme than in Year 11. This course encourages students to take responsibility for their own learning, and to make decisions about assignments and work experience.
121. There is a broad range of subjects, with lessons for all students in English, mathematics, science, humanities, food preparation, computer skills, art, physical education and religious education. In a Youth Award Scheme lesson, to promote independent study, five students worked on different tasks, supported by the teacher as required. Two students worked outside, independently, preparing a vegetable plot. Another wrote about water safety rules at a swimming pool, a fourth student completed his work experience diary, following a placement at kennels, and a fifth used the Internet to begin research on the topic 'Should drugs be legalised?' The students initially worked well and applied themselves, with good concentration, to their various tasks. Then the pace of work slowed and the lesson came to a halt ten minutes before time. These students are now over half way through Year 12 and the skill of working individually without instruction, at a sustained good pace, is still not established.
122. In an English lesson, students recorded on video their discussion about the work they have completed on a 'Theme Park' project. The recording is part of the assessment procedure for external assessors to mark. Students talked to camera about the content of the folders they have produced. A student with moderate learning difficulties and with additional very challenging behaviour was in charge of the video camera and worked competently and sensibly. The project work of this student is of a

high standard, using digital photographs, computer graphics, high quality design ideas, and a good standard of literacy. The result is a folder with a very professional finish. Here the student is working at his confident best, but in other subjects he can be sullen and refuse to co-operate. All the students were very patient when it came to the turn of a student with a severe speech impediment. They showed great respect for the time it took this student to speak to camera.

123. In a good quality lesson in religious education, students engaged in good quality thinking, speaking and writing about the suffering caused by prejudice. They identified prejudice in a range of situations, political, racial, social, religious and gender. In another good lesson, in science, students experimented to learn about the effects of acid rain on the environment. With sustained individual support from the language teacher who works in close harmony with the science teacher, one lower attaining student carried out the experiment and wrote a results table neatly and legibly. With a lot of support he gained some understanding of the effect of acid rain on bricks but does not have the skill of drawing conclusions from his results, even with the most dedicated support from the teachers.
124. The examples of learning drawn from the inspection evidence, and described above, serve to illustrate the range of difficulties that the students experience. Even half way through their final year in school, the students clearly require as much support as possible to develop the all important independence skills before they go off to college, training or employment.
125. Students spend up to three weeks on work experience in retail, industry, public services, and in the private sector, for example. Work experience is well planned and managed in association with the local Education Business Partnership and the Careers Service. As no time for careers education is provided on the timetable, time is taken out of other lessons to ensure that students are well prepared for their placement and fully de-briefed afterwards. Placements sometimes lead directly to employment.
126. There are so many subjects crowding the post-16 timetable that there is not enough time to teach all of them to a reasonable examination standard, in art, technology, the humanities, and in science for the higher attaining students, for example. Where the teaching time is more generous, in mathematics, for example, even the highest attaining students find it difficult to reach a nationally accredited standard in one year, in the 'Managing Money' unit, for example. Being able to manage their own money is a key independence skill, but this year no one has progressed sufficiently to be entered for the examination.
127. The post-16 accommodation is unsatisfactory. There is just one small, over-crowded classroom, also used by boarders in the evening for activities like painting. There is no longer the self-contained unit with kitchen, common room and an adult environment that was reported at the last inspection. Students do not have the kind of accommodation where they can practise independence skills, for example, budgeting, travelling, shopping, cooking, washing and cleaning for themselves. The post-16 numbers are set to rise next year, putting further strain on the already over-crowded accommodation for these mature young people.
128. Arrangements for students to attend college during their one year of sixth form study are not well organised. College links are not as effective as they could be because links are made very late in the school year. This weakness has arisen in part because the leadership and management of the post-16 provision are under review and staff have been given new roles. Until the leadership, management, curriculum rationale

and accommodation for post-16 students are resolved, the post-16 provision will not be as effective as the 11-16 provision. Senior managers have been reviewing the overall provision for the post-16 students. They have yet to resolve the most appropriate balance of academic, careers and vocational education and personal development that best meets individual needs. The current provision is an academic curriculum with a vocational input, and all the students, irrespective of their individual needs follow broadly the same programmes. The inspection evidence highlights how important it is not to promote the accumulation of large numbers of certificates at the expense of the development of students' independence skills.