

INSPECTION REPORT

**HEBDEN GREEN COMMUNITY SPECIAL
SCHOOL**

Winsford

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111505

Headteacher: Mr A Farren

Reporting inspector: Mr M Whitaker
1424

Dates of inspection: 8th – 11th May 2001

Inspection number: 233797

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:	2 to 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Woodford Lane West Winsford Cheshire
Postcode:	CW7 4EJ
Telephone number:	01606 594221
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr P Gaskell
Date of previous inspection:	20 th October 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
1424	M Whitaker	Registered inspector	Physical education English as an additional language	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further
13462	R 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?
7615	P Hall	Team inspector	Science	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
22821	L Wolstencroft	Team inspector	Mathematics The Foundation Stage	
23629	M Megee	Team inspector	Design and technology Modern foreign languages	
18498	D Morris	Team inspector	English Information and communication technology	
13101	M Kell	Team inspector	History Music Equal opportunities	
4989	L Lewis	Team inspector	Art and design Religious education Special educational needs	
1987	G Davies	Team inspector	Geography	

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REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT	7
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
PART B: COMMENTARY	
HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?	12
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?	15
HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?	16
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?	19
HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?	21
HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?	22
WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?	25
PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS	26
PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES	29

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Hebden Green is a large Community Special School for boys and girls aged between two and 19 years. There are currently 111 pupils on the roll of the school. All pupils have statements of special educational needs identifying a wide range of physical, medical, sensory and learning difficulties. Many pupils spend one or two nights a week in residence in the school and a very small number stay for four nights a week. The attainment of the majority of pupils when they enter the school is below or well below the standards achieved by pupils of the same age nationally, because of their special educational needs. Most pupils are of white ethnic origin. Over 30 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals. Pupils are admitted to the school from a number of local education authorities and are from a wide range of backgrounds.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Hebden Green is an effective school. Pupils with a diverse range of special educational needs and a wide range of attainment learn effectively and achieve good standards in many areas of the curriculum and in relation to their own individual needs. This is the result of good teaching and effective teamwork between all the adults working in the school. The headteacher provides excellent leadership and management. He is very well supported by senior staff and the governing body and clear plans are in place for the future development of the school. It provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Ensures that all pupils achieve well in most areas of the curriculum through good teaching. Links with parents and the community are very effective in supporting learning.
- Has very good leadership and management and a shared commitment to improve, providing excellent capacity for further improvement.
- Develops very positive relationships which ensure that pupils behave well and have positive attitudes to learning. Teamwork is a major strength.
- Successfully identifies priorities for development and takes effective action to improve the school.
- Has very good procedures for child protection, health and safety and the welfare of pupils in day and residential settings.

What could be improved

- The quality of provision in art, design and technology and music in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4.
- The role of subject managers in monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching and the standards achieved in their areas of responsibility.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good improvement since the last inspection in October 1997 when it was found to have serious weaknesses. The senior management team has been re-structured to provide more efficient leadership and the recent appointment of a new deputy headteacher has strengthened this further. The quality of teaching has improved throughout the school and progress in the subjects of the curriculum and in the residential setting is better. Major refurbishment of the residential provision has been undertaken and it should be fully operational in the autumn term. New arrangements for performance management are

fully in place. Further developments need to be made, particularly in relation to the management of the curriculum and monitoring and evaluating the quality of teaching. Progress has been hampered by the unavoidable long-term absence of the deputy headteacher leading to his resignation, consequential staffing changes and the major refurbishment and building work being undertaken.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets by the time they leave the school.

Progress in:	by age 5	by age 11	by age 16	by age 19	Key very good A good B satisfactory C unsatisfactory D poor E
speaking and listening	B	B	B	B	
reading	B	B	B	B	
writing	B	B	B	B	
mathematics	C	B	C	C	
personal, social and health education	B	B	B	B	
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B	B	B	

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

Pupils of all ages and with a diverse range of special educational needs make good progress in all aspects of English. The widespread use of communication aids ensures that all pupils are able to communicate and, as a result, make good progress. Drama is also used effectively to promote learning. Progress in mathematics is good in the primary department and satisfactory for younger children, secondary aged pupils and post-16 students.

Children in the Foundation Stage make good progress in most areas of learning and very good progress in some areas, particularly physical development, through the conductive education programme. Progress in science is good throughout the school and across the range of needs. Progress in information and communication technology and in religious education is good throughout the school. Progress in music is very good up to the age of eleven but unsatisfactory in Key Stage 3 because of the lack of a specialist teacher. Progress in design and technology is satisfactory overall but the lack of a permanent teacher in the secondary department makes this less secure. This is also the case in art although there has been a permanent teacher for this subject until very recently. Pupils make good progress in history and geography. Students in the post-16 provision make good progress overall and achieve success in a range of accredited courses.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils have very positive attitudes to school, they enjoy coming and join in activities with enthusiasm.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils with a wide range of needs behave very well in a variety of different settings including visits to restaurants during residential experiences.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships throughout the school are very good and pupils respond very well to opportunities for personal development.
Attendance	Satisfactory. It is broadly the same as similar schools. Most absences are because of medical reasons.

Pupils are very positive about school, they work hard, co-operate well and celebrate each other's successes. Relationships between pupils and with adults are very good and often excellent. This is a significant factor in pupils' learning.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5	aged 5-11	aged 11-16	aged over 16
Lessons seen overall	Good	Good	Good	Good

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

The quality of teaching is consistently good throughout the school and in the majority of subjects. It is often very good. During the inspection, 98 lessons were observed. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 96 per cent of lessons; importantly it was good or better in 76 per cent of lessons with 26 per cent being very good and two per cent excellent. It was unsatisfactory in four per cent. The overall high quality of teaching is a major factor in the progress made by pupils and the effective learning which takes place. The strongest elements of the teaching throughout the school are the management and organisation of lessons and the range of teaching methods adopted. These factors enable pupils with a wide range of attainment to make good progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The school provides a broad, balanced and relevant range of learning experiences to all pupils. Care is taken to ensure that there is an appropriate balance between National Curriculum requirements and the individual needs of pupils identified on their statements of special educational needs. It is enhanced for some pupils in the residential setting.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Appropriate provision is made for the small number of pupils for whom English is an additional language.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. The well-structured programme for personal, social and health education makes a significant contribution to this area of pupils' development. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is good.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares well for all its pupils. Procedures for child protection and for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and attendance are very good. Those for monitoring personal development are good and for academic development they are satisfactory.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher has provided very effective leadership and management for the school. He has been very well supported by the governors and senior staff through a very challenging period.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governing body fulfils its responsibilities effectively. It has developed a wide range of expertise and recognises the need to develop its role further as the school develops its evaluation role.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Procedures are in place for the senior management to evaluate performance but this has not yet been extended to include every subject manager.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are effectively used throughout the school. Staff are deployed well and good use is made of the grants available to the school. The principles of best value are applied.

The headteacher has provided excellent leadership and management for the school, guiding it out of serious weaknesses during a particularly difficult period. The governors have supported the school very well during this period and the school is now in an excellent position to develop further.

Staffing levels are very good overall but the lack of permanent staff in the secondary department for music, design and technology and, until recently, in art, is a weakness. The school has tried to resolve this situation but there are recruitment difficulties in these subjects. Resources are satisfactory and accommodation is good and will improve further as a result of the remodelling.

Effective use is made of the grants available and the school constantly seeks best value evaluating its work in relation to other schools. Arrangements for routine administration and financial control are very good.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The leadership and management of the head. • The quality of relationships and the caring attitude promoted. • The quality of teaching. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support and expertise for children with communication difficulties. • More regular information about individual targets. • More stability in staffing.

The inspection team agreed with the largely supportive views of the parents. They felt that the school makes good provision for children with communication difficulties and that appropriate opportunities are provided for parents to be involved in reviewing and setting individual targets. They did agree that there is now a need to stabilise the staffing.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Although there are some pupils who attain at nationally expected levels and achieve success in accredited courses, it is inappropriate to compare the school's results overall with national averages because of the special educational needs of the pupils. The percentage of pupils who achieve success in accredited courses is higher than that in similar schools, however.
2. The standards achieved and the progress made by pupils throughout the school and with a diverse range of special educational needs are good in most subjects and in relation to the individual needs of pupils. This represents an improvement since the last inspection and is the result of good quality teaching and very good leadership and management.
3. Children in the Foundation Stage achieve well and make good progress in nearly all areas of learning. They achieve particularly well in physical development where the introduction of the principles of conductive education has had a marked impact on development for individual children.
4. Standards achieved in all aspects of English are good throughout the school. The good use of alternative communication aids ensures that all pupils have access to the curriculum and are able to achieve well. Drama is also effectively used to provide teaching. Pupils of all ages achieve well in speaking and listening. In Key Stage 1, pupils can join in stories very well, expressing their own ideas clearly, using signs where appropriate and listening carefully to the ideas of others. In Key Stage 2, they learn to take turns and make good attempts to complete rhymes using their own rhyming words. The extensive use of group work further provides speaking and listening skills in Key Stages 3 and 4 and for post-16 students. For example, good speaking and listening skills were used in Year 7 when pupils described the characteristics that puppets they were making might have.
5. Effective strategies throughout the school enable all pupils to achieve well and make progress in reading. Reading has a high priority in the school and there are many examples of pupils of all levels of attainment using books in many different subjects. Many achieve standards in line with their age.
6. Good progress is made in writing throughout the school because of the quality of teaching and the work of the access team. Information and communication technology plays an important part in the progress pupils are able to make. In Key Stage 1, pupils develop their skills through daily writing activities whilst in Key Stage 2, higher attaining pupils develop a clear handwriting style and lower attainers communicate their ideas through pictures and symbols. The good teaching continues throughout the school and as a result, writing skills continue to develop in Key Stages 3 and 4 and with post-16 students.
7. Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory across the school. At Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, it is good overall. At Key Stage 1, pupils can measure using cubes and paperclips and are beginning to use a ruler to measure straight lines. Older pupils at Key Stage 2 are learning about area. Most can confidently calculate the area of a regular shape such as a square or rectangle and can use this knowledge to find the area of a

more complex shape. They can confidently explain to their classmates the strategies they have used to find the answer. They know how important it is to work from what is known and all join in to chant 'work from what you know'. At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils undertake an investigation to determine how many paving slabs will be needed to edge a garden pool. Higher attainers can develop a formula that will enable them to calculate the answer. Older pupils in Key Stage 4 are revising what they have learned about co-ordinates and the points of a compass. All know the four points and higher attainers can work out points between.

8. Post-16 students are able to apply their mathematical knowledge to real life situations. For example, looking at the best way to invest money!
9. The numeracy strategy has been implemented successfully at Key Stage 2 and elements are evident in Key Stage 3. It is having a positive impact on standards and numeracy is effectively taught in other areas of the curriculum, such as science. The National Numeracy Strategy has not been fully implemented in Key Stage 1.
10. The school's results in science in a combination of teacher assessments, national tests and GCSE examination results show that pupils compare very well with all special schools and with other similar schools. Overall, the achievement of pupils in science is good, and in a number of individual lessons, very good. There are no discernible groups of pupils who are under-performing in science, and indeed one of the strongest features of the provision seen are the strategies designed to ensure that all pupils can participate and make progress.
11. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils develop an increased awareness of the world around them and a sense of time and place. They learn to recognise and name key parts of the body, together with features of the face, and to assemble the flower, stem and leaves of a plant. Their observational powers develop and they practice recording their observations as simple diagrams, or as patterns of observed weather.
12. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are assembling well-organised folders of their work, whether it is original work or careful overwriting and colouring of diagrams. They become involved in discussions about their own bodies and the need for healthy eating. Pupils can name and label more parts of the human body or produce clear diagrams to represent electrical circuits. Prediction appears in work on forces, and higher attaining pupils increase their confidence in writing or word-processing some of the findings from their work. Pupils with complex needs show increased confidence in participating in testing materials by touch, smell and taste.
13. In Key Stage 3, pupils explore topics in greater depth and over several weeks. They show an increasing understanding of the need for accurate measure and fair tests. They develop and can describe features of safe practice when conducting experiments.
14. Key Stage 4 pupils' folders show continuing improvement in the quality and range of work. Evidence of good levels of understanding of cause and effect are seen in a piece of writing by higher attaining pupils who describe effectively the life cycle and behaviour of ladybirds across the seasons and their potential use as environmentally friendly pest control in greenhouses. A good number and range of GCSE results had been achieved by pupils in the previous year.
15. Throughout the rest of the curriculum, pupils of all ages and levels of attainment make good progress and achieve well in information and communication technology, religious education and physical education and in history and geography in Key Stages 1, 2 and

3. These subjects are not taught in Key Stage 4. Progress in music is very good in Key Stages 1 and 2 where pupils achieve very good standards but the lack of a specialist teacher in the secondary department leads to unsatisfactory progress in Key Stage 3. Achievement and progress are satisfactory in design and technology currently but the lack of a specialist teacher in Key Stages 3 and 4 makes this less secure. This is also true in art in the secondary department, although achievement over time has been good as a result of the good teaching provided by a teacher who has recently left the school. Students in the post-16 provision make good progress and achieve success in a range of accredited courses.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16. Pupils' attitudes to school and learning are very good. Pupils are enthusiastic about their school and very proud of the developments that have and are about to take place in the building and residential unit. There is a buzz about the school as pupils move to their lessons. At lunchtime, the talk is of what the morning's lesson has covered and what is anticipated for the afternoon classes. Pupils are keen to make a relevant contribution to lessons. For example, in a lesson where senior pupils were auditioning for roles they had created for themselves in a play on life in Liverpool at around the time of the Beatles, the pupils came to the lesson wearing make up and clothes to match their roles and carried convincing curriculum vitae documents to support the characters they were meant to be impersonating. In a science lesson, junior pupils all helped a fellow pupil with a hearing impairment to set up a personal computer program on gravity for the group, and then applauded when the program ran correctly. The range of lunchtime clubs is currently restricted by the building programme in school, but back copies of the school's Hebden News give ample evidence of pupils who are keen to enter competitions on the school's behalf, and win prizes that benefit all pupils, for example a water feature in the post-16 garden.
17. Pupils' behaviour in the school is generally very good and there have been no recent exclusions. Indeed, there has only ever been one exclusion. When occasionally a pupil does display an element of disruptive behaviour, for example a girl in a junior class who would not contribute to completing a worksheet in a personal, social and health education lesson, the other pupils are prepared to ignore the disruptive behaviour and continue with their own work. Generally, pupils get on very well with each other and are helpful and aware of each other's special needs. No pupils spoken to expressed any worries about bullying in the school. In a trip out to a restaurant with a group of pupils from the residential setting, pupils displayed a very courteous attitude to the waiter and other members of staff in the restaurant, and were a credit to the school, each other, and their families.
18. Pupils' personal development and relationships within the school are good. Senior pupils are responsible for collecting and publishing news about the school through the school newsletter. Pupils in the residential unit have made good use of their 24-hour curriculum to support charity causes, for example by baking cakes to be sold in school to raise money for the Indian Earthquake appeal. Pupils in school have also sponsored runners in the London Marathon for Children in Need. Pupils share some of the minor administrative jobs in the school such as returning registers to the school office. All pupils who have school lunches have to take responsibility for choosing their lunchtime meals well in advance and then remember to bring their menu with them to the school cafeteria at lunchtime. Older pupils who require routine medication take on the responsibility of getting to the school's nursing staff on time, although this is always carefully supervised to ensure that no pupil's medical needs are jeopardised. Restrictions in the extent of lunchtime accommodation because of building work are

currently hampering pupils' use of the outside playground for team games and social intercourse. However, older pupils can still make good use of corridor space to sit together and chat, and younger pupils make good use of the quadrangle at breaktimes for friendly play. Staff and pupils enjoy very good relationships and within the residential unit, this heightens the degree of trust necessary for an effective caring atmosphere.

19. Pupils' attendance at the school is satisfactory and in line with similar schools. The school's good relationship with the transport drivers goes a long way to ensuring that most pupils are punctual to school. The main reasons for pupils being absent from school are illness or medical treatment. Within school, pupils are generally punctual to lessons, although the regular timetable of ensuring standing time and changing procedures for pupils, does occasionally, unavoidably, delay the start of lessons. The registration period in the morning supports a friendly pastoral session when home/school books are checked and personal matters attended to.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

20. The quality of teaching is consistently good throughout the school and in the majority of subjects. It is often very good. During the inspection, 98 lessons were observed. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 96 per cent of lessons; importantly it was good or better in 76 per cent with 26 per cent being very good and two per cent excellent. It was unsatisfactory in four per cent. This represents an improvement from the last inspection and is a major factor in the progress made by pupils and the effective teaching which takes place.
21. The quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage is consistently good and sometimes very good and as a result, children learn effectively. This has been maintained since the last inspection. The recent development for children with complex needs with the introduction of conductive education has also improved the quality of teaching. Throughout the Foundation Stage, very good use is made of the knowledge of children's individual needs to set objectives which are challenging but realistic, enabling effective learning to take place.
22. Teaching in all aspects of English is consistently good and sometimes very good throughout the school. Listening skills are effectively taught in a range of subjects. The use of alternative communication aids enables all pupils to achieve well in speaking and listening. The careful use of questions enables all pupils to contribute to lessons and express their ideas. A very good range of strategies is used by teachers to develop understanding in English. For example, in Year 6, very good, effective strategies were employed to help pupils understand the use speech makes through conversation. The strategies included teacher modelling and pupils having to pre-prepare a conversation in which they indicated different characters. They then worked in groups to determine where speech marks belonged. As a result, they made good progress and effective learning took place. Good deployment of support staff and teamwork is also a significant feature of the teaching in English. For example, the very positive, planned- for support provided by support assistants in reading is very effective in improving standards.
23. Teaching in mathematics is satisfactory overall but it is good in Key Stage 1 and very good in Key Stage 2. There is a very lively approach which encourages and motivates pupils who make progress as a result. Key Stage 2 is better than Key Stage 1 because very effective use is made of the National Numeracy Strategy, lessons are fun and well planned and as a result, pupils develop confidence in their answers. At Key Stages 3 and 4, teaching is satisfactory overall. The pupils benefit from a specialist teacher of mathematics who, although new to the school, is quickly getting to know the pupils and

is matching work to their needs. Lesson planning is satisfactory and the understanding of support staff of the needs of pupils ensures that the expectations are high enough and that learning and lessons move at a good pace.

24. Teaching in science is predominantly very good. Lessons are exciting and imaginative, very well planned and have clear learning outcomes. Planning has very close regard for pupil's individual education plans and effective teamwork with support staff ensures that all pupils have access to the lessons. For example, highly aromatic plants with different textures were used by support staff to ensure the involvement of pupils with serious visual impairment. A range of teaching strategies and resources were very effectively used to provide good learning. In one lesson concerned with planets, music from the Planet Suite was played in the dark to create a sense of space, awe and wonder before pupils began to research and investigate the behaviour of planets within the solar system.
25. Throughout the school, particularly effective aspects of the teaching are the organisation and management of pupils and the range of teaching methods adopted. In almost all subjects, a wide variety of teaching methods is employed to ensure that pupils with a wide range of needs are able to benefit. In physical education for example, good individual coaching, using support staff very effectively, enabled all pupils to develop their skills in volleyball. They were then allowed to practice and develop these skills in a small game.
26. Where teaching is less than satisfactory, this was largely due to specific issues which the school is about to address. Music in Key Stage 3 for example, suffers from the lack of a teacher with specialist knowledge and although staff try hard, they do not have the necessary expertise to enable pupils to make enough progress. In the secondary department in art and design and technology, temporary staff are in place following the recent move of the specialist teacher. Although expertise in the subjects is good, the necessary teaching strategies and knowledge of the range of special educational needs sometimes reduce the effect of teaching and pupils' learning.

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

27. The quality and range of the learning and development opportunities offered to the pupils and students are good, and are being strengthened by the introduction of curriculum managers in primary, secondary and post-16 departments.
28. The full requirements of the National Curriculum, together with the agreed syllabus for religious education and a detailed and strong programme of personal, social and health education are provided. They are well integrated with a substantial programme of physiotherapy, speech therapy, nursing care and residential opportunities and experiences. The Key Stage 4 and post-16 curriculum offer a wide range of accredited courses covering a youth award scheme, certificates of achievement, GCSE, a GNVQ and an A-level opportunity to support higher attaining individual students. The early years provision is being strengthened by the introduction of conductive education, providing a more coherent approach to meeting the wide range of young children's personal, social and learning needs.

29. The quality of care throughout the 24-hour day is very good and is an integral part of the overall provision for pupils in the school. Although there has been considerable disruption to the school recently as a result of extensive building works, management restructuring and staffing changes, strategies to improve the quality and coherence of the curriculum have continued to be put in place. The school is aware that further work is needed to improve the linkage of the curriculum between key stages, and to develop the monitoring and assessment systems now in place or being introduced in order to refine curriculum planning.
30. The curriculum is complex following the positive introduction of modified versions of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies in the primary department, their current introduction into Key Stage 3, the introduction of the recent Key Skills initiative and the strengthening of information and communication technology across the school. While pupils will inevitably need to take, for some, substantial and necessary time out from the classroom for therapy and nursing care, the school is developing strategies to minimise the impact, particularly in the core subjects. However, there remains a need to keep this aspect and its impact under review, particularly for the foundation subjects.
31. There is strong extra-curricular provision for those pupils who spend some of their time in residential facilities and a small programme of other extra-curricular activities at lunchtimes. Homework is set for some pupils and in some subjects, particularly accredited courses. Overall, this is a rich and improving curriculum, relevant to the pupils' needs and providing through high quality care, personal, social and health education, careers education and a range of accredited courses, a good preparation for the next stage of their life.
32. All pupils are fully included in the curriculum irrespective of their individual needs and some pupils are included in local schools to enhance their curriculum. Individual education plans are in place and are regularly reviewed and all pupils are included on the school's register of special educational needs.
33. Provision for the children's, pupils' and students' spiritual development is good. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection. Well-planned, whole-school and phase assemblies ensure that pupils celebrate the main Christian religious festivals as well as having the opportunity to appreciate the richness and diversity of other faiths such as when celebrating the Chinese New Year. Additionally, assemblies provide opportunities for celebrating achievement, quiet reflection and, dependent on the theme, the expression of awe and wonder such as was shown by many as they looked at the free-fall parachute video in support of the trust and faith theme. Younger pupils are very aware of what constitutes appropriate and inappropriate behaviour and as they move through the school, they develop this awareness into a more mature understanding of the difference between right and wrong. All staff, school-based and residential, make a very positive contribution to the development of moral behaviour as they present very good role models and consistently reinforce acceptable behaviours and attitudes through praise and guidance. Class-based codes of conduct that stress fair play and justice reflect the developing maturity levels of the children, pupils and students and result in the very good behaviour and attitudes that are a strong feature of the school. Religious education lessons contribute significantly to the children's, pupils' and students' spiritual and moral development.
34. Provision for social development is good with the school's personal, social and health education programme playing a significant part in this process. Staff are consistent in the high expectations that they have of the children's, pupils' and students' social behaviour and are equally consistent in the praise and guidance that they provide. The

youngest children showed great effort and perseverance when dressing themselves at the end of the day; older pupils waited their turn with patience and sensitivity as they had their meal time drinks, while students in the school's post-16 provision demonstrated very mature social skills as they interpreted for and shared a joke with a peer who found it difficult to communicate. The standard of social behaviour during the lunch period is of the highest order. The school's underpinning and totally unobtrusive structure for this activity is excellent and results in a social occasion that demonstrates clearly that the demands made of pupils and students are fully justified as they order their meals in advance from a menu, know how to respond correctly in a cafeteria setting and eat their meal in a very civilised manner. These social attributes and skills are equally well used when on subject visits such as to an Adventure Farm, Jodrell Bank and a Sea Life Centre. In class and when moving around the school, pupils and students co-operate well as they help each other, show tolerance and patience with friends who are slower than themselves and readily accept and enjoy responsibilities such as being on register duty.

35. The school's provision for cultural development is good. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection. A good programme of visits such as to the Tate gallery in Liverpool and to Chester city centre extends their knowledge of their own culture while visits by a 'rap' poet and percussion specialist extended their understanding of other cultures. The interest generated by these visitors was translated into schoolwork of very good quality. Cultural development is additionally enhanced through subject-based activities such as the younger pupils' linking of the work of William Morris to their study of texture in nature and through the post-16 students' comparison of English and Indian dress codes. Religious education lessons also make a very positive contribution to the children's, pupils' and students' cultural development as they provide opportunities for them to acquire a deeper understanding of the cultural traditions of different faiths. Additionally, drama lessons provide pupils and students with an understanding of the role of drama in their own culture while a French visit provided direct experience of another culture.
36. The provision for the pupils' and students' personal development is very good – a positive improvement since the previous inspection. A very well-structured programme for personal, social and health education underpins provision and although clearly contributing to social development, this programme is very effective in extending the pupils' and students' personal and health development in a very systematic way. Sex education, personal health education and citizenship units are carefully and progressively provided within the programme with the whole being supported by a wide range of relevant visits and complementary activities for those in residence. Visits to local sports centres extend physical and personal skills in different settings; the use of local venues for meals provides opportunities to extend skills and attributes developed in the dining hall while visitors such as the fire service bring community resources into the school. The mature manner in which post-16 students respond to the very good physical and curricular organisation provided for them demonstrates clearly that the school programme for personal development is very effective.
37. The school makes very good use of the community to support both the school and 24-hour curriculum.
38. Pupils in the residential setting are making very good use of the local area to complete an ASDAN module. They have been mapping out routes to their visits to local shopping centres, the police station and an animal adventure park, and they are currently working within a community arts promotion on a hidden talents project. This is a great improvement since the previous inspection. The school makes very good use of the

area's cultural and social facilities. For example, visits to art galleries, natural features, shopping centres (for example researching packaging and prices in a local supermarket as part of an information and communication technology project), and the local zoo and library. Work on careers for the junior pupils brought firemen, policemen, postmen, opticians and a vet into the school. The school works hard to raise its profile in the local community and there has been a generous response. The school has used extra resources provided by the community to support pupils' progress.

39. The school enjoys very good links with partnership institutions. There are close links to a secondary school on the same site, and a number of pupils are integrating successfully with mainstream classes. Several post-16 students regularly attend a computer graphic art module at a nearby neuromuscular unit, where realistic work experience and career opportunities are available.
40. The school's recent networking installation and Internet access will consolidate links already made to schools around the country and in South Africa.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

41. The provision that the school offers to all pupils for their care, welfare and well-being is very good. Child protection procedures in the school are very good and close attention to the detail of these procedures by the designated person, the head of care, is ensuring a rolling programme of training that will include all staff across the school. There is frequent liaison with social workers who are involved with pupils and their families in the school. New guidelines by the Area Child Protection Committee are being absorbed into the school's day-to-day activities and procedures.
42. Health and safety procedures across the school are very good and an improvement since the previous inspection. All areas of this provision are now dealt with very efficiently and issues raised in the previous inspection are no longer of concern, for example all visitors to the swimming pool must now wear overshoes whereas previously this was not the case. Very close attention is paid to the arrival and dismissal of pupils, and all transport entering and leaving the school at this time is subject to scrutiny by the school's transport co-ordinator and the site manager. Pupils' safety is paramount. Medical treatment in the school is very good and supported by several members of the residential, teaching and support staff that hold first aid qualifications. A team of four nursing staff carry out all medication and treatment in the school. Liaison between physiotherapy, speech therapy, nursing staff and the school is very good and there are formal weekly meetings between the school, residential setting and nursing staff to ensure the continuity of care for pupils. Two nurses provide night cover. The school still has no occupational therapy input but actively encourages the health trust to address this lack. Risk assessments are in place for all moving and handling of pupils, and these are carried out by the school's physiotherapist, the nursing staff, teachers and support assistants. School meals make a very positive contribution to the health and well-being of pupils and are served in a similar canteen service to a mainstream secondary school or café system. The 'cafeteria' offers a wide choice of fresh foods and can cater for special dietary needs of pupils, which is an improvement since the previous inspection.
43. Where pupils require the support of the nursing service or one-to-one midday assistants to take their meals, appropriate provision is made. The school is currently evaluating the use of the accommodation in the school at lunchtime to promote pupils' personal development.

44. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good and an improvement since the previous inspection. The school follows up absences on a daily basis and registers are checked through each day. Information on whether a pupil is absent can come in either from transport drivers, by telephone message or from a written note. Pastoral teachers mark school registers twice daily. The school encourages pupils' families not to take holidays during the school term and liaises closely with education welfare officers to organise home visits where it has concerns over pupil absences. There is a properly maintained register of attendance in the residential setting that links into fire safety precautions. The school is aware of the reasons behind pupils who have unauthorised absences from the school, and involves the education welfare service where it is necessary.
45. The school's procedures for monitoring behaviour and ensuring that there is no oppressive behaviour are very good. In the residential provision, the incident book is up-to-date and analysed alongside incidents in the daytime provision for pupils at behavioural monitoring sessions held by the senior management team. The school now has a policy on physical restraint, but as the previous report noted, restraint is not a feature of school life. Behavioural modifications for pupils are addressed by a constant use of rewards, pupils' involvement in setting up their own rules, very good knowledge of each pupil that stems from the pastoral system and the overall view of behavioural issues in the school by the head of care and senior school staff.
46. There has been a dramatic improvement in the care offered to pupils in the residential setting since the previous inspection. A head of care is now in place and she has had a far reaching influence in addressing issues of pupils' welfare, their privacy and dignity, child protection issues, adherence to national guidelines in residential care, care plans, record keeping and adequate staffing. The opportunities for pupils to enjoy the combination of stimulating evening activities and then to relax in comfortable, private, domestic settings are now very good, and when the new residential unit is opened, are planned to be even better. Pupils enjoy the involvement they are offered in setting up and personalising their living areas. For example, the entire present group visited a large furniture store and bought sidelights and bed linen to furnish their bedrooms. The monitoring of pupils' personal and social development in the residential area is good and carefully matched to the statements on their individual education plans. Staff are very aware of the right of pupils to make choices in the residential unit and when pupils went out for an evening meal to a restaurant during the inspection, staff ensured that each pupil could select the meal they wanted off the menu and then later, visit the sweet counter to choose a pudding. Pupils in the residential unit are encouraged to take a pride in their personal hygiene. Medication arrangements for pupils in the residential unit are under the very capable supervision of the nurse on duty, however, present arrangements can leave pupils without nursing care for a few hours in the evening from 5.30pm until 9.30pm, other than in an emergency. This position is due to be reviewed when more pupils are in residence in the new residential unit. Although the school has not yet appointed an independent listener for residential pupils, the school nurses operate a confidential one-to-one advice and listening service each week for staff and pupils. The school has recognised the problems facing pupils who have difficulties in communicating, and with the speech and language therapist, is researching different ways that pupils can let others know, for example, that they are uncomfortable with a situation or have personal problems. The new residential area will have a private phone for pupils but currently, pupils can use the phone in the residential office for the occasional personal call. Residential staff ensure continuity of care with teaching staff by daily meetings, some formal, some informal, and at the morning and afternoon hand-over sessions between residential care staff in the school hall. The close, daily links between the school and the residential setting have been very efficiently organised by

the head of child care and the assistant headteacher to ensure that the pupils' development is supported throughout the 24-hour curriculum. Separate bedroom and bathroom provision is made for boys and girls in the residential setting, and there are no occasions when dormitory areas are shared, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. Even though the school regards the present residential accommodation as temporary until the new building is open, the present accommodation still gives pupils access to different areas for studying or leisure, and to mix socially.

47. The school's procedures for monitoring the academic performance and personal development are satisfactory but contain many good and developing features. The school has statements of special educational need for all pupils. The needs identified, together with the school's subsequent assessment findings, are used to write individual education plans. These are routinely used in lesson planning and are discussed with parents at both parents' evenings and at annual reviews.
48. Procedures for assessing pupils' academic attainment and progress are undergoing change and development at present. At present, they are complex, involving as they do the introduction of conductive education in the early years, both the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies, together with the introduction of 'Key Skills'. Managers are working hard and successfully to make the transfer from existing systems to new ones as smooth as possible. However, there are a number of new staff in place, monitoring by subject co-ordinators is at an early stage of development and the school recognises that staff will need time to look closely at the links across key stages in the school and at systems to ensure they moderate their assessments carefully. Until these planned refinements have taken place, the regular use of the information gained by assessment for reviewing and planning the curriculum is localised to particular teachers, groups of teachers or subjects.
49. The school has recently appointed a new deputy headteacher who brings with her considerable background in ways of assessing the very small steps of progress made by pupils with more complex needs, and there are clear plans for their introduction across the school. Assessment procedures are stronger in Key Stage 4 and in the post-16 unit where there are a good range of externally accredited courses at a variety of levels, and across a good range of subjects. These have their own built-in patterns of assessment at the end of units of study. Additional administrative support has been put in place in the post-16 unit to ensure previously unwieldy patterns of recording progress are simplified and well ordered. Good progress has been made in this respect since the last inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

50. Parents' views of the school are very good. Although many parents cannot visit the school on a regular basis because of the distance involved, the school makes every effort to keep close to parents either over the phone, through the 'chat' books that go between home and school and by regular newsletters. Parents gave a very positive indication of their views of the school in response to a questionnaire consulting them on twenty aspects of the provision offered to pupils in school life, and the school is currently acting on some of the suggestions they received from parents.
51. The school tries hard to give all parents enough notice of the date of their child's annual review and this is generally successful in ensuring a good parental attendance. A few parents however, perceive that they are not fully informed of the progress that their children are making against the targets in their individual education plans. The

inspection found that appropriate opportunities for involvement are provided. The school successfully negotiates with a range of different authorities to, for example, help arrange respite care outside of school, review the amount of support for a pupil in school or give personal support where parents are having difficult times at home. The regular contacts built up with the school's administrative team help parents to feel comfortable about coming to the school with any worries or concerns. In the same way, the regular dialogue that many school staff and parents build up through the home/school books creates a high level of trust and confidence between home and school.

52. A number of parents now regularly attend the 'School for Parents' held in the early years department. The school also successfully establishes early links with many new families of potential pupils, when pre-school children with special needs are attending therapy provision that is based in the school.
53. The school normally benefits from an active and enthusiastic Parent School Association, but until the new parent centre is opened and building work has finished in the school, their activities have been temporarily suspended. That has not stopped some parents from helping with specific projects in the school such as, for example, helping staff with clearing up work before the start of the new building.
54. A small number of parents regularly help in lessons, for example by helping with swimming activities or accompanying pupils on school trips. Parents also make a regular contribution to homework activities, for example by helping pupils in a junior class to identify dangerous objects in the home, some of which were a surprise to both the teacher and parents, but readily explained by the pupils. The school encourages parents to come into the school to work alongside their children where this will support their learning at home. For example, during the course of the inspection, a meeting was held by the health professionals working in the school to let parents know what they do and how parents could keep in touch and be involved. Although the school has not published its most recent governor's annual report to parents, preferring to wait for the opening of the new facilities, the school's prospectus meets all the necessary statutory requirements and the latest guidance on information to parents. Annual written reports to parents on their child's progress are brief but relevant and again, meet statutory requirements which is an improvement since the previous inspection. A successful junior open day and parents' evening for secondary pupils' families maintains the school's active stance on inviting parents into school to see 'where progress matters'.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

55. The overall leadership and management of the school are very good. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection where it was found to be poor although the then newly appointed headteacher was beginning to make improvements.
56. The headteacher has provided excellent leadership and management since that time. Rapid progress was made leading to significant improvements taking the school out of serious weaknesses within a year. The rate of progress has been slowed over the past two years because the attention of the headteacher and governors was diverted to deal with issues outside their control leading to a number of staff changes, including the resignation of the deputy headteacher. However, the high quality of leadership and management and the strong support of the governing body ensured that good progress was maintained despite the difficulties and the school now has an excellent foundation on which to base further improvement. During the unavoidable absence of the deputy headteacher, the two assistant headteachers provided conscientious and high quality support to the headteacher, taking on a range of additional duties to compensate for the

deputy's absence. As a result of the effective leadership and management, pupils achieve well in most areas of the curriculum because of the higher quality of teaching in the school. Effective and efficient administrative procedures enable teachers and support staff to concentrate on their work with pupils.

57. The school has a very clear sense of purpose with an emphasis in raising the achievements of pupils, the standards they attain and the quality of education they receive. There is a shared commitment to this from all involved with the school. The senior management team has been strengthened very recently by the appointment of a deputy headteacher with significant responsibilities for the curriculum. Existing members of the senior management team, which included the head of child care, have clear roles and responsibilities which they fulfil very well enabling the headteacher, increasingly, to work with the governors in the overall strategic management of the school. This has been important in improving the school and creating excellent foundations for the future.
58. Plans to develop the role of subject managers have been in place for some time but progress in this area has been slowed by staffing changes, the major refurbishment and building work and other events which have taken up management time. The school recognises the need to develop the work of subject managers in monitoring and evaluating standards, and teaching and in developing subject improvement plans to drive the subjects forward. Work has begun on this with some subject managers.
59. Teaching has been monitored by members of the senior management team, external consultants and the local education authority. This has led to an identification of strengths and areas for development and has had an impact on the overall quality of teaching. It is anticipated that the development of the role of subject managers will further improve this. The school has recently introduced a very thorough extended performance management system which will also add to this.
60. The school development plan clearly identifies the most important areas and priorities for improvement. All staff and governors are involved in its preparation and it has proved an effective tool for school improvement. It will be enhanced by consistent subject development plans. The financial implication of developments is clearly identified as are time-scales, criteria for evaluating the effect of them on standards and the people responsible for carrying them out.
61. The governing body has been very effective during a very difficult period. It is very knowledgeable and has developed considerable expertise. Governors fulfil their statutory responsibilities and have a clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. They now recognise they can devote more time, as previously planned, to monitoring and evaluating the standards achieved by the school. A very good committee structure is in place and the strengths of individual governors are used very effectively.
62. Financial procedures and controls are thorough although there has been no recent auditors' report provided by the local education authority. All administrative staff and systems are very thorough and these ensure that the school runs smoothly. The school compares its results and costs with other and similar schools and applies the principles of best value effectively.

63. The overall good standards achieved, together with the good quality of teaching and the very good leadership and management at a relatively low cost, means that the school provides good value for money.
64. The school has a very good number of teachers, learning support staff, therapists and residential care staff. This has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Teachers have appropriate training for the phase in which they teach and in the secondary department, the majority of subjects are taught by subject specialists. However, there are weaknesses in provision in the secondary department in design and technology, art and music, because there is no specialist teacher of music and no permanent art and design and technology teacher. In addition, very few teachers have additional qualifications in special needs and this is something the school hopes to continue to address through its staff training and development programme. However, overall, the quality and quantity of the staff and their effective deployment enables the school to enhance the learning opportunities of all pupils so that the wide variety of pupils' needs identified in the statements of special educational needs is well met.
65. The school's induction arrangements are satisfactory but are not yet planned systematically. There are arrangements in place for this to be phased in for all staff during 2001/2002. The school's arrangements for the performance management of teachers are very good and performance management is now beginning to permeate other aspects of the school's work. Staff development opportunities are very good and are available to all staff.
66. The adequacy of accommodation is good and in some areas, it is excellent, but there are weaknesses. The refurbished hydrotherapy area is an excellent facility, very well used by physiotherapists to enable many pupils to access the full range of the National Curriculum. It is very well used by the physical education department as a swimming facility for beginners to gain confidence and improve their stroke-making techniques. Therapists are an essential part of the provision for many youngsters and their accommodation is again excellent. This is typified by the secondary department's physiotherapy room, which is discreet yet sited in a central part of the school, and shows the determination of the governors and senior management to provide the very best for the pupils. The current boarding provision is very good and will be excellent when the new building is completed for an Autumn opening. The accommodation for the early years, science at secondary level, art at primary level, and the arts and drama provision, is very good. However, the current siting of some provision for music is not satisfactory and it is separated from an English teaching room by a sliding concertina door and restricts the range of learning opportunities available to the subject. The discreet provision for music using the art, drama and music building is very good however. The lack of a food technology room is planned to be addressed by utilising the three family-style kitchens in the new boarding facility. There are positive benefits to this because it will provide a 'real-life' context for pupils.
67. There are many areas about the school where high quality displays set the tone. Professional advice has been taken on colour shades and lighting for the corridor areas of the school where colour co-ordinated display boards are awaiting placement. Outside the science room, a science garden is being developed with the footings for the surrounding wall being dug during the inspection week. The large metal crates, the temporary storage space, whilst the extension to the boarding facility is being built, are to be removed shortly and there are plans to upgrade playgrounds and to develop landscaping features which will complement the attractive extension to the building.

68. The overall satisfactory level and quality of learning resources that was identified during the previous inspection has been sustained. However, as a consequence of the ongoing building programmes' effect upon storage, some of the resources in some subject areas are not yet fully accessible.
69. The resources available for science, information and communication technology, physical education and art are good, while resources for English, mathematics, religious education, design and technology, geography, music and French are satisfactory. Learning resources for history are unsatisfactory and there is an urgent need to carry out an audit of what is available.
70. The very good ratio of computers to pupils, in conjunction with a very good range of carefully selected communication aids and switches ensures that pupils and students have optimal access to the curriculum and in particular, provide very good access for those with the most complex learning difficulties. This improved access represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection.
71. A new and very accessible secondary library area has been created as part of the building programme and when the primary library area, equally well located, is completed, the school will have made significant improvements in this area of provision. Both areas are suitable for whole-class library and study skills and they also are suitable and accessible for reference and private study work.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

72. In order to raise standards further, the headteacher, staff and governors should:
 - Improve the provision in art, design and technology and music in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 by ensuring the appointment of permanent specialist teachers for these subjects. (Paragraphs 64, 108, 110, 151)
 - Improve the role of subject managers in the management of the school by:
 - developing their role in the systematic monitoring of teaching to identify areas of strength and areas for improvement; (Paragraph 58)
 - developing their role in monitoring and evaluating the standards achieved and producing development plans in a consistent format to raise standards further. (Paragraph 58)

The school has also identified these areas for development.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	98
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	44

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	26	48	20	4	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	111
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	37

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	10.0	School data	0.0

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	0
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	100
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	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	1
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: YN – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	17.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6.2
Average class size	8

Education support staff: YN – Y13

Total number of education support staff	50
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1,363

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	1,561,255
Total expenditure	1,558,759
Expenditure per pupil	13,438
Balance brought forward from previous year	84,465
Balance carried forward to next year	86,961

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	111
Number of questionnaires returned	46

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	30	4	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	50	41	9	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	50	41	4	0	4
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	30	39	22	0	9
The teaching is good.	43	50	0	4	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	41	43	13	0	2
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	72	26	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	54	43	2	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	46	48	7	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	54	43	0	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	46	41	9	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	26	30	11	2	30

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

73. At the time of the last inspection, the quality of teaching in the Foundation Stage was judged to be good or very good and children made at least satisfactory and often good progress. The quality of teaching and learning has been maintained. In addition, there has been improvement in the development of the accommodation and the recent introduction of conductive education has made a significant contribution to the education of children with complex physical needs.

Personal and social education

74. Personal and social education is good. Children generally settle well and are happy and confident in their groups. Children develop an understanding of the daily routines. They choose books to look at or toys to play with. They interact well together according to their age and level of needs. During an early morning activity session, one child chose to do a floor puzzle. Two others who were curious and wanted to help soon joined her. All three worked on the task together. Children respond well to the adults who work with them and show their enjoyment of the activities by smiling, gesture or voice even when undertaking challenging tasks. Staff are lively and enthusiastic and this is very effective in instilling confidence in the children. The atmosphere is relaxed but purposeful. Children and staff laugh together at a shared joke but expectations of pupils are high. Children are encouraged to be as independent as they are able to be in their personal care and in eating at lunchtimes.

Communication, language and literacy

75. Children are encouraged to communicate with one another and with adults. Good use is made of home-school communication to initiate discussion about the previous evening's events. Adults create opportunities for children to respond to one another, for example by planning activities where children give out equipment to others. Good use is made of language support systems, such as pictures, and children who find communication more difficult are well supported in developing the necessary skills. Where appropriate, children are encouraged to eye point or communicate needs through gesture and staff are very sensitive in responding. There is a wide range of attainment in literacy. Some pupils are able to identify the beginning sounds of words, can copy accurately from the board and can write their name. Other children can identify the names of the children in their group from name cards. All children enjoy stories about familiar characters and understand how to turn the pages of the book and that the print and pictures tell the story. During the inspection, children took part in role-play where one child was the postman and delivered letters to others in the group. Children happily join in with familiar rhymes and filling in missing words or phrases. They enjoy changing the words of familiar rhymes. Exercises in a conductive education session were done with everyone singing 'Baa, Baa, Rainbow Sheep!'

Mathematical development

76. Children make satisfactory progress in mathematical development. Children show an interest in numbers and every opportunity to count is taken. Some can match numbers. In one activity observed, the 'postman' delivered letters and children matched the number of their letterbox with the number on the letter. Opportunities are planned for

children to use positional language such as 'put Postman Pat in his van', 'What's in the bag?' During conductive education sessions, routines are accompanied by the adults singing the descriptions of the positions of children's hands and feet.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

77. The provision to develop children's knowledge and understanding of the world is good. The environment is interesting and a wide range of activities is planned to attract the children's interest. The new building is well designed to facilitate the range of activities and whilst development is ongoing, plans to build on the existing good practice make this area well placed for further improvement. Children listen with enjoyment to a range of sounds and respond with pleasure to familiar songs such as nursery rhymes. Some children can join the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle and can fold paper such as pretend letters to fit into an envelope. According to their age and ability, children respond to questions about what they do at home and some offer information.

Physical development

78. The provision for children's physical development is very good. The introduction of conductive education has contributed significantly to this area. The very good quality of teaching provides children who have a range of complex needs with the opportunity to develop physical skills that encourage independence. The wider curriculum is embedded in the established physical routines which one group of children works on each day. Conductive education is available to other children in the afternoons and in addition, there are hydrotherapy sessions and physical education. Children are encouraged to maximise their physical skills. For example, children were supported in rolling over and pulling themselves along the plinth to get to a standing position. Other children can balance on four points in a kneeling position. Some children can push a big ball to one another. In other activities, they can get into a line to leave the room and can handle glue sticks, crayons and pens appropriately.

Creative development

79. Children's progress in creative development is satisfactory. They listen to music and can respond by sign and gesture. Some children can join in by singing, clapping and playing percussion instruments. All enjoy singing familiar rhymes and songs to the accompaniment of an adult playing the guitar. Children show how much they are enjoying the songs and rhymes through facial expressions, smiling and clapping their hands. In other areas of work, children can select coloured pens for writing. One child replied to her letter from Postman Pat using a different colour for each letter. In early morning activities, two children enjoyed making pictures with Fuzzy Felt. Displays in the classrooms show children's paintings of toys and photographs of dressing up.
80. Teaching in the Foundation Stage is good and in a number of lessons observed, very good. Lessons are well planned and teachers choose activities and resources that interest the children and give them a wide range of opportunities. Adults know the children very well and make sure that what they are to do is adapted to their individual needs. All adults work very closely together and the children benefit from the effective and sensitive support provided by support staff. In the very good lessons, teachers have a very good understanding of the learning needs of young children. Teachers undertaking conductive education are clear and confident in providing appropriate routines which meet the wide ranging needs of the children in the group. Assessment and recording systems are established and routinely used to ensure that children's progress is tracked. Teachers are well aware of the need to prepare children for the

next stage in their education and plan for them to participate in activities that will ensure a smooth transition. The organisation of the department to encompass a Key Stage 1 class that shares some activities with the younger children further supports this.

81. The curriculum is well planned and appropriately differentiated to meet both learning and physical needs. Good use is made of effective assessment procedures. Previous planning is being systematically updated to ensure a match with the current curriculum guidelines for the Foundation Stage. The department is well led and staff have a clear view of the priorities for future development.
82. The newly built accommodation provides a very good environment in which to deliver the Foundation curriculum. Whilst there are still things to do to finally complete the new building, good use is being made of the rooms. Outside play facilities are restricted by the current building works but children have opportunities to play outside in a secure area and plans are in place for development of outdoor play facilities. Resources are satisfactory and adequate for the numbers and needs of pupils.

ENGLISH

83. Pupils achieve well in English at all key stages. Their achievements at Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 are in line with those achieved in similar schools across the country. At Key Stages 3 and 4, standards are higher than those achieved in similar schools for pupils with physical impairments. At post-16, achievement is also good and higher attaining students have the opportunity to study for external accreditation in a range of courses. These include GCSE, A-level and the Certificate of Education.
84. Pupils across the school make good progress in speaking and listening. The use of drama to promote communication skills is a strength in all areas of the school. The widespread use of alternative communication aids ensures that pupils of all abilities can communicate as well as possible. For example, pupils at Key Stage 1 are all able to join in with discussion about stories that they hear. In one lesson, they answered questions very well about 'Jack in the Beanstalk' and showed that they had clearly understood what the story was about. Because the teacher questioned him or her carefully, each pupil was able to offer their own contribution. They benefit from very good support from the speech and language service so that their skills are continually extended. Clear targets are set for both the higher and lower attaining pupils. These are carefully monitored to ensure that pupils' skills improve over time.
85. Pupils in Key Stage 2 show good understanding of stories and the way in which rhyme can sometimes enhance a story. They make good attempts to complete rhymes with their own rhyming words. The way in which teachers encourage them to work in pairs increases their opportunities to talk to each other and develop social conversation skills. Pupils across this age group are able to wait for a turn to talk. They know the rules of conversation. Teachers and learning assistants offer them many opportunities to improve and further develop their skills by encouraging them to participate in different drama activities. For example, pupils in Year 5 and 6 performed some good performance poetry during the inspection week. The carefully planned activities showed how earlier assessments of pupils' levels of attainment had informed the expected tasks. Because pupils were asked to work in groups that were carefully linked to ability, each pupil achieved at their own level. The good teaching ensured that pupils made good progress. Many opportunities are sought to further language skills in other aspects of English. For example in Year 6, the teacher planned some very effective strategies to help pupils understand speech marks through conversation. Some good modelling by the teacher ensured clear understanding. Pupils were required to prepare a

conversation in which they indicated different characters. They then worked in groups to try to decide where the speech marks belonged. Because this enabled them to learn in a practical way, pupils were able to understand the task and make good progress.

86. The high level of group activities in English lessons that support good progress in speaking and listening skills are continued into Key Stages 3 and 4 and also in post-16. For example, in Year 7, the teacher encouraged pupils to discuss how they were going to make a rod puppet. Pupils described the characteristics that their own puppet would have and some good questioning reinforced earlier work about different characters. Pupils used some good vocabulary as they described the different features. This is continued in Key Stage 4 and post-16 where pupils and students undertake detailed character studies linked to book reviews, also where post-16 students role-play a visit to a restaurant and learn about conversational rules. In this particular lesson, the teacher identified very clear learning targets for each pupil so that there was a precise focus to the task. They learn about conversation in many real-life situations.
87. Reading skills are also good in relation to pupils' prior attainment. Some effective strategies and a good range of reading resources are used to help pupils enjoy their work. Reading has a high priority within the school and there are many instances of pupils of all abilities reading and using books in many different subjects. Many pupils achieve standards that are commensurate with their age nationally in reading. Some good literacy books are used to foster interest in the early years and throughout each key stage. Pupils use the library increasingly as they get older. In Key Stage 1, pupils develop enjoyment in books. They benefit from good use of books and from identified curriculum time to browse. For example, in one session, pupils were observed looking through atlases. They used good book behaviour and benefited from positive support from staff who talked to them about the places and the different flags of various countries. The good role modelling had a positive impact on standards. Pupils of higher attainment in Key Stage 1 can read simple text fluently. Lower attaining pupils use a range of picture and symbol clues to help them follow stories. They all show enjoyment and pleasure, and evidence of good parent partnership is clear.
88. Throughout Key Stage 2 pupils use books in a wide range of ways. They enjoy their literacy time and join in with enthusiasm at familiar parts of the story. They build on earlier knowledge and make good progress. This is because of the good teaching that they receive and the positive support that is given by support assistants. By the time they reach Year 6, a small minority of pupils read for pleasure and attain broadly average standards. They can explain why certain stories appeal to them and identify many favourite stories and authors. Lower attaining pupils develop their reading skills through the good use of symbols and pictures. Almost all pupils can recognise some pictures and use them to help with communication. In the best lessons, teachers use reading to support learning in a range of ways. For example, in Year 6, pupils were learning to recognise onomatopoeia in poems. The teacher had made sure that all pupils had a copy that they could read and that the font size was appropriate to each pupil's requirements. This had a positive impact on learning. The very good use of support assistants in the class enabled some very good gains in learning to be made.
89. In Key Stages 3 and 4 and in post-16, pupils and students continue to make good gains in reading skills. They benefit from the use of age-appropriate resources that sometimes have to be modified to ensure access. Because of this good practice, learning remains good throughout each pupil's school life. Higher attaining pupils in the senior department read fluently, use books to gather information and browse to find what they need. They develop clear preferences in reading and make good use of the school library. Lower attaining pupils develop basic skills that help them to learn about

the world and that help them to develop independent communication. For example, they learn to recognise pictures and symbols of the things that they want to do. Some good quality accreditation is available to pupils of all attainment. This is a positive feature of English. Pupils' reading skills are promoted through these accredited courses. Pupils learn to summarise and give opinions about books. They identify why they enjoy a particular book. The very good range of communication aids supports reading standards. For example, pupils in Year 11 were observed using eye pointers, touch screens, symbols and pictures to make themselves understood and to make choices of activity. This good provision benefits all pupils. Teachers in the secondary department are skilled in promoting good reading behaviour and this impacts on progress in reading for pupils of all ability.

90. Across the school, pupils use a wide range of aids to help them write down their thoughts. The use of information and communication technology, as well as the work of the access team at the school, is a very important feature of pupils' success in writing. Good progress is closely linked to the quality of the teaching and the work of the access team which has been established in the school to support learning. Because of this, pupils have appropriate means to write, and work is sufficiently appropriate to enable them to see it and understand it. In Key Stage 1, pupils develop their writing skills through many drawing and writing activities. They write on a daily basis. For example, following a story about toys, pupils were required to make a list of their favourites. Higher attaining pupils were able to make a valid list of several toys that they liked. Lower attaining pupils received good support from assistants to enable them to copy or overwrite their choices. As pupils move through the school, they continue to make good progress in writing, either using a pencil or a word processor. In Key Stage 2, higher attaining pupils develop a clear joined handwriting style or they word process clear and imaginative sentences. Lower attaining pupils often communicate their ideas for an adult to scribe or choose from a range of pictures and symbols the things they want to say. Teachers work hard to help pupils improve. For example, in one lesson, the teacher modelled writing so that pupils could think carefully about the way they presented their work. Because teachers move around the classes, work is marked with pupils. This helps them to improve as they go.
91. These good strategies are continued throughout the senior department. Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 and students at post-16 benefit from good teaching and this helps them to improve their writing skills as they get older. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 write for many different purposes and respond well to the tasks set. There are many good examples of extended writing for many different purposes. As they move through the upper school, pupils work hard to improve their skills ready for the various examinations that they take. Higher attaining pupils have the opportunity to integrate into the local secondary school to take GCSE or A-level exams. This is an important link and ensures that every opportunity is granted for pupils to achieve the highest levels in English.
92. The impact of the good curriculum opportunities is very positive and ensures that pupils have access to a broad and balanced range of English activities. Drama is having a major impact on standards in speaking, listening and in reading. It is also helping to raise confidence and self-esteem. A small amount of extra-curricular activities take place but not all pupils have the opportunity to watch good drama even though they regularly take part in it. Leadership is not yet fully secure. There is currently too little liaison between departments and too little monitoring of standards and of teaching.

MATHEMATICS

93. At the time of the last inspection a number of weaknesses were identified in mathematics. Teaching at Key Stages 1 and 2 was judged to be unsatisfactory, departmental planning was not effective and systematic assessment at some key stages was not properly organised. The improvement that has taken place since that inspection has been good. Teaching at Key Stages 1 and 2 is now good overall and in some lessons observed, very good. Planning at Key Stages 1 and 2 has recently been reviewed and developed and with the appointment of a new secondary co-ordinator, a similar process is in its early stages for Key Stages 3 and 4 and post-16. The National Numeracy Strategy has been implemented at Key Stage 2 and elements of it are in operation at Key Stage 3.
94. Achievement is satisfactory across the school. At Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 it is good overall. At Key Stage 1, pupils can measure using cubes and paperclips and are beginning to use a ruler to measure straight lines. Older pupils at Key Stage 2 are learning about area. Most can confidently calculate the area of a regular shape such as a square or rectangle and can use this knowledge to find the area of a more complex shape. They can confidently explain to their classmates the strategies they have used to find the answer. They know how important it is to work from what is known and all join in to chant 'work from what you know'. At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils undertake an investigation to determine how many paving slabs will be needed to edge a garden pool. Higher attainers can develop a formula that will enable them to calculate the answer. Older pupils in Key Stage 4 are revising what they have learned about co-ordinates and the points of a compass. All know the four points and higher attainers can work out points between. Some pupils are revising work for GCSE and Certificate of Achievement examinations. Students at post-16 work on individual programmes which are well matched to their needs. From scrutiny of work in ASDAN folders, these older students apply their mathematical knowledge to real life situations and undertake exercises to find the best way to invest money.
95. Teaching is satisfactory across the key stages. At Key Stage 1, it is good. The approach is lively and pupils are appropriately challenged. This encourages them to respond with enthusiasm and it is clear that they enjoy their mathematics. Work is well matched to the needs of the group and those pupils who need it, get effective support from support staff. Whilst the good teaching at this key stage results in pupils making good progress, the National Numeracy Strategy is not yet a feature of these lessons and pupils do not therefore benefit from work on mental maths and need to use apparatus to complete addition and subtraction beyond ten. Very good teaching at Key Stage 2 makes very effective use of the strategy and lessons are fun and pupils confident in their answers. These lessons are well planned and meet the needs of the different groups. During the mental starter, higher attainers can quickly work out the answers to multiplication sums and explain how they did them. At Key Stages 3 and 4, teaching is satisfactory. Pupils benefit from being taught by a specialist teacher who although very new to the school, is ensuring that work is matched to the very wide range of pupil needs. Lesson planning is satisfactory and support staff understand what pupils are to do. This ensures all pupils can work at a good pace because they receive effective support. Over the school, there is a good balance of whole-class teaching and group and individual work. Support staff make a significant contribution to pupils' learning in the support they provide to both groups and individuals. At Key Stages 1 and 2, assessment is satisfactory. A new system has been recently introduced and is currently being embedded. Throughout the school, pupils behave very well in mathematics and respond with enthusiasm to their lessons.

96. Two teachers undertake the co-ordination of mathematics, one in the primary department and one in the secondary. One of these teachers is very new to the school and consequently, co-ordination between Key Stages 2 and 3 is only just developing. However, the two co-ordinators have plans in place to continue the development of the National Numeracy Strategy into Key Stage 3. Monitoring of the teaching of mathematics or of the curriculum is not yet in place and consequently there is not a clear view of mathematics across the school. This has led to the inconsistent implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy across Key Stages 1 and 2.

SCIENCE

97. The school's results in a combination of teacher assessments, national tests and GCSE examination results show that pupils compare very well with all special schools and with other similar schools. Overall, the achievement of pupils in science is good, and a number of individual lessons, very good. There are no discernible groups of pupils who are under performing in science, and indeed, one of the strongest features of the provision seen are the strategies designed to ensure that all pupils can participate and make progress.
98. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils develop an increased awareness of the world around them and a sense of time and place. They learn to recognise and name key parts of the body together with features of the face, and to assemble the flower, stem and leaves of a plant. They explore the idea of growth and the conditions needed for seeds to become plants. Their observational powers develop and they practice recording their observations as simple diagrams or as patterns of observed weather. One higher attaining pupil recording the stages of development of frogs, begins to record a good level of detail.
99. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are assembling well-organised folders of their work, whether it is original work or careful overwriting and colouring of diagrams. They become involved in discussions about their own bodies and the need for healthy eating. They conduct and record experiments to separate magnetic and non-magnetic materials. Pupils can name and label more parts of the human body and produce clear diagrams to represent electrical circuits. In other investigations, they explore how and why materials change through heating, melting, dissolving or evaporating. Prediction appears in work on forces and higher attaining pupils increase their confidence in writing or word-processing some of the findings from their work. Pupils with complex needs show increased confidence in participating in testing materials by touch, smell and taste.
100. In Key Stage 3, pupils explore topics in greater depth and over several weeks. They show an increasing understanding of the need for accurate measure and fair tests. Computers are used well to record tables of the effects of bouncing balls on a range of soft and hard surfaces. They develop and can describe features of safe practice when conducting experiments.
101. Key Stage 4 pupils' folders show continuing improvement in the quality and range of work. Evidence of good levels of understanding of cause and effect are seen in a piece of narrative writing by a higher attaining pupil who describes effectively the life cycle and behaviour of ladybirds across the seasons and their potential use as environmentally friendly pest control in greenhouses. A good number and range of GCSE results had been achieved by pupils in the previous year.

102. Pupils' attitudes towards science are very good throughout the school. They enjoy taking part in experiments and investigation, working hard with support staff and specialist equipment to participate as fully as possible. The more scientific the ethos created by the teacher, the greater their involvement, as when one class, working as two research teams to discover why metal nuts, allegedly from their teacher's car wheels, appear to weigh less when immersed in water. In this case, one group chose not to release their findings until they were sure of their research grant for the next year! Another group concentrates very hard when they are dissecting flowers and drawing careful diagrams of the results.
103. Teaching is never less than good, predominantly very good, with an example of excellent teaching seen. Exciting and imaginative lessons are very well planned, with clear learning outcomes. Most have a practical or investigative element and behaving in a scientific way triggers a very good level. References to pupil's individual education plans are routine and the staff teams work very hard to ensure good access by all pupils considering both their levels of attainment and their special needs. A good example is the use of highly aromatic plants with very different surface textures to enable a pupil with serious visual impairment to participate fully.
104. In an exceptional lesson on the behaviour of the planets, pupils listened to Jupiter from the Planet Suite in the dark to create a sense of space and of awe and wonder before working on a variety of modelling techniques in the search for evidence for the relative behaviour of planets in our solar system. One group conducted their research quite independently, sharing both their skills and their insights effectively.
105. The curriculum is broad, meets requirements and provides a good level of investigative and experimental science to take place. It would now benefit from more careful planning of this aspect of the curriculum, across and between key stages, in order to help pupils consolidate their skills as they move through the school. At present there are no formal opportunities for continuing accredited courses in the post-16 unit, although elements of science appear in units linked with independent living skills. The school now has an impressive specialist facility for secondary science. It provides for a good range of experimental situations and provides reasonable access for the class numbers and for the physical aids seen. It is already having a positive impact on students who enjoy experiments requiring the use of goggles and aprons and take their work seriously. The recent introduction of a subject co-ordinator for the primary department will allow for a clearer focus for departmental development across the school.

ART AND DESIGN

106. Achievement in art is good and at Key Stages 1 and 2, it is very good and can be excellent. At Key Stages 3 and 4 it is satisfactory in the small sample of lessons observed but examination folders for GCSE indicate that it has been good over time. Good achievement is also evident in the GNVQ work undertaken by post-16 students. Displays about the school confirm that achievement is good. Where achievement is best, pupils have a clear indication of what is expected and sufficient freedom to be creative and imaginative in their work. This was very clear in a Year 3 lesson, where making printing blocks from fruit and vegetables was the theme. Pupils could choose from a very good range of materials, many experimenting with mushrooms and broccoli, cutting both across and lengthways to achieve different patterns. They were also encouraged to experiment with different consistencies of paint until they were satisfied with the print they wanted to use. This was a lively, energetic lesson with the teacher in full control yet confident in allowing pupils to experiment and be imaginative.

107. The quality of teaching is very good at Key Stages 1 and 2, good at post-16 and is satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4. The secondary department manager left at the end of last term and the teaching is currently undertaken by a supply teacher. In the better lessons, pupils and students did high quality research into the approaches of famous artists, as was the case with post-16 students, and the work of Van Gogh. Similar research was evident in a Year 6 lesson where the designs of William Morris and the work of Andy Goldsworthy featured in the printing and modelling done by pupils. Some of the creativity was of the highest quality with the teacher confident in her approach, encouraging and discussing how various techniques might be used to improve their initial research. Teachers in these lessons had very good subject knowledge and high expectations of their pupils. The junior department's subject manager does most of the teaching in this area of the school which provides a very high quality art education. By contrast, the current teaching in the weaker lessons is too prescriptive and gives insufficient emphasis to individuality and creativity. Teachers' assessment and recording of achievement are satisfactory across the subject and tend to be the strongest in the junior department.
108. Resources for art are good overall and particularly good at Key Stages 1 and 2. The kiln is sited in the senior department art room and agreement is being reached for the junior department to have access when they begin to experiment with pottery. Accommodation in the junior department is good and is being used very well by the junior department subject manager. It is satisfactory at secondary department level where art shares a room with design and technology which is not ideal for either subject. There is an urgent need for a permanent appointment to be made for a senior department manager for the subject. The school recognises this. It is of prime importance that good liaison and lines of communication are available to ensure the continuity of learning between Key Stages 2 to 3 is secure.
109. Since the last inspection, the progress throughout the key stages and at post-16 is now good. The quality of teaching is now very good at Key Stages 1 and 2, good at post-16 and is satisfactory at Key Stage 4. This improvement since the last inspection indicates the enormous amount of work done by the staff to make such a dramatic difference.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

110. The school's provision for design and technology is satisfactory. Pupils make the progress one would expect in the subject and their achievements are in line with their abilities. However, older pupils do not currently have the benefit of a permanent specialist teacher and until this problem is resolved, it is difficult to ensure that pupils will continue to achieve as much as they might. An audit is urgently required to ensure that the school has sufficient and appropriate accommodation and resources in the longer-term to support fully the subject.
111. Pupils make satisfactory progress throughout the school, designing and making items which develop their awareness of a range of materials. They are given opportunities to research ideas and to discuss and develop them. In the primary department, pupils develop their skills by visiting a local candle factory, making bread, pizzas and pop-up cards. Older pupils learn about the different shapes of kites and discuss which shapes fly well, and why they have tails. They design a moving toy and a 'butty box' and discuss the relative merits of using different types of wood. They test and compare the strengths of hardwood, plywood, hardboard and chipboard. Pupils learn how to select the correct type of saw and acquire confidence in using one. Pupils build on these skills progressively but they are not entered for externally accredited examinations and so their achievements are not fully recognised. Pupils at 16+ learn how to make chicken

korma and develop useful skills like chopping and preparing vegetables and clearing away. They discover the range of foods eaten in India and find out what different spices are used for.

112. The pupils enjoy the activities and work hard in all the lessons. Indeed, if the lesson starts to drag a little, they are keen to move the lesson along and are very tolerant of staff who do not know them very well. Pupils ask good questions like 'Does the toy have to have an on/off switch?', showing they are fully engaged with the project and mentally exploring all the possibilities.
113. The teaching of design and technology is satisfactory overall and learning is also satisfactory. It was not possible to observe any teaching of the subject to younger pupils during the week of the inspection. However, the teachers' planning and the displays of pupils' work show that teachers in the junior department work well to provide pupils with good experiences and challenging opportunities for learning. There are impressive displays of attractive pop-up cards which use control mechanisms such as levers, springs, wheels and pulleys. A display of work in progress includes 'tactile planets' and incorporates a design theme about 'opening doors with surprises'. The class teacher in Key Stage 1 talks enthusiastically about these projects and demonstrates a very good knowledge of the subject, how it should be linked to other subjects like science (astronomy) and most importantly, how the pupils with the most complex additional needs can be fully involved and supported in their learning.
114. Thorough planning is carried out in the secondary department as well, but the sudden departure of the previous specialist teacher a few weeks before the inspection has meant that the supply teacher currently teaching the subject has had little opportunity to get to know the pupils. This teacher is working hard to plan appropriate lessons and has a good knowledge of the subject but he is sometimes unable to pitch the lessons correctly in terms of pace and challenge and pupils do not learn as quickly as they might. This situation should improve once a permanent appointment is made. More emphasis could be given to the use of computers to support pupils when they are developing their designs. In some lessons, pupils are withdrawn for their therapy sessions and although for the most part this is necessary and managed sensitively, care needs to be taken that the flow of the lesson is not interrupted and that pupils are given full information about what they have missed.
115. Homework is set as a matter of routine but there is little expectation that all pupils will carry it out.
116. Both the subject co-ordinators are enthusiastic and knowledgeable, and work well together despite the temporary circumstances. They are able to evaluate their own provision well and know, for example, that there is a need to develop the electronics and constructional aspects of their subject. However, effective planning for the long-term will be hampered until a permanent appointment is made. The same is true in relation to monitoring the performance of teaching, and to evaluating teachers' planning and the standards achieved, neither of which are currently being carried out across the school. A good policy and scheme of work has been developed and is being reviewed appropriately.
117. The subject is taught satisfactorily in classrooms in the junior department. In the secondary department, teaching takes place in a room which, while satisfactory, has not yet been set up as a specialist area. The arrangements for teaching heavy crafts like woodwork and metalwork need particular attention. There are plans for food technology to be taught in the residential accommodation and the school will need to

carefully assess the suitability of these developments for whole-class teaching. The junior department makes use of equipment loaned from a local resource centre and the secondary department has at present, enough resources at its disposal to carry out this term's teaching satisfactorily. However, an audit is urgently required to ensure that the school has sufficient and appropriate accommodation and resources in the longer term to support fully its subject programmes. This needs to be a priority for when a specialist is appointed.

118. The subject has improved satisfactorily since the last inspection. The junior department has a permanent co-ordinator, progress has improved and teachers have reasonably high expectations of what pupils will be able to achieve. Planning is now good. However, there are many areas which still require further development such as accreditation, staffing, accommodation, learning resources and monitoring of teachers' work.

GEOGRAPHY

119. As a consequence of the timetable during the week of the inspection, no lessons of geography were observed at Key Stages 1 and 2 and as such, judgements about achievement and progress made at these key stages are based upon a detailed scrutiny of work, analysis of pupils' records and discussion with the co-ordinator.
120. Overall, pupils' achievement in geography is good and they make good progress. This represents an improvement since the previous inspection.
121. During Key Stage 1, pupils begin to understand the island nature of the British Isles, the vastness of the world as they follow Barnaby Bear on his travels and they use simple maps of the world to learn to distinguish land from sea. Their awareness of local geography stems from studying their home and moving around the school, and investigative skills are introduced as they consider how to make the local environment safe. By the end of the key stage, their early environmental work has developed into a better understanding of the influence of rivers, land, air and transport on the environment.
122. During Key Stage 2, pupils continue to make progress with their map work as they identify the major rivers of the British Isles and locate Italy, Greece and Egypt on a map of Europe. Previous work on their homes is developed into extending their knowledge about different types of local buildings such as shops, a post office, hospital and station and they also name different types of houses – terraced and detached. Investigative work at this key stage involves identifying the effects that a new motorway will have on a town, and their previous work on weather is further developed as they study the impact weather and water problems have upon 'third world countries'. By the end of the key stage they use atlases with more confidence and are able to compare farming in Egypt with farming in the British Isles.
123. Pupils at Key Stage 3 continue to make good progress as they study Italy in greater detail – famous people, its food and climate – while previous work on their own locality is extended to the study of settlements and the reasons for their development. The teacher's careful recapitulation of previous lessons enabled pupils to succeed in locating a settlement in the most desirable place and her insistence on the use of correct geographic terms had the class record their conclusions with brevity and accuracy. Additionally, the carefully targeted use of information and communication technology ensured that all pupils had the opportunity to produce good records of their investigation. The use of a specialist keyboard by a pupil working on primary industries was equally effective in allowing him to respond and produce an outcome that matched

his verbal skills and understanding. As pupils progress through the key stage, they make comparisons with greater insight, such as comparing Brazil with the United Kingdom or studying different types of vegetation and are confident when responding to Why? When? How? and Where? questions. A study of the rainforest cycle has pupils re-visit earlier work on the effect of man on his environment while a lesson on contours had pupils read contour heights, plot highest and lowest points and identify different types of slopes. Higher attaining pupils correctly identified valleys and spurs. The teacher's very careful use of different materials – worksheets, models and graded task cards – allied to the help provided by learning support assistants, resulted in all pupils achieving at their individual optimum level.

124. The quality of teaching in geography is good. Lessons are well planned, have clear objectives and employ methods and organisational approaches that ensure that the different learning styles and needs of the pupils are met. Support staff, who share the teacher's high expectations, are very well deployed, relate excellently with the pupils and make a very positive contribution to the pupils' learning and the progress that they make. Pupils respond with effort and sustained concentration to the pace and clear structure of geography lessons and because of the teacher's very good use of time, finish lessons with a sense of satisfaction with the work completed.
125. The co-ordinators provide good leadership for the subject and have a shared commitment for continuing improvement. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection. Good long-term plans are now directly linked to clear medium-term plans with these in turn providing sufficient information for detailed lesson planning. There continues to be a need to complete all of the units in the medium-term plan at Key Stages 1 and 2 but nevertheless, the scheme of work is sufficiently well organised so as to have pupils make progress as they build on previous learning in carefully graded steps. The time allocated at all key stages is sufficient for good coverage of the scheme of work.

HISTORY

126. Pupils achieved well overall during the inspection, although in some lessons unsatisfactory features of teaching reduced their learning opportunities. The school has made good improvement in its provision for history in many areas since the last inspection but others still require further development.
127. Pupils in the early years and Key Stage 1 begin to develop a sense of time as they study aspects of history that are familiar to them and to which they can relate. Work is focused on developing in pupils an understanding of chronology and the vocabulary associated with the passage of time, so that by the age of seven, they understand concepts such as the past, present or now, and the future. Analysis of pupils' work shows that by the age of eleven, they have increased their knowledge of a number of different periods of British history, such as the Tudors and World War II, and have also developed some understanding of other societies from the past. They know about the features and background of these past societies, such as the Greek alphabet and the Olympic Games, and understand some of their characteristics, such as the reasons for mummies in ancient Egypt. By the age of 14, some pupils have a much more extensive historical vocabulary including chronological words such as century and millennium, and make some comparisons between different periods of history through independent research using photographs and information and communication technology.
128. The teaching of history is good overall and sometimes very good, but on some occasions lessons have unsatisfactory features. When teaching is very good, lessons

are very effective and enjoyable learning experiences for all pupils. This was clearly demonstrated during the inspection when a class of eleven-year-olds made very good progress in increasing their knowledge of the Victorian period and their understanding of how current features of their immediate locality can be explained through a study of historical events. Pupils achieved so well because of the very high quality teaching that incorporated high expectations and the presentation of varied and effective learning opportunities that maintained pupils' interest. A good and lively lesson introduction encouraged pupils to recall previous knowledge as the teacher probed and extended their understanding by asking some searching and targeted questions. This was followed by carefully chosen group activities that used different resources to encourage pupils' research skills and to stimulate ideas and discussion. Some of these activities were particularly challenging and required pupils to interpret historical information, to make predictions and to draw inferences about the location of features such as towns, canals and railway lines. They were able to succeed because they had a clear understanding of what was required and they did it on a three-dimensional map that also provided good tactile experiences for pupils with more complex needs.

129. Unfortunately not all lessons are so effective as they have some unsatisfactory elements that restrict learning. On these occasions, sufficient and appropriate resources are not available and lessons lack pace. At other times, pupils are given activities that are not linked sufficiently tightly to previous learning and therefore tasks are beyond their knowledge and understanding.
130. History makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development through events that 'bring the subject to life'. On these occasions, pupils have been dressed in the appropriate costumes as they have experienced the delights of Ancient Greece, an Egyptian feast and a Victorian music hall.
131. At the present time the leadership and management of history are unsatisfactory. This is because there have been a number of recent staffing changes relating to co-ordination of the subject which included a period when it was the responsibility of a temporary teacher in the secondary department. As a result, neither co-ordinator knows what resources the school has or where they are located and medium-term planning is in its early stages. However, the recently appointed co-ordinators have the enthusiasm and capacity to move the subject forward provided they receive the training that will enable them to identify the priority areas for development and to take appropriate action.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

132. Achievement in information and communication technology is good across the school. This represents good improvement since the last inspection. Pupils in all key stages, and students at post-16 make good progress in all aspects of the subject. The good resources and the quality of teaching, as well as the effective learning assistants, all play an important role in the good standards achieved.
133. At Key Stage 1, pupils begin to learn quickly about the basic skills needed to work with the good resources available. They can switch computers on and off at an early age. Many use simple programs independently and develop their word processing skills well. They play simple computer games with enthusiasm and treat resources with respect. They are eager to learn and the positive support that they receive promotes

good standards. At Key Stage 2, pupils build on previous successes. They continue to develop their word processing skills and develop clear understanding about how to present their work. They change fonts easily and save and print their own work. Lower attaining pupils are given good quality support so that they can also make good progress. The good use of many appropriate simple programs has a positive impact on learning. Teachers use good strategies to improve pupils' skills. For example, in one lesson, pupils benefited from good demonstrations as they learned how to re-organise text on screen to help it make sense. Because the teacher took the pupils carefully through the task, demonstrating each technique, pupils were able to complete it quickly and efficiently. The good pace in the lesson meant that pupils achieved a good amount of work and improved their understanding.

134. At Key Stage 3, pupils show that they have achieved good standards in data handling. They present many different graphs and charts, with clear explanations of how they achieved the work. In one lesson, a pupil was able to explain the type of chart he would use to present a particular form of data. He showed that he knew the difference between a pie chart and a bar graph and quickly opened a file to show an example of each. Many pupils in Key Stage 3 can scan pictures and import them into text to enhance presentations. They make effective use of spreadsheets and use word processors in many different subjects. Teachers have a good level of knowledge and skills and use a range of appropriate strategies to improve pupils' understanding. The very good support that the learning assistants offer to individual pupils ensures that both higher and lower attaining pupils achieve well.
135. At Key Stage 4 and post-16, pupils and students take part in many good projects which help to improve standards. For example, they design posters to advertise school disco's using multimedia packages. They develop and design their own business cards and customise pages to suit the work they are doing. The pupils also receive very good support and good quality teaching which serve to improve the standards that they achieve. They use a wide range of different packages to support the work they do in other subjects. Teachers are skilled in helping pupils to develop as much independence as possible. Some good examples of trouble-shooting strategies help pupils to find many of their own faults and put them right.
136. Across the school, pupils with very complex needs benefit from the good provision in information and communication technology. Linked with the work of the access team, it ensures that all pupils have a means of communicating and developing their interactive skills. The very good team approach in lessons is a most positive feature of the provision. The good use that teachers make of resources, including staffing, also has an important impact on learning in all areas of the school. The well-organised lessons ensure that pupils stay interested and enjoy the subject. The clear targets that teachers set help individual pupils to make progress and ensure that they are enabled to work at their own level. The good curriculum and assessment opportunities are having a positive impact on the improvements in the subject. Leadership is satisfactory overall. Although the two co-ordinators have had opportunities to meet and discuss developments, too little monitoring of teaching and learning has taken place. This is a weakness in the provision.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

137. The school's provision for teaching French to pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 is satisfactory. There is a good weekly lunchtime club for pupils in Key Stage 2. Pupils generally make at least satisfactory progress in the subject, but the school does not currently have a permanent specialist teacher and this means that long-term planning for the subject is in a state of uncertainty.

138. Pupils' achievements are adequate in relation to their abilities. More able pupils follow an external Certificate of Achievement in French, and where this is inappropriate, the NEAB Unit Award Scheme is followed.
139. By the age of 14, pupils have consolidated their range of vocabulary; the more able know numbers up to 30, the days of the week and the months of the year. They can put together simple sentences beginning with verbs like 'j'aime'. Through simple games and the frequent use of information and communication technology, they repeat words and phrases to build up their vocabulary. Pupils' spoken French is not yet well developed and they find it difficult to answer questions about their name, for example.
140. By the age of 16, pupils have consolidated their vocabulary further but are still fairly reticent when it comes to speaking to staff and each other. Pupils use information and communication technology very effectively when using programs to develop their knowledge and skills. Pupils over 16 learn about places in a town, know simple language rules (like not pronouncing the initial 'h' in French words) and learn about gender agreement.
141. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and often good. Planning is very thorough and links with core skills such as literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, are made as a matter of routine. Lessons move at a brisk pace and all pupils participate fully. There is good teamwork between the staff, and learning support assistants make a very good contribution to pupils' learning by encouraging them and giving them good feedback on their progress. Opportunities for teachers to conduct the lesson in French are sometimes missed. At other times, when lessons are in French, they become much more enjoyable for all concerned, pupils become more confident in their own efforts and they learn faster.
142. Homework is set on a regular basis but only a few pupils complete it regularly. A similar situation was reported on in the last inspection. Because of the building works, the French base room does not yet have displays on the wall of either pupils' work or of posters relating to the subject.
143. Pupils are animated and keen in their lessons and wait patiently for each other to answer. Even though they are not yet sufficiently confident or knowledgeable to speak freely in French, they enjoy repeating the words after the teacher and answering questions. Pupils move quickly and quietly in between the different parts of the lesson, from whole-class to individual work, for example.
144. An enthusiastic teacher in the primary department runs a well-supported weekly lunchtime club for pupils at Key Stage 2, including those with additional complex needs. There is an informal programme in which pupils listen to native French speakers, taste local French cheeses and learn to sing songs in French. This club gives pupils a useful initiation into a foreign language and culture and whets their appetite for when they are older.
145. The subject co-ordinator has been recently appointed and, while he has little formal training in the subject, he has taken up the challenge with a good deal of energy and interest. His good knowledge of information and communication technology enables him to make lessons come alive and retain the interest of even the least able. At the time of inspection, it is unclear whether this position is permanent, and this situation needs to be resolved as soon as possible so that planning for the long-term can be undertaken and opportunities for professional development can be arranged. Monitoring of the subject is still only informal. The subject has a satisfactory policy and scheme of work

which need further review and development so that the particular needs of the pupils in the school are addressed. Teaching takes place in a room which, while satisfactory, has not yet been set up as a specialist area and an audit of resources is required to ensure that pupils are fully supported in their learning.

146. Improvement has been satisfactory since the last inspection, when pupils did not make enough progress in the subject. Now, their progress is at least satisfactory, there is a sufficient range of resources, the curriculum is well balanced and ensures that pupils build up their skills and knowledge progressively as they move up through the school.

MUSIC

147. Overall, the school has not made satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. However, there has been very good improvement in the primary department. Music is now a significant strength of the school in Key Stages 1 and 2 as pupils achieve very well in lessons and make very good progress because of high quality teaching. There has been unsatisfactory improvement at Key Stage 3. Music is not taught to the oldest pupils and post-16 students.
148. The youngest pupils study music through a number of themes such as colours, fairy tales and toys, that relate well to topics being studied in other areas of the curriculum. Through these themes, they begin to explore sounds in the environment and the qualities and range of different sounds so that by the age of seven, some pupils have developed a number of skills. They follow instructions to produce a steady beat, including periods of silence, and clap the pattern of syllables in picture cues such as a waterfall. As pupils move through Key Stage 2, they experience a number of stimulating activities through topics such as 'Music around the World' and 'Outer Space', that are very well suited to their needs. These carefully chosen activities provide many opportunities for them to improve their knowledge of musical beat, rhythm and tempo through hearing and producing different types of sound. By the age of eleven, pupils know that sound can be produced in a variety of ways and have a growing understanding of characteristics such as louder and quieter, longer and shorter and faster and slower.
149. Consistently high quality teaching in the primary department gives pupils very good learning opportunities. For example, a group of four- and five-year-olds improved their understanding of how simple instruments can be used to create a 'sound picture' when they pretended to be pirates on a desert island. The teacher's excellent subject knowledge and creative use of resources enabled her to provide a range of activities that built systematically on the pupils' previous learning about the physical features of the island. Her excellent relationships with the pupils and the very good use of praise and encouragement meant that they responded very well as they played percussion instruments to represent features such as a volcano and rain forest as they imagined they were moving around the island. A lively pace was maintained and the effective input of learning support assistants meant that all pupils had opportunities to use the instruments so that they could participate fully in the lesson.
150. Pupils in Key Stage 3 do not have such good learning opportunities as the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory. Teachers are not music specialists and are therefore not secure in their knowledge of the subject. As a result, they are not aware of how activities have to be carefully planned and sequenced to develop pupils' musical skills and understanding. This was evident when a class of 13-year-olds studying twentieth-century music were expected to create a simple musical piece on keyboards. This was supposed to follow the same pattern to one they had listened to on a disc in the early

part of the lesson. Unfortunately, the task was not explained clearly and the activity was not appropriate to the pupils' needs anyway, as they did not have the necessary skills and level of understanding to carry it out.

151. The overall leadership and management of music in the school are unsatisfactory. They are very good in the primary department but they are not co-ordinated in the secondary department because of the absence of a specialist teacher. Resources are satisfactory but information and communication technology is currently underdeveloped. The accommodation for teaching some music in the secondary department remains unsatisfactory because its location means that noise affects adjoining classrooms that are separated only by a sliding screen. Discreet provision within the art, drama and music area is very good.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

152. Pupils of all ages and with a wide and diverse range of special educational needs achieve well, and in some cases very well, in physical education. This is largely the result of good and often very good teaching from subject specialist teachers throughout the school. The standards achieved and the quality of teaching have been maintained since the last inspection.
153. In Key Stage 1, pupils improve their ability to respond to music during dance lessons. They join younger children in imagining they are different types of toys such as monsters, dolls or Jack-in-a-box. Different types of music stimulate them into moving in different ways, at different speeds using different shapes. The teaching is very good because it pays close attention to physical development and individual needs of every pupil who is encouraged to respond within the constraints of their disabilities. Support staff are very effectively used with pupils to ensure that expectations are high and challenging but realistic. For example, for a child who has difficulty picking up his feet, obstacles are put out for him to step over, whilst for another, who has difficulty putting his heel to the floor, support staff encourage and remind him. As a result, all make good progress, achieve well and there is a clear link between their physical education lesson, their individual education plan objectives and their physiotherapy programmes.
154. In Key Stage 2, pupils, both ambulant and non-ambulant, make good progress and achieve well in athletics. They develop a clear understanding of what athletics is and how it differs from games and gymnastics through careful questioning by the teacher. All pupils learn about listening carefully to instructions and responding to them when involved in races. Pupils in wheelchairs move at speed when given instructions, whilst most ambulant pupils improve their balance and speed when racing. Again, the teacher uses her knowledge of the subject and the detailed knowledge of the needs of every pupil to ensure that expectations are high, challenging but achievable. As a result, all pupils make gains in their performance and in their ability to follow directions. They apply similar skills when developing their knowledge and ability in throwing events. Resources are well selected to allow all to achieve well and support staff ensure that all pupils are fully involved and are able to make progress. Pupils all improve their performance because of the careful match of the demands of the activity to their individual needs, the good selection of resources and the careful targeting of support.
155. In Key Stages 3 and 4, and for post-16 students, the high quality of teaching again ensures that all pupils make good progress and achieve well in a range of activities. In volleyball, for example, the teacher uses his subject knowledge very well to explain the rules so that pupils can apply their skills in a small game. He ensures understanding through careful questioning using pupils' responses effectively to develop their thinking.

For example, when asking whether the ball should be hit upwards or downwards and why they might choose different methods during a game. Resources are very well selected to ensure that all pupils can take part, for example, using a very large balloon ball for non-ambulant pupils and a sponge volleyball for others. Again, teamwork between staff is a significant feature in the progress made by pupils. Support staff are very able and know the pupils very well, using this effectively to ensure full participation. Similar lessons were observed where pupils made significant gains in their knowledge, understanding and level of skill in cricket and rounders.

156. Pupils of all ages make good progress in relation to their earlier attainment in swimming through carefully planned activities matched to the needs of pupils. There is good correlation between swimming lessons and hydrotherapy, with professionals working very closely together to ensure maximum benefit for pupils.
157. Pupils enjoy physical education; they have positive attitudes and join in with enthusiasm. They enjoy each other's success and clap and cheer when, for example, pupils are successful in a game of volleyball.
158. The newly appointed secondary subject manager and the established primary manager are both specialist teachers and provide good leadership for the subject. They are in the process of developing a subject improvement plan and it is intended to develop a system of monitoring teaching between the phases. This is not yet established. The curriculum is well planned and good use is made of individual education plans to ensure pupils make progress. Resources are good.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

159. Achievement at Key Stages 1 and 2 and at post-16 is good. At Key Stages 3 and 4, it is satisfactory in the small sample of lessons observed but pupil records indicate that it is good overall. Where achievement is best, lessons have a strong experiential element with a good range of supportive artefacts being used to add a flavour of reality to the occasion. At post-16, students respond very well to the story of the 'Good Samaritan' and are able to discuss this in a modern context, showing a sophisticated level of understanding. This was part of an accredited course in the subject.
160. The quality of teaching is good and at times it can be very good, especially at Key Stage 2, where a module on Islam was being taught. In a very good lesson, pupils handled Muslim prayer mats and learned how to set the compass to ensure they faced east when exploring the ritual for prayer. This also included the routine cleansing of hands, face and hair with the full participation of the pupils. Teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4 is good and is never less than satisfactory. In a Year 7 lesson, pupils considered values, especially justice, by analysing the Ten Commandments and relating them to the basis for our law and order. The quality of the question and answer approach was high with the teacher probing to ensure understanding of the concept being taught. This approach gave a clear indication of high expectations of the pupils and meticulous planning which was evident throughout the subject. Another lesson on forgiveness took its origins from the 'Forgive them Lord they know not what they do', at the crucifixion and skilfully led the pupils into discussion about what they would find easy to forgive and areas which they would find most difficult. This was a good example of handling a complex topic with pupils showing the rudiments of quality debate.
161. There is now a very clear policy statement for religious education. The subject meets statutory requirements fully through schemes of work based on the Cheshire Agreed Syllabus. It is broadly Christian in content and covers the other five major faiths.

Resources for the teaching of the subject are satisfactory but appear to be better in the junior department than for the older pupils. A good range of religious artefacts is being acquired to support the experiential approach of the learning. However, there is a need to undertake an audit of the resources held centrally and many that are held within classrooms and an inventory published to enable teachers to know what is available and where it can be located.

162. Since the last inspection, the provision for religious education is now good. It is an established part of the curriculum and is taught to each class in the school on a weekly basis. Pupils learn about Christianity and the other major faiths and they draw upon religious teachings to learn moral and ethical lessons. Very good coverage of the agreed syllabus is evident in the schemes of work across the school. The overall quality of teaching is now good with very well planned lessons which meet the very special needs of each individual, resulting in methods and organisation being good and often very good. Resources are now satisfactory, although their quantity will not be fully known until an audit is undertaken. There would appear to be a good range of artefacts to promote the learning in the major religious faiths. The school is to be congratulated in making such an enormous change in the delivery of the subject since the time of the last inspection.