

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **PENN FIELDS SCHOOL**

Wolverhampton

LEA area: Wolverhampton City Council

Unique reference number: 104412

Headteacher: Mr. B.A.Briginshaw

Reporting inspector: Mr. I. Naylor  
20906

Dates of inspection: 13<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> January 2003

Inspection number: 249305

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:	5 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Birches Barn Road Wolverhampton
Postcode:	WV3 7BJ
Telephone number:	01902 339786
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. K.L. Tottman
Date of previous inspection:	27 <sup>th</sup> April 1998

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
20906	Ian Naylor	Registered inspector	History Physical education  Equal Opportunities	The school's results and pupils' achievements  How well are pupils taught?  How well is the school led and managed?
9931	Margaret Kerry	Lay inspector		How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
18461	Vanessa Wilkinson	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Art Science	How well does the school care for its pupils?  Special educational needs
3055	Clive Tombs	Team inspector	Geography Religious Education	
20024	Paul Wright	Team inspector	English Design and technology	Educational inclusion
28106	Michelle Majid	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Personal and social education	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.
20536	Sarah Mascal	Team inspector	Modern Foreign Language	
30071	John Pearson	Team inspector	Mathematics Music Citizenship	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Penn Fields is a maintained day special school for boys and girls aged 5-16. Nearly a third of pupils are from non-white cultural backgrounds but all of them speak English. The pupil population of the school has changed since the previous inspection. All pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Need defining their primary need as moderate learning difficulties. However, attainment on entry to the school is low and lower than at the time of the last inspection. There is also a broader range of learning difficulties since the previous inspection, including twelve less able pupils with severe learning difficulties (SLD), eight with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD), most of whom have moderate rather than severe learning difficulties; fifteen pupils with behavioural difficulties and a significant number who have additional special educational needs such as hearing impairment or physical difficulties. At the time of the inspection the number on roll was 165; five above the standard number registered with the Department for Education and Skills. This includes four new children under five years old who were admitted into the school on 6<sup>th</sup> January 2003. In total, there are only five children of reception age.

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

This is an effective school with good leadership and management. The headteacher and deputy headteacher work effectively together and as a result many improvements have been made recently to the curriculum. The morale of staff has been enhanced. All staff work co-operatively towards meeting the school's aims. Teaching is good and, as a result, so are pupils' achievements. There is a productive relationship with parents. The school provides good value for money.

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

- Teaching and learning are good.
- Achievement and progress of pupils are good.
- Leadership and management by the headteacher and key staff are good.
- There are very good procedures for measuring pupils' progress.
- The school provides very well for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school shows a high level of care and support for pupils.
- Pupils' responses to their lessons and relationships with one another and staff are very good.
- The school's links with parents are very good.

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

- Class sizes. Most are too big and this affects the achievement of less able pupils and those with additional special educational needs.
- Accommodation. This is unsatisfactory for many areas of teaching.
- Staffing -there are too few staff for the demands of the curriculum.
- The agreement with the local education authority about those pupils for whom the school can provide a suitable education.
- The curriculum for less able pupils and those with additional special educational needs.

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

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was inspected last in April 1998. Since then the quality of teaching and learning has improved considerably and as a result the achievements and progress of pupils has increased. The general climate for learning in the school has been improved. The curriculum has been revised and now meets legal requirements. All subjects have had their policies and planning renewed. The amount of time allocated to teaching each day has been increased and this also meets recommended levels.

Assessment has been greatly improved and the school now has effective systems for measuring the progress of pupils. More pupils are included into mainstream classes and activities than previously. Accommodation overall remains unsatisfactory for the number of pupils on roll. Class sizes have increased. Although there are more teachers and learning support assistants now, there are still too few for the curricular requirements of pupils.

## STANDARDS

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

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

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

Achievement and progress are very good in religious education. They are good in English, mathematics, art, design and technology, information and communication technology history, geography, physical education, citizenship, personal, social and health education. Achievement is satisfactory in science, music, and modern foreign language. There are no significant differences in pupils' progress between year groups, although pupils make rapid progress on entering the school in Reception and Years 1 to 3. By Year 11, many pupils have gained good success in nationally recognised examinations. Throughout the school pupils make very good progress in speaking and listening, and good progress in reading and writing when measured against their previous achievements. Pupils make good progress in skills of numeracy. Pupils with ASD and those with behavioural difficulties generally achieve well. The progress of SLD pupils and those with additional special needs is satisfactory overall, but could be better given smaller class sizes and a curriculum to match their needs. There is no significant difference in the progress of boys and girls. The whole school targets for achievement by Year 9 in 2002 have all been met.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are most enthusiastic about their school, and are very keen to improve and succeed.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils are generally co-operative and sensible in class. They are welcoming, polite and helpful to visitors, and most behave very well around the school. There is an element of unsatisfactory behaviour from a few pupils with emotional difficulties, and disaffection amongst a small number of boys.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils develop good social skills and become increasingly independent. By the time they are 16 they are well prepared for the transition to further education or employment.

Attendance	Attendance is good and has significantly improved from the last inspection. Unauthorised absence has been reduced.
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### TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years R – 6	Years 7 – 11
Quality of teaching	Good	Good

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

Teaching is good overall and very good for children under five. It is very good in religious education and good in English, mathematics, art and design, design and technology, information and communication technology, history, geography, physical education, citizenship, and personal and social education. Teaching is satisfactory in the other subjects. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. Teaching is best at Years 1-6 where it is frequently very good and sometimes excellent. It is predominantly good in Years 7-11, but often very good. Subject knowledge is good, and teachers know the abilities of pupils well. Speaking and listening skills are taught very well in most subjects. Numeracy skills are taught well. ICT is being used well to extend learning opportunities. Despite the large size of most classes, teachers successfully manage the behaviour of pupils, even those pupils with emotional difficulties. Learning is good throughout the school. Pupils can sustain effort for long periods and generally respond very well to the good teaching. Teachers have effective strategies for supporting autistic pupils. However, a direct consequence of class size is that the needs of SLD pupils and those with additional special educational needs are not always met as well as they should be; for these groups of pupils, learning is only satisfactory overall and occasionally it is unsatisfactory. Learning support assistants provide good support to pupils' learning when they are deployed well by teachers. Teachers work well with other professionals such as speech and language therapists. Good use is made of homework to extend pupils' learning.

### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The school has made good improvement to its curriculum since the last inspection. All subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education are now taught to statutory requirements. The school now provides an appropriate amount of teaching time each day for its pupils and allocates suitable amounts of time to each subject, with correct emphasis on the core subjects of English, mathematics and science.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. The school provides pupils with relevant, imaginative and rich experiences, which make a very good contribution to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education. These are a strong feature of the school. This represents a considerable improvement since the previous inspection.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good overall. Child Protection procedures are effective. Health and safety procedures are in place with very good procedures for risk assessment. The care and welfare of pupils and the quality of pastoral support they receive is very good.

The school has a very effective partnership with parents, and they are supportive of its work. The school welfare officer has very close links with parents. Parents feel there is close support for the whole family. Teachers' records show very good contact by staff with parents.

The school is committed to providing an environment that allows all pupils full access to all areas of learning. The school works well with the local education authority inclusion support team. Twenty-two pupils are successfully involved in mainstream links. There is very effective measurement of pupils' achievement and progress.

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

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have together created a culture within the school that encourages development. There is a clear idea of the educational direction of the school and the need to embrace a curriculum that will serve a wider group of pupils with more complex learning difficulties. In a relatively short period of time good improvements have been made to the quality of teaching and learning and areas of management. There are, however, difficulties with the current admission arrangements that threaten to undermine the work of the school.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governing body is supportive of the headteacher and staff and meets all its statutory obligations. A new chairman has begun to introduce more effective ways of evaluating the school's strengths and weaknesses, and the recognition that more development is required to achieve these. The headteacher provides governors with very detailed information on all aspects of school life to help to inform their decisions. Governors have begun to address the issues of large classes and understaffing.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The headteacher and staff have given a great deal of effort to the review and revision of many school procedures and policies. New ways of measuring the quality of teaching and the achievements of pupils have been put in place. The school improvement plan is very good because it is the product of consultation between staff and governors and contains very detailed plans for the development of many areas of school.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Administrative staff are welcoming and there is an efficient school office that assists in the smooth day-to-day running of the school. Financial management is good. The headteacher and governors are prudent in their search for the best value when spending on equipment and resources and the most efficient use of staffing. The high quality of teaching and learning, as a result of effective leadership and management, means that the school provides good value for money.

In comparison to similar schools nationally, the school is seriously understaffed with regard to teachers and support staff. This was a weakness noted in the previous inspection that has not been addressed. It results in overlarge classes, four for example, in excess of twenty, and negative effects on the quality of individual work and support for pupils, particularly that for SLD pupils and those with additional educational needs. In addition, it means that a few teachers carry a number of subject responsibilities and this limits their effectiveness and the time available for necessary developments. The qualifications, experience and expertise of teachers currently in post is sufficient to teach the National Curriculum and religious education, and to meet the special educational needs of pupils in the school. The school is aware of the more complex special needs of pupils now being referred and is adjusting its staff development programme accordingly. Support staff, when deployed effectively, give good quality support to pupils. The accommodation is inadequate for the age and number of pupils on roll and clearly has a negative impact on learning in many subjects, for example, in music and physical education. Resources are good overall.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Their child likes school.</li><li>• Teaching is good.</li><li>• Pupils make good progress.</li><li>• School is approachable and expects pupils to work hard.</li><li>• Leadership by the headteacher is good.</li><li>• There is good discipline.</li><li>• School helps pupils to become mature and responsible.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Homework.</li><li>• Opportunities for after school activities.</li><li>• Teaching of autistic spectrum disorder pupils.</li></ul>

Parents answering the questionnaire had concerns about homework and about the lack of after school activities. These concerns are not borne out by inspection evidence. Use of homework is good. Extra-curricular activities are satisfactory given the problem of school transport for most pupils. The needs of autistic pupils are generally catered for quite well despite difficulties over class sizes.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Pupils' learning has increased and therefore their achievements and progress have also improved significantly. They are now good overall with little variation between year groups, although the youngest pupils in Reception to Year 3, make the most rapid progress. Analysis of pupils' work, individual education plans (IEPs), annual reviews, reports and teachers' records, together with the evidence from lesson observations, shows that achievement is good overall, and often very good. Progress over time is also good. However, there is evidence in lessons that for less able (SLD) pupils and those with additional special educational needs, who, whilst making satisfactory progress overall, do not always make the progress they could in lessons. Much of this is because of the large size of classes, but also because the school has not yet fully developed individual programmes for these pupils. The impact on achievement and progress for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and those with behavioural difficulties is less marked and they generally meet their individual targets and achieve well, despite large class sizes.
2. By Year 11, many pupils have gained good success in nationally recognised courses such as the Welsh Joint Education Council Certificate of Achievement. In 2002, fourteen pupils were entered and they gained a 100 per cent pass rate. with 40 per cent of pupils achieving a Merit award and 54 per cent achieving Distinction in English, mathematics, science, French, information and communication technology, food technology, and design technology. This was an improvement on pupils' performances in previous years. Sixteen pupils achieved awards through the ASDAN(Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) Transition Challenge in work covering Independent Living Skills, Self Advocacy, and Positive Self Image. This represents a significant improvement in the take up of accredited courses since the previous inspection and has supported a rise in overall levels of achievement. One pupil has also been studying for GCSEs in conjunction with a local secondary school. Other more able pupils are increasingly being offered similar opportunities. Pupils in their final year also make good progress in their work experience placements; some pupils have on-site placements, others placements in the local community. All pupils are well prepared by staff and make successful transition to post-sixteen courses at further education colleges. A few move on to open employment.
3. Achievement and progress is good in all subjects except science, French and music, where it is satisfactory. In religious education achievement is very good. There is very good achievement in speaking and listening skills, and good progress in reading and writing. The introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has helped to improve standards in these areas and this has resulted in better progress of pupils in their literacy and numeracy skills in the subjects up to Year 6. A similar national initiative recently introduced to the school is beginning to show similar improved results in these basic skills for pupils between Years 7 and Year 9.
4. The school has, over the past eighteen months, collected information about each pupil's levels of achievement on the P-Scales (measurement of attainment under Level 1 of the National Curriculum). The school uses its own system for measuring and comparing this data through its CSARS (Complete School Assessment and

Recording System). Although there is not as yet sufficient information to compare pupils' progress year on year by using this system, nevertheless the information it provides does give an important indicator to staff that progress of pupils in most subjects is improving throughout the school. The CSARS scheme has the advantage that it can show teachers and parents the level of skills that have been attained, and it is also linked to pupils' IEPs, and thus is able to highlight pupils' next stage of learning more precisely. This scheme has been used well to set whole school targets for achievement at Year 9 in 2002, in English, mathematics and personal and social education, in conjunction with the local education authority. These have all been met.

5. Very good integration links with a local mainstream primary school give pupils in Reception and Years 1 and 2 the opportunity to interact and participate in a variety of curriculum activities within a mainstream setting. This has given considerable support to their communication and social skills.

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

6. Pupils have very good attitudes to the school and to their work. There are very good relationships between pupils and staff. Overall, pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and around the school. Minor incidents are dealt with well by the staff. Pupils' personal development is very good because of the climate of mutual respect and the school's commitment to promoting personal and independence skills.
7. Pupils enjoy coming to school. In lessons, pupils are keen to get on with their work because they are motivated by the tasks they are given to do. The majority of pupils show positive attitudes to their learning; they work sensibly, concentrate well and try hard to succeed. For example, in a citizenship lesson for Year 11, pupils were very attentive, conscientious and showed good perseverance and concentration on the subject matter.
8. The school has engaged in the Pupil Attitude to Self and School survey (P.A.S.S.), a national scheme to evaluate pupils' response to learning and to school. All staff have been involved in this. During the inspection week, the organisers gave very positive feedback to staff on the results of the scheme. The scheme has revealed several areas in which Penn Fields pupils have more positive attitudes to school and themselves as learners than other pupils nationally. It has also given the school areas for consideration. For example, pupils in Year 7 are less positive than pupils in other year groups. The school is already addressing the fact that boys' attitudes are less positive than girls'.
9. Behaviour is good because staff have clear expectations of expected behaviour throughout the school. There were no exclusions in the past year. In lessons most pupils behave well because they enjoy their work, they are usually well managed by staff, and respond accordingly. Pupils listen to instructions and carry them out well. They co-operate fully with staff, work hard and are keen to please. However, there is small element of unsatisfactory behaviour from a few pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. This and other disaffected behaviour has been identified by the school and reinforced by the P.A.S.S. scheme. The school is also involved in the Department for Education and Skills/Cambridge University project on Raising Boys' Achievements and as a result, the staff have introduced strategies to change boys' attitudes, such as securing outdoor education activities for disaffected pupils. These programmes have been successful in raising the confidence and self-

esteem of disaffected boys. Pupils have a very positive attitude towards these activities and work very well as a team.

10. Bullying is not a problem in the school, although inspectors noted some isolated incidents of name-calling, and boisterous play. However, pupils generally get on very well together. At lunchtime, there were examples of older pupils often taking care of the younger pupils. There are very good relationships between pupils and they enjoy and recognise each other's achievements. Pupils are friendly and welcoming to visitors.
11. Pupils' personal development is very good and they respond well to opportunities provided to increase their independence. Many are willing to take on responsibility. For example, in a very good Year 7 lesson on food technology, pupils knew what they required for preparing vegetables and were able to go to the cupboards and the equipment they needed without supervision. They also washed up their utensils at the end of the lesson without having to be reminded. Pupils in a food technology lesson in Year 11, enthusiastically discussed what they needed to learn so that they could be more independent.
12. Attendance is good compared to schools of a similar type. It has improved significantly from the last inspection when it was a key issue for action. The level of unauthorised absence has been reduced. There is some lateness, usually related to transport, but the expectations of the school are clear and pupils are made aware of the need to be punctual.

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

13. There has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. A quarter of teaching seen during the inspection was very good or excellent, compared with just ten per cent reported previously, and over a half is good. The fact that there is no unsatisfactory teaching is also an indicator that the standards of teaching have improved. Very good teaching is a frequent feature of each year group. These figures are impressive given the current circumstances in the school where large class sizes are a predominant feature. It means that despite the unwieldy size of most classes, with a wide range of abilities within them, teachers nevertheless manage to cater well for the majority of pupils. However, a number of lessons which are satisfactory and some of those which are good, would be improved given a better ratio of staff to pupils so that the needs of the less able pupils and those with additional special needs can be better met.
14. Teachers' planning is of good quality, particularly given the staff resources at their disposal, and takes into account three main levels of ability of pupils: higher, middle and lower. This approach works reasonably well with most subjects, but in English, mathematics and science, the needs of individual pupils are not always sufficiently addressed using this method. As a consequence the learning needs of some less able pupils and those with additional special needs, and occasionally those who are more able, do not get the full attention that they deserve. Teachers generally show at least satisfactory and often good management of pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD) and those with behavioural difficulties. The needs of these pupils are often given some recognition in planning. Activities and resources chosen are relevant and challenging for the majority.
15. Teachers' enthusiasm, thorough preparation and very good subject knowledge make many lessons particularly exciting and engage pupils' interest. In an English

lesson at Year 9, pupils studied poetry from other cultures. The teacher's reading of the poem was very expressive which stimulated pupils' imaginations. Pupils took part in role-play, acting out scenes from the poem. As a result pupils became very involved and there was a high level of learning occurring, with pupils not only increasing their knowledge about the poem and its view on slavery, but also expanding their awareness of other cultures. This is not always the case, as was seen in a science lesson at Year 10, where pupils were asked to test the boiling point of liquid, but there was no relevant planning for a less able pupil and the task set was inappropriate to his learning needs. As a result the pupil was not involved with the other pupils in the experiment and little learning occurred.

16. Teachers develop pupils' speaking and listening skills very well in literacy lessons and in other subjects. This has a very significant effect upon their learning, particularly on pupils' ability to recall information and give good verbal answers. In a history lesson at Year 5, the teacher read from the text book and used particularly focussed questioning of pupils at regular intervals throughout the lesson to check their understanding. She checked what the pupils had noticed when watching a video recording. As a result, pupils extended their knowledge and understanding of what life was like for a poor child working on a farm in Victorian times. Two particularly good qualities were present in this lesson, those of expectation and challenge. These were also seen in many other lessons. The teacher constantly asked pupils for their opinions and there was a high expectation of pupil participation and effort.
17. Occasionally all the best qualities in teaching are present in one lesson, as in an excellent personal, social and health education lesson for children and pupils in Reception to Year 3. Here the teacher had exemplary planning, very high expectations of the pupils and despite a large class size, managed to control pupils' behaviour extremely well. Activities were well thought out for pupils to 'identify people in school who help them'. Very good questioning reinforced by the use of symbol cards helped pupils' understanding and their speaking and listening skills. The teacher also included the use by pupils of a computer program relevant to the main activity. She also supported pupils' literacy and numeracy skills through her attention to 'key words' pupils used and, whenever possible, by raising their awareness of numbers. The teacher improved pupils' social skills by the very good management of their behaviour. Learning support staff played an integral role in supporting pupils in the activities. The result was the excellent response and progress made by pupils.
18. In most lessons, teachers use praise and encouragement very well and this boosts pupils' self-esteem and confidence, which in turn assists their learning. Work is marked and commented on in a way that shows pupils how well they have done or where they have gone wrong. Good use is made of relevant homework to extend and support pupils' learning. Teachers co-operate very well with other professionals to support pupils' learning, for example, with speech and language therapists.
19. Teachers generally value and use the skills of learning support assistants (LSAs) well, although this is not always the case. This is unfortunate because the low numbers of LSAs for the number of pupils in each class means that they work under great pressure. Teachers rely very heavily upon them to support less able pupils or to assist with behaviour management. LSAs know pupils well and give very good support to the welfare of pupils so that they can take best advantage of all activities in lessons. In most lessons the role and support that needs to be given to pupils by LSAs is clearly identified by teachers. In a few lessons this is not done as

well as it could be, so that valuable LSA time is not used to best effect in supporting pupils' learning. For example, LSAs are well briefed by the teacher in a history lesson in Reception to Year 3. They are given a clear understanding of what the pupils are expected to achieve and that there must be a constant emphasis on developing pupils' communication skills. Consequently LSAs skilfully help the teacher to support pupils' language and to test pupils' understanding. In an art lesson at Year 9, pupils were able to work independently and the LSA's time could have been used more efficiently elsewhere in the school.

20. Teachers throughout the school use the very good procedures they now have to measure the progress and achievements of pupils over time. This is a distinct improvement since the last inspection when this was unsatisfactory. Teachers use the information that is gathered to understand what pupils have learned and what they need to learn next. This information provides good guidance for teachers when they plan work and ensures that learning is well matched to the needs of the majority of pupils. Teachers predict effectively how much progress they expect pupils to make over a year and set targets for individual improvement. However, more specific information about the achievement for lower attaining pupils, and those with complex learning difficulties, is needed to enable teachers to plan even more effectively. Teachers could give more attention to pupils making their own self-assessments of their progress in lessons.
21. Teachers in Years 1 to 6 use commercial schemes well, such as PECS (Picture Exchange Communication System), where symbols help pupils to recognise words or actions, together with other forms of communication aids using information technology. There has also been a general improvement in teachers' skills and use of information and communication technology in the subjects, to extend the learning opportunities for pupils. This is already having a good impact upon pupils' learning and this will increase further as the skill of staff increases.

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

22. There are many good aspects to the school's curriculum. A great deal has been achieved to address the weaknesses identified in the previous inspection. However, there are limitations in the extent to which it is successful in fully providing for the special educational needs of all of its pupils. Taken as a whole, therefore, the curriculum provided is now satisfactory.
23. The school's curriculum statement satisfactorily sets out its values and aims, followed by details of what it is hoped that pupils will achieve as a result of the learning activities provided in each subject. All subject policies have been reviewed and brought up to date with this in mind. Pupils are taught all the appropriate subjects of the National Curriculum, including citizenship. Suitable amounts of time are allocated to teaching the subjects. Good features include the work related curriculum, work experience placements and college link courses. There are some opportunities for pupils to work alongside pupils in mainstream schools. Therefore, the school now has a curriculum that is at least satisfactory with respect to the subjects and opportunities that it offers. However, there are still limits to the extent to which it serves the educational needs of all of its pupils. Despite the introduction of accredited courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11, including those for less able pupils, and the use of the P-Scales to support curriculum assessment and planning across the school, there is still more

development needed to fully establish a suitable curriculum for those pupils at the margins of ability for which the school can cater, particularly those pupils with severe learning difficulties. Also, but to a lesser extent, for those with autism and for a few pupils who are the most able. The school is aware of this and has identified appropriate action to address the problem.

24. All pupils are included satisfactorily in the full range of activities provided by the school. No pupils experience difficulty in taking part in lessons as a result of their cultural or religious backgrounds. Boys and girls have access to the same activities, although a small group of boys take part in a local initiative that aims specifically to boost the self-esteem of boys.
25. The school places a proper emphasis on the teaching of literacy and numeracy and the national strategies in these subjects have been introduced well. The provision for literacy is now good, but the development of numeracy provision fell behind briefly due to a teacher leaving and is only satisfactory at present. There are suitable plans for its further improvement.
26. As most pupils do not live within easy reach of the school and use home-school transport, it is difficult for the school to provide activities for them outside of the school day. However, a satisfactory range of activities is provided to enrich and supplement the pupils' normal lessons, either by taking them out on educational visits or by bringing people into the school. These include events recognising festivals of different faiths, music drama workshops, theatre visits, and visits by representatives of different faith groups. Other regular activities include the use of leisure centres for ice skating and ten-pin bowling. The school has organised annual residential visits to Belgium and older pupils have attended a three-day residential stay in Wales. A choir meets weekly during lesson time and musical events are organised during the year, particularly at Remembrance Day and Christmas. Outdoor education programmes are successfully organised by staff and help in raising the confidence and self-esteem of disaffected boys. These programmes are very well run and managed by the LEA outdoor pursuits officer who ensures high standards of safety awareness and sensitivity to individual pupils' needs. There are currently, however, only a few after-school or breakfast clubs at the school.
27. The school makes satisfactory provision for the pupils' personal, social and health education (PSHE). Pupils of all ages have weekly lessons that include sex and relationships education. Drugs education is introduced to pupils from age 11 years onwards. Citizenship is satisfactorily included as part of the personal and social education lessons for pupils aged 4 to 11, and then is taught as a separate subject for pupils aged 11 years and above. Every pupil has individual targets for personal and social development. The personal and social issues raised by pupils on a daily basis are met well by the school's welfare officer.
28. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 gain from a good series of weekly lessons that help them to learn about the world of work. Apart from taught lessons on work-related topics, the curriculum includes visits to places of work and leads to a good programme of work experience that provides pupils in their last year of school with opportunities to sample the working environment in at least one of a range of local businesses. All pupils receive a careers interview from the local Connexions adviser and the school complements this well with its own programme of mock interviews and careers advice planned in co-operation with local colleges of further education and the business community.

29. Pupils have access to a good range of opportunities in the local community. For example, all nearby residents are invited to school events and at Christmas pupils in Year 11 prepare a lunch for local senior citizens, followed by the school concert. The school uses the local Methodist church for its Carol Service and the choir sings with a local choral group, taking part in multi-cultural celebrations at the Civic Hall. Pupils use sports facilities at a local community centre and have been involved in the local special needs Olympics group. Pupils are helping to develop a garden with a local community group and workers from a national utility provider helped the pupils develop the school's front garden and entrance walkway.
30. Similarly, both staff and pupils benefit from good relationships with other local special and mainstream schools and colleges of further education. Staff are able to share and develop their teaching skills, while pupils use the educational facilities of other schools and colleges. The youngest class in the school visits a local infant school one afternoon each week and pupils from the infant school visit Penn Fields in return. Older pupils in their last year at school engage in "taster" courses at colleges of further education to prepare them for full time attendance.
31. Spiritual development is promoted very well throughout the school, through both planned experiences and less formal opportunities. Daily assemblies incorporate a suitable act of collective worship and follow a planned theme. The theme during the inspection week was "sharing". Assemblies are regularly taken by local church leaders. There are opportunities for spiritual development throughout the curriculum. For example, in a Year 5 religious education lesson, there was a moment of quiet reflection with a lighted candle and a darkened room where pupils thought about the times when they were forgiven. In a Year 7 geography lesson, pupils appreciated the beauty and diversity of the United Kingdom, when they studied photographs of the regions. Pupils take part in celebrations of different faiths, including Christian, Muslim and Sikh festivals. There are visits to local churches and visitors include the local vicar and a representative of the Sikh religion. Overall, the strong caring ethos throughout the school, and the mutual respect that is evident between pupils and staff, make a very positive contribution to the spiritual climate in which the pupils learn.
32. Moral and social development are very good. There is a clear moral code in the school, which enables pupils to feel safe and confident enough to express themselves. Pupils receive clear messages about what is expected of them in lessons and during play and lunchtimes. The pupils understand and appreciate the rules that are in place to ensure their well-being. Pupils are very well supported in their moral and social development by a very good programme for religious education and in citizenship, PSHE and physical education in particular, as well as across the other subjects. For example, in religious education, pupils in Year 7 achieved some awareness of the act of forgiveness through the story of the Prodigal Son. A lesson in citizenship at Year 7, on how stealing is wrong and harms everyone, gave a powerful illustration of the pupils' awareness of right and wrong. Pupils in a physical education lesson at Year 6 worked very well in pairs and helped and encouraged each other. They were able to talk confidently about each other's performances and suggest ways in which they could be improved.
33. Cultural development is very good and represents a very good improvement since the last inspection. Pupils have the opportunity to appreciate cultural diversity. There was a multi-faith millennium celebration and there is an annual Remembrance Day assembly. In geography, Year 5 studied daily life in an Indian

village. Musical performances and festivals have been held in school. Pupils in Year 9 learn about French culture through a residential trip, which gives them genuine experiences of French life. Many opportunities are available in history lessons for pupils to learn about their country's cultural heritage and that of ancient societies.

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

34. The care and welfare of pupils and the quality of pastoral support they receive is very good. This is an improvement since the last inspection. Good child protection procedures are in place. They are understood by staff and used in the best interests of pupils. All staff are aware of the need for vigilance and effectively monitor the well-being of pupils. Effective procedures are in place to support children 'looked after' by the local authority.
35. There is a health and safety co-ordinator and the governors are appropriately involved in the health and safety checks. As well as a named person responsible for first aid who is well qualified, there are also a number of staff with first aid training. Very effective procedures are in place for the management and reporting of any injuries that occur during the school day. Very good arrangements are in place for recording, storage and administration of prescribed medicines to pupils.
36. The school has very good links with the health service. There are clinics held at the school by the school doctor, as well as consultant paediatricians. There are very effective links with social services and with other external agencies. For example, educational psychologists and specialist teachers for pupils with hearing impairment. The school also receives very good support from a speech and language technical instructor who works with the speech and language therapists to provide programmes for individuals and small groups of pupils.
37. The school has developed and implemented very good procedures for measuring and recording pupils' progress. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection when procedures used to measure progress and help teachers plan pupils' learning, were judged to be unsatisfactory. The school now has a computerised system for measuring and recording pupils' achievements. In particular these refer to standards set in the National Curriculum materials and the P-Scales, each of which is appropriately adapted to reflect the needs of the majority of pupils. However, the school recognises that the range of materials it uses needs to be further extended. At the moment these recording systems do not fully reflect the needs of lower attaining pupils or the needs of the changing population because they are not sensitive enough to demonstrate the small steps in progress that these pupils make. The school is already addressing this in its school improvement plan, for example, by including the Early Learning Goals from the Foundation Stage Curriculum. The school and individual teachers are beginning to use this information to accurately measure pupils' progress and to compare the progress made by different groups of pupils.
38. The statutory procedures for pupils who have Statements of Special Educational Need are met well. The annual review of a pupil's statement is carried out effectively but there are a small number of statements that have not been dated and do not name the school as the appropriate placement. The school needs to draw the attention of the local education authority to this. The annual review report provides parents with good information about their child's level of achievement, in text and graph form, and the annual targets set at the last meeting are appropriately

reviewed and new targets are set. Individual education plans are good. They are effectively linked to the school's computerised recording procedures and reflect the needs of the majority of pupils well.

39. The type of provision needed by pupils, as outlined in their Statement of Special Educational Need, is not fully met by the school. A significant number of statements require pupils to be taught in classes where there is a high teacher (adult) - pupil ratio; that pupils have frequent opportunities to work in small groups and for teachers to plan their learning through individual programmes of work particularly in literacy and numeracy but also in other areas of their development. These requirements are difficult for the school to meet because of the large number of pupils in some classes and because teachers do not have enough support staff to plan small group work on a regular basis.
40. The school has a satisfactory policy for special educational needs, which outlines how it intends to meet pupils' needs but it does not clearly identify the characteristics of the pupils it caters for or identify the type of special educational need it will have to cater for in the future. At the moment the policy does not provide sufficient guidance for the school about how to develop staff expertise or resources for the future. The school is admitting pupils who have a much wider range of special educational need than previously and there are an increasing number of pupils who have learning difficulties such as autistic spectrum disorders. There are also a significant number who have severe learning difficulties and a growing number of pupils who have health needs such as degenerative conditions. The school is beginning to develop staff expertise to better meet the needs of these pupils and has made a good start in developing staff skills in the teaching and management of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, for example, by identifying a co-ordinator for autism and by providing her with training in suitable strategies such as TEACCH (The Treatment and Education of Autistic and Communication handicapped Children) and PECs (Picture Exchange Communication systems).
41. Procedures for promoting good behaviour for the majority of pupils are good. The reward systems used across the school are similar but modified to reflect the age, ability and interests of pupils in each class and, for the majority of pupils, they are effective in promoting good behaviour. The school also recognises pupils' achievements through a weekly assembly. The school is not quite as good at identifying and managing the behaviour of pupils who have behaviour difficulties as additional special needs or who for short periods of time have behaviour problems. This has already been recognised as an area for development and a comprehensive programme of support and training has already been started.
42. Procedures for measuring pupils' personal development are very good because formal elements such as the PSHE and citizenship programmes are linked to the school's recording system. This is an effective framework through which the school provides very good support and guidance for pupils. The welfare officer also has a significant and very effective role in promoting pupils' personal development by providing very good support for pupils who need counselling or additional encouragement. She is also responsible for liaison with any external agencies that provide care for pupils in the school and plays a central role in supporting parents and families and, through them, pupils' learning and progress. This responsibility is carried out very effectively.

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

43. Parents expressed many positive views about the school, both at the parents' meeting and through the questionnaire. They identified a number of significant strengths including the quality of teaching, the progress their children make, the quality of the school's leadership and management and the approachability of the staff. There were concerns about the size of classes, and these were borne out by inspection evidence. Concerns about homework were also expressed, but this was seen, by inspectors, to be well used by teachers to extend children's learning. Extra-curricular activities, another concern of parents, are satisfactory given the context of the school transport system.
44. The school has an open door policy, and parents regularly come into school to see the headteacher or other staff. From initial contact with the school a close relationship is formed, which gives continuity of support as the child moves through the school. There are committed and involved parent governors, and parents attend assemblies and special occasions such as Remembrance Day.
45. The quality of information for parents is very good. The prospectus and governors' annual report are informative and clearly laid out. They contain all the required information. Annual reports give parents a picture of progress in each subject and are much improved from the last inspection. There is variation in the sharpness of reporting, but there are examples of good practice in precise, detailed evaluative comment from some teachers. Reports are supplemented by detailed information on targets, and progress related to targets and P-Scales, including information that is presented visually. This is detailed and meaningful to parents. In addition to written information and individual discussion, there are meetings to inform parents about educational topics, such as the Foundation Stage. The quality of this information enables parents to help and support their child's learning effectively.

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

46. In the five terms since his appointment, the headteacher has made many changes and improvements to the standards and expectations of staff and pupils. He leads from the front and has a direct, open style which has made him accessible to staff and pupils alike. He has effected many improvements since the previous inspection including improvement in both teaching and pupils' achievements. He has changed the culture of the school to one that is seeking to achieve excellence in all that it does. He has brought staff together to work as a team. He recognises that there is still a lot of work to do and, together with the deputy headteacher, who was appointed a term after the headteacher, they have committed the school to a series of developments that have enhanced the management structure of the school. For example, the school applied for and has recently received the Investors in People Award. This award is a testament to the strong management systems and procedures that have been put in place. School policies have been reviewed and a new computerised system of measuring pupils' progress and achievements and setting relevant targets for their next achievements, has been introduced.
47. The key issues from the previous inspection have all been well addressed. National initiatives have been introduced successfully. Staff have engaged in external projects for raising pupils' standards. These have had a strong influence on raising pupils' achievements and improving their responses. They serve to illustrate the leadership skills of the headteacher and senior staff who have encouraged and supported staff and pupils during the introduction of these initiatives and projects. A less effective area of leadership so far, is the inability to persuade the local education authority not to oversubscribe pupil numbers. The

result is that the school has become rather a victim of its own success, with parents eager to find places in what they perceive to be a good school. The numbers on roll now substantially exceed the recognised maximum number. Consequently class sizes have become too large for teachers to be able to guarantee that all pupils' special educational needs will be met, despite their best efforts. The school does not satisfactorily follow its own admissions policy and has not reviewed this in conjunction with the local education authority to ascertain the limits on admissions that are brought about by considerations of staffing levels, class sizes or the demands of the curriculum. There is also a need for the school to make clear in its curriculum statement the limitations to the range of ability for which it can reasonably be expected to cater.

48. The management of the school is very well supported and directed by the school improvement plan (SIP). This is the product of close consultation between the headteacher, staff and governors. It very clearly sets out the priorities for development in teaching and learning and of all the subjects. The staffing structure, roles and responsibilities are mapped out. There is a good link between the SIP, school's appraisal of staff performance and the staff development and training programme.
49. The Governing Body has recently taken up the mantle of 'critical friend' to the headteacher and school staff. A new chairman has galvanised them into activity in support of the headteacher's claim that the school does not receive enough funds, compared with other similar schools nationally and consequently, has too few staff.
50. The school is aware of the more complex special needs of pupils now being referred and is adjusting its staff development programme accordingly. Administrative staff are welcoming to visitors, run an efficient office and assist in the smooth day to day running of the school. Procedures for the induction of new members of staff are very good and the school has very good potential for training new teachers.
51. The accommodation remains unsatisfactory despite some remedial work. For example, although four teaching areas have been built since the last inspection, two were lost in conversion to the science room and one mobile classroom was also lost in the building programme, resulting in an increase of only one teaching area. Although improvements have been made to the science room it remains unsatisfactory for secondary aged pupils. No library accommodation has been built. Instead three library areas have been created in corridors and this has helped to make the library provision better. In addition, there is no gymnasium or specialist room for music. As a consequence physical education and music are taught in the hall, where the equipment and instruments are also stored and which is a main thoroughfare. The information technology room is too small and poorly ventilated. Outside, there is no specific play area for the very youngest pupils and the small grass area for games and athletics is unsatisfactory for secondary aged pupils.
52. Resources are now identified through subject development plans and this also means they are used more effectively. They are good overall in English, mathematics, geography, history, information and communication technology, design and technology and religious education. They are satisfactory elsewhere, except music where they are unsatisfactory. The school is aware of the need to improve resources to match the needs of pupils with a wider range of special educational needs. Teachers make good use of resources within the school and very good use of facilities within the local community. Vibrant displays of pupils'

work enhance the school environment by celebrating pupils' achievement and stimulating their interest in learning.

53. The school has a clear view of the strategic financial issues, and is active in trying to improve the financial position. The money from the school's budget carried forward from one year to the next, and which includes an amount for any contingencies, has been reduced to a very low level. This money has been used to maintain current staffing levels. Although the problem of large class sizes is clearly perceived, the evaluation of the effect on pupils' progress could be more systematic, rather than anecdotal. Governors are closely involved in setting the budget, and the finance committee takes appropriate steps to check how the money is spent.
54. Day to day financial management is effective. The very recent financial audit report by the local education authority, judged that systems were satisfactory. There were several minor recommendations, which are being satisfactorily addressed. There is careful planning for the costs of educational priorities, for example, of in-service training. Good financial planning supports a good programme of staff development, and a well-maintained educational environment.
55. The school makes comparisons with other schools locally and nationally when measuring levels of pupil attendance and school spending. It is beginning to be in a position to compare its performance with other similar schools nationally. As a result it has been able to identify a serious shortfall in funding, as a consequence of which the school has insufficient staff to adequately meet the curricular needs of its pupils.
56. There are procedures in place for obtaining competitive quotes, and contracts are reviewed for value for money. The work undertaken in this area is what would be expected of a small school. There are consultative procedures that involve staff in development planning, but currently there is no formal mechanism for ascertaining the views of pupils. The headteacher and staff review their own practice and make changes that improve quality.

## **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

57. *To sustain and further improve the good quality of teaching and achievement, the headteacher, staff, and governors should continue to seek the support of the local education authority and work closely together to:*
  - Reduce the number of admissions to more manageable proportions and below the maximum recognised number of 160. Follow the school's admission policy and lower the numbers in each class to a maximum of ten. (Paragraph 47)
  - Ensure that a sufficient number of teachers and learning support assistants are provided to meet the curriculum needs of all pupils. (Paragraph 55)
  - Review and redefine the school's special educational needs policy and admissions procedures so that they fully identify the full range and extent of pupils' learning needs that the school's curriculum can reasonably cater for. (Paragraph 40,47)
  - Improve curriculum and lesson planning so that it includes the specific needs of pupils with lowest and highest ability. (Paragraph 23)

- Improve and extend the school's accommodation and facilities, particularly for science, music, information technology, physical education, speech therapy and other visiting professionals, annual review meetings, school library, and outdoor play area for the youngest pupils. (Paragraph 51)

*The headteacher and governors when considering their Action Plan may want to consider the following minor points:*

- Appoint subject leaders in Year groups and subjects that do not currently have them. (Paragraph 115,122)
- Ensure that the best use is made of learning support assistants' time. (Paragraph 19, 86, 101,118)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	81
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	50

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	19	43	17	0	0	0
Percentage	2	23	53	21	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	165
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	68

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.9

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.5

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

**Ethnic background of pupils**

**Exclusions in the last school year**

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	121		
White – Irish			
White – any other White background			
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	7		
Mixed – White and Black African	1		
Mixed – White and Asian			
Mixed – any other mixed background			
Asian or Asian British - Indian	25		
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani			
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	1		
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	1		
Black or Black British – Caribbean	8		
Black or Black British – African			
Black or Black British – any other Black background	1		
Chinese			
Any other ethnic group			
No ethnic group recorded			

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

**Teachers and classes****Qualified teachers and classes:****YR–Y 11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	11
Average class size	16.5

**Education support staff: YR- Y11**

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	472.75

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Financial information**

Financial year	2001/2002
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	£
Total income	938880
Total expenditure	944859
Expenditure per pupil	5905
Balance brought forward from previous year	83941
Balance carried forward to next year	77962

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	4
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	5
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0

Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0
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*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Results of the survey of parents and carers**

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	160
Number of questionnaires returned	30

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	83	13	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	56	30	6	3	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	56	23	10	3	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	40	26	16	10	3
The teaching is good.	60	33	0	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	60	33	0	10	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	76	10	3	3	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	73	16	6	0	3

The school works closely with parents.	63	13	6	10	3
The school is well led and managed.	73	16	3	0	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	66	23	0	6	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	46	20	10	10	13

**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**

- 58. There are five children of reception age, four of whom were admitted to the school at the beginning of the term (they have been in school for two weeks). Children of reception age learn alongside pupils in Years 1, 2 and 3. The school has made a good start in implementing the Foundation Stage Curriculum particularly as it was unaware that its admissions for this term would include such a significant number of children under five years of age. Because these children have been in school for such a short time it is not possible to comment on, or make judgements about their achievement and progress.
- 59. The learning opportunities and experiences provided for these young children are very good and include very effective opportunities for them to learn alongside children from a local mainstream school. The learning planned for them is satisfactory; lesson plans and the work prepared reflect the requirements of the Foundation Stage Curriculum well. The Early Learning Goals are being effectively incorporated into lesson plans and provide a good focus for achievement.
- 60. The class teacher, who is also the subject leader for Early Years provides very good opportunities for them to make progress in developing their communication, language and literacy. Children are confident to explain what they are doing because adults provide them with very good opportunities through the sensitive use of questions.
- 61. Two excellent lessons were seen during the inspection. There is very effective teamwork between the teacher and support staff and this ensures that all children

have very good opportunities to learn and make progress. Because the teacher provides very good guidance for staff they are very clear about their roles and responsibilities and this enables them to effectively support teaching and learning. Staff provided opportunities constantly during activities for children to develop and improve their communication skills. They gave very good support to children's vocabulary by talking to them about their work and encouraging them to describe what they were doing or thinking during their play. The verbal prompts staff provided and the way they modelled behaviour and play skills, helped children learn how to participate in activities. The teacher skilfully used symbols to label activities and provided children with information about routines and the school's expectations of them. This helped children to participate effectively in the learning opportunities they were given. Regular and effective teaching by the speech and language technician also helps children to develop their social use of language.

62. Ongoing measurement of pupils' achievement and progress by the teacher is very good. There is daily recording of each child's responses to activities and good evaluation of how effective lessons have been. The school's computerised system is currently being updated to include the Early Learning Goals from The Foundation Stage Curriculum. The teacher uses the information she has about children's achievement very effectively to plan good experiences for them to acquire knowledge and skills.
63. The accommodation for children of under five is satisfactory but the school does not have a suitable safe area for outdoor play. However, these facilities are available when children play alongside pupils in a local mainstream school. Staff make sure that the classroom provides a stimulating environment to support learning.

## **ENGLISH**

64. Pupils' achievements in English are good. Since the last inspection there has been good improvement in curriculum planning and pupils' standards. There is an appropriate curriculum and the range and quality of learning opportunities are good. The high quality of relationships in lessons is a very important factor in the progress that pupils make. The National Literacy Strategy is now firmly established and there are good improvements in the quality of teaching, planning, learning and assessment. Work is planned so that pupils build on what they have already learned. The introduction of accredited courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11 have helped to promote learning and achievement. However, due to the high number of pupils in many classes, teachers and support staff are unable to give the level of individual support that they would like to. Therefore in a significant number of lessons the achievement of less able pupils, those with additional special needs and sometimes those with autism is only satisfactory.
65. There are many opportunities for pupils to develop speaking and listening and their progress in this area is very good in English lessons and very well supported in the other subjects. Pupils are willing to contribute and learn from their mistakes. They listened carefully and responded to questions asked by teachers and learning support staff. For example, in a very good design and technology lesson, Year 9 pupils talked and listened confidently, describing different aspects of designing a jigsaw for use by a three year old. Higher attaining pupils engaged the interest of the listener by varying their expression and vocabulary. Pupils in Years 1 to 3 were given good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills in a group listening exercise. Pupils listened carefully to one another describing objects, made appropriate comments and asked relevant questions. Older pupils in an

English lesson at Year 9, displayed very effective use of their speaking skills when presenting a short sketch in improvised drama based on a poem by Benjamin Zephaniah.

66. Achievements in reading are good. By Year 6, progress is good because there is a clear focus by teachers on developing pupils' understanding of text and specific lessons for literacy. Pupils in Reception to Year 3, learned to follow the text in books and repeated words that the teacher pronounced. They showed understanding of how a book works. For example, they enjoyed reading "Walking in The Jungle". They followed the story with enthusiasm, anticipating events and relating them to objects that were identified by the learning support staff. By Year 9, pupils' achievement remains good for the majority. Teachers read stories aloud very well. This encouraged pupils to be expressive. For example, in a Year 9 lesson, pupils benefited from being given the opportunity to read from "Frankenstein" by Shelley, with higher ability pupils reading the more complex sentences. Pupils showed great pleasure in books because they have been given the chance to read widely. Progress and achievement by Year 11 remains at least good. Older pupils in Year 10 and 11, are given the opportunity to study a variety of passages from books ranging from "Lord of the Flies" by Golding and Shakespeare's plays "Romeo and Juliet" and "Macbeth". Less able readers followed an appropriate reading scheme and were effectively supported and encouraged by staff.
67. Pupils' achievement in writing is good throughout the school. Pupils made good progress in acquiring skills in writing because teachers knew how well they were learning and planned further work to build on this. Higher attaining pupils in Reception to Year 3 produced recognisable shapes to convey meaning. Lower attaining pupils copied under or over pre-written words and began to trace and follow letters and lines as a prelude to handwriting. Higher attaining pupils' writing was often organised, imaginative and clear. For example pupils in Year 8 understood the use of adjectives to describe different settings. As part of their Certificate of Achievement coursework older pupils in Year 10 produced good work focussing on the character of Macbeth. They were given the opportunity to redraft pieces of writing and produced work of a good standard. The range of opportunities provided to develop creative writing skills was good and pupils regularly used computers to word process their work.
68. Teaching is good overall throughout the school. There is a range in quality between satisfactory to very good. This represents a good improvement on the findings of the previous inspection when some unsatisfactory teaching was observed. In many lessons, teachers were enthusiastic and had good understanding of the needs of the pupils, creating a very positive learning atmosphere. Teachers showed a good ability to manage pupils' behaviour. They had a good knowledge of the National Literacy Strategy, which they suitably adapted to pupils' needs. Homework is set well on a regular basis and is varied according to the abilities of pupils.
69. Teachers in most subjects use a range of resources in lessons to support literacy. Pupils are encouraged to use information from different sources. For example, in a good history lesson, pupils read and sequenced assorted facts into the correct chronological timeline. There are many opportunities for pupils to find information for themselves and become independent learners. For example, in a food technology lesson pupils were given the recipes and encouraged to refer to these during the lesson. Measurement of pupils' achievement and progress is good with

teachers using a range of nationally recognised tests for speaking and listening, reading, writing and spelling. Each pupil is given an individual target for improvement in each area. Teachers reviewed progress towards achievement of these targets regularly. Although pupils in Year 11 are entered for externally accredited courses and the majority attain a good rate of success, these courses are not always appropriate for the most able or least able pupils.

70. Management of English by the two subject leaders is good. One is responsible for pupils up to and including Year 9 and the other for pupils in Years 10 and 11. They work well together in overseeing and developing the subject. The use of information and communication technology is good and is identified in lesson planning. The school's support for pupils with speech and communication difficulties is good. The subject gives good support to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Resources have been dramatically improved since the last inspection and are good. However, the location of the library areas remains unsatisfactory as their present positions are in busy thoroughfares.

## **MATHEMATICS**

71. The majority of pupils of all ages achieve well in mathematics and make good progress, although there are slight variations in the progress they make, as they move through the year groups of the school. There has been good improvement in pupils' achievements since the last inspection. This reflects the increased focus upon the subject resulting from the National Numeracy Strategy, which has had a good impact on teaching throughout the school. There is a satisfactory mathematics curriculum. However, teachers are aware that further development is needed to make planning more appropriate to the needs of all the pupils. Recent improvements to the school's procedures for measuring pupils' attainments have provided information that will help teachers to plan their lessons so that tasks more closely match the individual learning needs of pupils. Planning for higher attaining pupils in Years 10 and 11 has shown good improvement since the last inspection, as a result of the introduction of courses leading to nationally recognised awards.
72. Pupils' progress in mathematics reflects the quality of the teaching they receive, which is good when taken as a whole, but varies between satisfactory and very good for specific age groups. The most effective teaching in the school is in lessons where there are an appropriate number of pupils in the class and pupils are set tasks that are matched carefully to their abilities. Pupils enjoyed their mathematics lessons and generally good, co-operative behaviour and interest in their work is a crucial factor in enabling most of them to make good progress despite such large class groups.
73. By Year 2, pupils have made very good progress in mathematics. This is because of very good teaching that challenges pupils with tasks that carefully build upon their existing knowledge, skills and understanding in fine steps. For example, pupils were engaged in a range of number activities around counting in ones to five. Some counted toys and shapes, others matched these to numbers and more able pupils considered whether one number is more or less than another. Teaching achieves the correct match of tasks to pupil and this is apparent from the appropriate level of independence with which pupils are able to continue with their work and the lack of either distraction or frustration.
74. By Year 6, pupils make satisfactory progress. The quality of teaching varies between good and satisfactory. Pupils recognised and counted numbers to 100,

and counted in tens. More able pupils began to understand place value, leading to work with tens and units. However, both in the lessons seen and in analysis of pupils' work, there are examples of pupils being given work that does not match their abilities. This has the greatest impact upon less able pupils.

75. By Year 9, good teaching is enabling pupils to make good progress. However, large class sizes continue to reduce opportunities for the least able pupils and it remains difficult to match work to individual needs. Opportunities for a more able pupil are improved by his part time attendance at a local mainstream school. Analysis of pupils' work shows that they have a wide range of attainments, with less able pupils continuing to work, for example, on numbers and addition or subtraction to 10, while more able pupils are converting fractions to decimals, multiplying numbers to about 200 and investigating the frequency that numbers occur when a dice is thrown. They analyse data to resolve a query about the performance of their local football club and find this a challenging activity.
76. Pupils continue to make good progress during their last two years until leaving school at 16. All pupils follow courses that lead to a nationally recognised award that suits their level of attainment. One pupil is preparing for GCSE. However, although the provision for this age group has improved since the last inspection, continued development is needed, because more pupils are capable of following the GCSE course and there are less able pupils who are not getting full benefit from the lessons provided for them. As with other age groups, a minority of less able pupils and those with additional needs are not being as successful as they could be, because teaching is not delivering tasks to them at an appropriate level.
77. The subject is well managed by a recently appointed subject leader, who has good plans for the subject's development. A good range of classroom resources supports lessons. Pupils in each year group receive a regular amount of weekly homework that helps to reinforce what they have learned in lessons.

## **SCIENCE**

78. The overall achievement of pupils by Year 6 and by Year 11 is satisfactory. This is an improvement since the last inspection. There has been significant development in the areas of curriculum and assessment. Pupils' progress is satisfactory overall although in lessons pupils of all ages often make good progress. This progress is not sustained over time because the curriculum needs to be developed further to better meet the needs of less able pupils of all ages. It also needs to reflect the changing needs of the pupils being admitted to the school, particularly those in Years 1 to 6. A small but significant number of less able pupils of all ages and those with additional educational needs, including autism, do not make as much progress as they could because work is not well matched to their needs. As a result they make satisfactory progress in lessons and over time where others make good progress.
79. By Year 6, pupils understand the principles of a fair test and carried out an investigation to see if, for example, different surfaces had an effect on the distance travelled by a beanbag. Pupils' knowledge and understanding increases steadily during their time in the school. For example, pupils in Year 4 when working on forces, recognised and named the forces used to pedal a bike, hammered a nail into a piece of wood and squeezed a lemon. Pupils in Year 5 tested different materials to see if they were magnetic. They were given good opportunities to work with the secondary subject leader who is a science specialist.

80. By Year 9, pupils carried out simple investigations with confidence, as when they found the melting point of different substances such as ice and chocolate. When questioned they were able to describe the melting processes in simple terms such as 'the molecules start moving apart' and they knew that this happens because of the heat they applied. Pupils of all ages recorded the results of their tests and more able pupils drew simple conclusions from the information they had gathered. Pupils used the skills they had developed in mathematics effectively to convert the information they had recorded in a table, into a bar graph. However, teachers, particularly for pupils in Years 7 to 11, need to find ways for less able pupils to record their findings more independently.
81. By Year 10, pupils understood the difference between solids, liquids and gasses and knew that applying heat can change a solid to a liquid and that some changes are reversible. Good progress was made by a significant number of pupils in developing scientific vocabulary because teachers picked out, and reinforced, key words for them. They provided good opportunities for pupils to use them in oral work, to read them and, to a lesser extent, to write them. There is satisfactory evidence of the use of information and communication technology to support pupils' work particularly in the area of topic research.
82. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teaching ranged from satisfactory to good but was consistently good for pupils up to Year 6. Across the year groups, teachers place a good emphasis on providing learning opportunities that are as practical as possible and this approach works well. Pupils, of all ages, respond well in lessons, particularly when teachers engage them in interesting activities and they like to get involved in experiments. For example, in Year 4, pupils concentrated well in a lesson about the different forces used to mash bananas and whisk cream to make a banana mousse. They were excited when they were given a turn to use the whisk and potato masher. In good lessons this practical approach, together with a lively pace and the use of challenging questions helps pupils to grasp ideas. Pupils understand because they have been involved in investigations and find things out for themselves. In good lessons teachers provide pupils with opportunities to talk about their learning and this helps them to clarify their thinking and make good progress. Lessons for pupils in Years 7-11 are not always as successful as they could be because the design of the room makes it difficult for pupils to undertake practical work or to see the teacher when he is giving demonstrations. This often affects pupils' concentration and the teacher has to waste time re-focussing them on the task and going over instructions.
83. Teachers find it difficult to plan effectively so that they can meet the needs of less able pupils when there are large numbers of pupils in the class. They do not have enough staff to provide these pupils with opportunities to work on individual targets, to work in small groups or to receive the amount of support they need when they are part of a large group. This means that even in a lesson where the majority of pupils make good progress, these pupils are not able to achieve as well as their peers. The quality of teaching in Years 7 to 11 is sometimes affected by the lack of a science technician because learning support assistants do not have the knowledge or skills to effectively support teaching and learning. Teachers' measurement of pupils' progress is good.
84. Management by the two subject leaders is good. They have identified good priorities for development including opportunities for pupils to be more involved in assessing their own progress and setting their own targets. They recognise the need for

developing a wider range of accreditation opportunities and further development of computer software and the use of computers to support pupils' learning. A suitable subject development plan has been established to help the school address these developments. Pupils in Years 10 and 11, follow the Welsh Joint Education Board syllabus and other accredited courses are planned. There are few opportunities for pupils to work alongside pupils in mainstream school although this has been explored as a way of meeting the needs of more able pupils.

85. Accommodation for the subject is satisfactory for pupils in Years 1 to 6 and unsatisfactory for those in Years 7 to 11. For example, it restricts older pupils learning about and investigating acids and alkaline because the floor is carpeted and this represents an undue risk. The bench area for investigations is badly designed and the teacher does not have a clear view of what pupils are doing, and this is a safety concern. This workbench is also very small and is not suitable when there are large numbers of pupils in the group. Resources are satisfactory.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

86. The overall achievement of the majority of pupils by Year 6 and by Year 9 is good. Art is not taught to pupils in Years 10 and 11. However, there are a number of pupils in Year 9, whose work is of a high standard and shows that they could be successful in achieving accreditation. These opportunities are not currently available to them. The majority of pupils make good progress. Less able pupils also make good progress when class numbers are small enough to enable the teacher to plan work to meet their needs and provide them with enough support. When pupil numbers are high there are not enough adults to support pupils and they make satisfactory rather than good progress.
87. Teaching and learning varied from satisfactory to good in lessons, but teachers' plans and examples of pupils' work around the school and in the art and design portfolio indicate that teaching and learning are good overall. This is an improvement since the last inspection when standards and teaching were judged to be satisfactory. The curriculum is satisfactory; it does not fully reflect the needs of less able pupils but teachers plan a good range of activities that enable pupils of all abilities to develop understanding and skill because they have opportunities to use different media and techniques. For example, when pupils in Year 6 designed and made an Egyptian jewelled collar. Pupils were also given good opportunities to look at the work of famous artists such as Lowry and to paint in the style of different periods in history. For example, pupils in Year 9 studied early Egyptian painting and mixed pale background colours for a painting from their imagination. Teachers provided good opportunities to help pupils make connections between learning in different subjects. Examples of pupils' work are used well in displays around the school.
88. Teaching and learning is good because teachers have good subject knowledge. The subject leader, who teaches art and design to all pupils in Years 7 to 9, is an art specialist. Teachers plan interesting work for pupils, for example, when pupils in Year 7 made and designed tiles based on Roman mosaics. They also used skills that they had learned in mathematics such as measuring and drawing shapes. Teachers provided clear instructions and good demonstrations and because activities were interesting pupils were keen to participate and carried out the activities successfully. For example, good progress was made when pupils in Year 9 learned how to mix colours effectively. Teachers increasingly make good use of computers to support pupils' work and pupils in Year 9 used a program to create a

chart showing different tones of the same colour. Teachers measure pupils' achievement well.

89. Management of the subject by the two subject leaders is good. A suitable subject development plan has been established to help address priorities such as improving the curriculum for lower and higher attaining pupils and increase the use of computers to support and extend pupils' learning. Resources are satisfactory and there is specialist accommodation for pupils in Years 7 to 9.

## **CITIZENSHIP**

90. Citizenship is a new subject that has been introduced satisfactorily since September 2002 for pupils in Years 6 to 11. A small number of lessons were observed. These indicate that pupils make good progress, as the result of good teaching. The teachers have successfully established pupils' interest in the subject and developed good relationships with pupils. As this is a new subject there is not a sufficient amount of pupils' past work available to judge whether or not their good progress is sustained over time.
91. By Year 9, pupils explore moral issues, such as those about stealing, as well as becoming familiar with more practical matters like learning road signs to help them as pedestrians and future drivers. By Year 11, pupils understand about the customs of people from a range of different races and cultures. In all activities, pupils display interest in the information they are given, present good ideas and ask sensible questions. The lessons are seen by pupils to be about real life and are valued by them. Pupils in Year 11 recalled and evaluated their efforts to produce the lunch they had planned and provided for senior citizens before Christmas. This gave them great satisfaction.
92. The size of teaching groups reduces the effectiveness of teaching in some instances, especially in relation to the support provided for less able pupils. In one class, where several pupils were absent, the improvement was immediately evident.
93. A satisfactory "first draft" of the curriculum plans is in place, as a result of the good leadership shown by the subject leader, who is now enthusiastically planning improvements based upon the teachers' experiences so far. The resources for the subject are being developed satisfactorily.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

94. Planning for design and food technology is good. Pupils achieve well in workshop skills, textiles, and food technology, because teaching is good and sometimes very good. Pupils' progress, achievements and attitudes are especially good in food technology, where they are particularly attentive, keen, and sensible. This is a good improvement since the last inspection.
95. Due to timetabling arrangements, only one lesson could be observed of pupils up to Year 6. However, analysis of a range of pupils' work and teachers' plans and records confirms that these pupils also make good progress. Pupils by the end of Year 6 have developed skills in manipulating, joining and constructing a range of resistant and mouldable materials such as fabric, clay, wood and plastic.

96. In Years 7 to 11, teachers plan and prepare their lessons very well, with well-structured activities that involve clear explanations and demonstrations at the start, and at key points through the lesson. The learning support assistants in each lesson are very capable; they have good skills in the different aspects of the subject, good awareness of the pupils' needs, and they work very well in support of the teaching. This gives pupils confidence and raises their self-esteem. In food technology, pupils learned to use the equipment safely and hygienically. They were highly motivated and watched and listened carefully. They worked carefully in pairs and manipulated utensils like knives, graters and saucepans with good effect. Although many of the design projects for pupils in Years 10 and 11 are long and complex, pupils applied themselves very well. They concentrated on the design work, were very careful in the making stages, and afterwards they evaluated how well they had done, and what they would do differently another time.
97. Teachers and learning support assistants have very positive relationships with pupils. Lessons are introduced well, ensuring that pupils know what they have to do. This, together with the good timing, ensures that pupils complete their work in the time available. A significant strength in most lessons is the way that teachers ask questions and lead discussions to encourage pupils to think for themselves. Teachers use effective strategies to manage behaviour and this ensures that pupils follow class and workshop safety rules. Staff share their enthusiasm for the subject with pupils. For example, in a very good food technology lesson at Year 11, pupils were given the opportunity to make a variety of main course meals. In a very lively and enthusiastic style, the teacher demonstrated each stage of the preparation and cooking. She allowed the pupils a lot of freedom in getting the utensils out, cutting and preparing ingredients; they achieved this well.
98. The subject is well led and managed by the two subject leaders. The subject leader for Years 7 to 11 has given very good support to the recently appointed primary subject leader. Subject plans are good and cover a wide range of skills, materials and tools, but do not include very much use of people and places outside the school. The accommodation is good, with specialist rooms that are well equipped. Resources are good, well stored and easily accessible. The school intends to extend the level of externally accredited examinations to include GCSE work. This subject makes a particularly good contribution to pupils' wider personal and social development. Pupils increase their literacy skills through following instructions and recipes and when they write their plans for design assignments.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

99. Achievements in geography are good and pupils make good progress in lessons and over time. They learn well because of consistently good teaching and because lessons are well planned. Teachers' measurement of pupils' progress is good and homework is used appropriately to extend learning. As a consequence, pupils build steadily on prior learning which gradually becomes more demanding as they move up through the school. There have been good improvements in geography since the previous inspection when many aspects of the subject were judged to be barely satisfactory.
100. By Year 6, pupils recognise and make observations about the main physical and human features of their locality and show an awareness of places beyond. They understand the purpose of buildings, such as schools and churches and make plans of real and imaginary places. They begin to use appropriate geographical vocabulary in describing why they find certain features attractive or unattractive. For

example, in a Year 4 lesson, pupils learn how maps show the features in a place and that an island is a piece of land surrounded by water. They make good progress in producing a large painted map because the teacher is well organised, routines are well established and the challenging behaviour of a few pupils is well managed. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils used secondary sources and information and communication technology to find information about a village in India. They learned to interpret an aerial map of the village because the teacher patiently identified the key features and confirmed their understanding with carefully phrased questions. One pupil had recently visited India and the teacher invited her to share her impressions. This attention raised her self-esteem. Pupils had very positive attitudes to the subject. They listened carefully, worked well in groups, shared resources, and took a pride in the presentation of their work. This contributed to their good progress in this subject.

101. By Year 9, pupils are able to compare the physical, human and economic characteristics of different countries and select information from the resources provided to inform their questions and answers. In a lesson at Year 7, the majority of pupils make good progress in learning about the different regions of the United Kingdom because the teacher makes very good use of a range of resources including atlases and an interactive white board. The computer program enables him to present a series of powerful images about well-known tourists spots, for example, the Cotswolds, Norfolk Broads and the white cliffs of Dover. This visually stimulating material helped pupils both to identify and compare one place with another and encouraged them to locate them on the map. This was a very large class with a wide range of abilities and tasks set for a range of abilities. Although behaviour was good and well managed, the needs of all pupils were not fully met. In particular, three learning support assistants were not effectively deployed or sufficiently involved in the planning, teaching and evaluation of the lesson.
102. Teaching makes good use of the school's local area, to extend and enhance pupils' learning. For example, the study of a local brook provides pupils with opportunities to measure the speed of flow, the depth and quality of water; to explore the issue of pollution and to use key words, such as 'meander' and 'curved' in their writing. In this way, teachers make meaningful links to mathematics, science, literacy and personal and social education. Appropriate use is made of the digital camera to record all these experiences. In addition, the recent earthquake in nearby Dudley has been an inspiration for extended writing on personal experiences and other work on the nature, causes and effects of earthquakes. As a result, pupils have gained a more informed empathy with the plight of earthquake victims around the world.
103. The subject leadership for geography, whilst satisfactory overall, needs to be developed further. Resources are good

## **HISTORY**

104. Achievement and progress over time are good throughout the school. The subject has been strengthened and improved since the last inspection so that it provides a relevant and adapted curriculum that is suitable to pupils of all abilities. Very good support is given to pupils' literacy skills, particularly those of speaking and listening.
105. By Year 6, pupils make good progress. In Reception and Years 1 to 3, children and pupils talked about the difference between toys they got at Christmas and those they had as a baby. They begin to understand the meaning of 'then' and 'now'.

They can recognise the distinction between past and present in their own lives. In Year 4 they learned about Egyptian hieroglyphics and knew that they are the symbols Egyptians used for writing letters of the alphabet. More able pupils showed their understanding when they wrote their own name in hieroglyphs and then translated other words such as 'pyramid' and 'pharaoh'. Less able pupils matched the hieroglyph symbols to letters. In Year 5, pupils knew what it was like to be a poor child in Victorian England. They followed the video story of a boy working on a farm and could answer the teacher's questions about the work he has to do. They described how he must have felt getting up early to milk the cows. In Year 6, pupils found out about some of the inventions of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries from posters and web-sites. They compared transport now with what it was like then. They discussed with one another and staff the modern uses for electricity and what it would have been like in the past without it.

106. By Year 9, pupils gained an understanding of what life was like in the trenches of the First World War. They read poems and stories written by soldiers who fought in the war. Less able pupils talked to staff about how it must have felt to be in the trenches. More able pupils wrote a letter home, imagining that they were a soldier on the Front Line writing to their family or wife. They searched for information about the war on a web-site. They used the facts they found there to help them when writing about the horrors of the war.
107. Teaching is never less than good and is sometimes very good and excellent. Despite the large class sizes and wide range of abilities, teaching is successful because it is well planned so that it takes into account the needs of all pupils and learning is good. Thorough preparation and the very good use of resources, together with a clear idea of what it is the pupils will learn, make lessons successful because it gives support to pupils' learning and understanding. Constant checking by teachers of what pupils know through careful questioning, high expectations of performance and effort from pupils of all abilities, sustains their interest and helps them to focus on learning. Particularly effective lessons were seen in Reception to Year 3, Year 5 and Year 9. In Reception to Year 3, pupils made good progress because planning recognised their needs and matched activities to these. In Year 5, the teacher's skilful questioning, very good use of video clips and careful grouping of pupils for written tasks ensured very good progress and learning. In Year 9 the teacher's enthusiastic approach and very good use of a range of artefacts and resources helped to stimulate pupils' imagination to produce good written work. Consequently pupils of all ages and abilities worked hard, maintained their concentration for long periods and showed very good levels of co-operation with staff, often working in pairs or small groups where they were keen to help one another
108. The subject is well led. Resources are good. There are good links with other subjects such as art and religious education. Teachers and pupils use information technology well to help pupils find out facts in history, for example, accessing information from CD-ROMS. The many visits to places of historical and cultural interest organised by staff give very good support to pupils' academic, social and cultural development.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

109. Pupils' achievement in ICT is good throughout the school. This is an improvement since the last inspection, as is the use of ICT in many other subjects. Planning for ICT meets National Curriculum requirements.

110. By Year 6, pupils knew that CD-ROMS contained a lot of information, and compared this with the information in a book. They used a drop down menu on a CD-ROM and understood that it was in alphabetical order and knew how to click with the mouse to access the information. Pupils in Year 4 made good progress in a mathematics lesson where they were introduced to the concept of using pictograms to answer simple questions. The teacher demonstrated how long it takes to cut out and glue each picture in the chart by hand and then with the computer program so that pupils understood how much quicker it was to use the computer. Pupils entered information onto the computer and they all knew how to use the mouse to click on an icon. A less able pupil made good progress when he learned to connect the number of clicks with the number of pictures produced.
111. By Year 11, pupils were able to word process documents, using the basic techniques of changing font and justifying text. They understood that things can be identified by using 'yes and no' questions. More able pupils constructed a tree diagram. They understood how to use a turtle for control work. They transmitted emails, used the Internet and an appropriate search engine. They found information in a simple database and learned about the properties of spreadsheets. For example, in a good Year 9 lesson, pupils could define cells, rows and columns and were able to identify a specific cell by its co-ordinates. All pupils were able to load the spreadsheet program on their computers and type text and numerals into specified cells. Pupils succeeded in using the "fill up" facility for days of the week and months of the year and they worked very hard using this facility for multiplication tables. Most pupils successfully follow accredited examination courses. A few more able pupils need the challenge of GCSE course work, but this is not yet available to them.
112. Teaching is good overall and consequently pupils make good progress in lessons. In a very good Year 10 lesson, the teacher used good behaviour management and knowledge of the abilities of each pupil to provide suitably challenging work for the more able pupils. Teachers are following the new curriculum plans effectively. Teachers make sure that pupils are listening and direct questions appropriately to ensure that pupils know what to do. All staff have completed the nationally recognised ICT training successfully and this is reflected in their subject knowledge and expertise in discrete ICT lessons and throughout the other subjects. Learning support assistants show good skills and are effective in helping less able pupils to achieve well. As a result of the good teaching and challenging work, pupils enjoyed their ICT lessons, behaved well and were keen to work hard.
113. Teachers make good use of ICT in all subjects. For example, the use of ICT in a Year 7 Art lesson was impressive and helped the pupils' understanding by showing the outline of a map and images of the British Isles. ICT is used well in English by less able pupils, who use programs to listen to sounds and to assist with their letter recognition. In design and technology, pupils used an ICT program to design a mirror shape and they searched the Internet for information. In history pupils searched CD-ROMs for information about ancient civilisations.
114. Teachers measure pupils' progress in using the new school database program. However, this has not been in operation long enough to reflect progress over time. Teachers use a brief assessment after each lesson, which identifies which pupils need more support. However, there is no pupil self-assessment.

115. At present there is no ICT subject leader although the school is looking to appoint one soon. One teacher looks after the school's networked system and ensures that the computers are in working order. The accommodation for ICT is unsatisfactory because it is too small for the large class groups. Resources are good and the three interactive whiteboards are used well. Staff use digital cameras well to record pupils' progress.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

116. The quality of teaching is satisfactory and as a result pupils' achievements are satisfactory. All pupils are now taught French and this reflects good improvement since the last inspection when French was not taught to Years 7 and 8.
117. By Year 9, pupils are developing a good understanding of the French language. They enthusiastically greeted teachers with "Bonjour" and responded to questions about where they live and what their name is. They recognised the names of different sports and were developing an understanding of life in France. Lessons are planned carefully to develop pupils' skills and by Year 11 pupils were aware of how to order items from a café and knew the names of different shops in France. They are encouraged to respond in French and were confident to speak to each other and the class. Younger pupils recalled vocabulary well from previous lessons although older pupils needed more encouragement to remember previous work. There are good expectations that pupils will record their work in French. As a result the majority of work is dated in French and pupils knew their numbers and the months of the year. Pupils were developing an understanding of how to ask questions and make explanations. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, pupils had to pretend that they had lost their bag and explain at a police station, where it had been lost. Pupils worked well together and practised in small groups taking on different roles. They completed written exercises based on a commercial scheme well; their work was neat and well presented.
118. The teacher is a non-specialist, but works very hard to use spoken French as much as possible. Pupils record what they say and listen to each other well. Humour and praise are used effectively to develop pupils' self-esteem and confidence. However, the use of learning support assistants is not always effective. For younger pupils, for example those in Year 8, a good working relationship ensures that pupils are well supported. However, in Year 11 those pupils with additional special needs are not always well supported because of the large size of the classes.
119. Resources are adequate to meet the needs of the present curriculum. The subject leader recognises that there is a need to increase the use of ICT in teaching French. The subject gives good support to pupils' cultural development.

## **MUSIC**

120. No formal music lessons were observed during the inspection. Discussions with staff and an analysis of their records and planning show that the situation remains similar to that at the last inspection in that pupils of all ages make at least satisfactory progress, as the result of satisfactory teaching. A satisfactory curriculum remains in place and the subject continues to be taught by class teachers, who are, with one exception, not music specialists.
121. Pupils follow a satisfactory range of planned topics that begin for the youngest pupils aged up to 7 years with the exploration of sounds and early identification of

pace and rhythm. Pupils aged between 7 and 11 years explored this further by experiencing the sounds made by a variety of different types of instrument. However, the singing lessons provided for the first two classes take time away from their timetable allocation for music, leaving their class teachers very little time to engage them in the planned topics for their age group. By the age of 14, pupils were creating their own sounds using a range of instruments and could appreciate music from a range of different cultures representing various genres. There is a school choir that is taught by a volunteer. However, the timing of the choir lessons causes disruption to other classes as it takes pupils away from their usual lessons.

122. Since the last inspection the school has lost, and has so far been unable to replace, its subject leader for music. Consequently the leadership of the subject across the whole school is unsatisfactory. However, a teacher has been designated recently to be responsible for the subject for Year R to Year 7. Teachers continue to teach their own classes. The pupils in Years 7 to Year 9 do not enjoy the benefit of a specialist teacher, nor do they have the use of a room set aside and equipped satisfactorily for teaching music lessons. The resources available for teaching the subject are unsatisfactory.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

123. Pupils' progress and achievement are good by Year 6, but only satisfactory overall by Year 11. There has been some improvement since the previous inspection in the learning opportunities for pupils aged five to eleven, for example, in dance and outdoor adventurous activities such as canoeing and sailing. Those for older pupils between twelve and sixteen have been somewhat reduced by the lack of opportunities for swimming and little opportunity for activities such as leisure and outdoor pursuits.
124. By Year 6, pupils make good progress in swimming. Their confidence in the water has increased from taking part in the regular weekly lessons and more able pupils could float and propel themselves on front and back and were beginning to develop strokes. A few could swim 25 metres, whilst others made progress through a nationally recognised swimming award scheme. Less able pupils listened to instructions well, bent their knees and climbed out of the pool without support. In sensory movement lessons younger pupils, up to Year 3, experienced the sensations of rocking, rolling and turning. They knew slow and fast, and followed carefully what they were asked to do, for example, making their fingers dance along their feet, or shutting their eyes, wriggling their noses, tapping their cheeks. Older pupils in Year 6 learned different jumps in gymnastics, such as standing and push jumps. More able pupils described and commented on their own and other pupils' performances; copied, repeated and explored simple actions with control and co-ordination Pupils knew how to exercise safely. Less able pupils were given opportunities to achieve at their own pace and level. All pupils worked happily in pairs, helping and encouraging each other. They made a good physical effort and behaviour was good. Every pupil knew about the importance of warm-up and cooling down exercises and all helped to clear equipment from the hall at the end of the lesson.
125. By Year 11, progress is satisfactory. No lessons were seen at Years 11 or 10, but the pattern of the curriculum is very similar to that for Years 7 to 9 and teachers'

records show similar levels of achievement. In a gymnastics lesson, Year 8 pupils knew how to create shapes with their bodies showing some co-ordination and dexterity. More able pupils made shapes in three dimensions. All pupils listened well and carried out instructions carefully. They co-operated fully with staff, worked hard, concentrated well and had a positive approach. In Year 9, pupils took part in a circuit training session. Although there was some initial reluctance to begin with, they seemed to understand the importance of exercise and finally engaged successfully in various repetitions of squat thrusts, bench steps, short sprints and other simple activities to build up their stamina. A few less able pupils struggled to keep up with their fitter counterparts and the activities were not best suited to their needs.

126. Teaching is good throughout the school. Staff know pupils' abilities and generally cater for them well, although occasionally less able pupils are not planned for as effectively as they might be. Teachers engage pupils' interest through an enthusiastic approach, by setting clear targets for achievement and by high expectations of participation and effort. There is good use made of praise and encouragement. Management of behaviour is very good. Many of these qualities were present in a very good gymnastics lessons for Year 8 where all pupils but one were successfully engaged. The teacher quietly gave the reluctant pupil encouragement, with opportunities to re-engage with the activities, making no fuss or overreaction to his refusal to participate fully, but at the same time clear indications that he was expected to do what all the other pupils were doing. These methods worked well and he rejoined the group and completed the tasks given. In a sensory movement lesson for Reception to Year 3, the teacher effectively used symbol cards together with clear instructions and demonstrations to engage pupils' attention. The help of learning support staff and other adults was used well to guide pupils in the activities.
127. The subject leader for pupils up to Year 6, provides very good leadership with good measurement of the effectiveness of teaching and learning, together with new ideas such as those for sensory movement activities with younger children. Leadership for older pupils up to Year 11 is satisfactory, but constraints on the time of the subject leader and those of the school timetable have reduced the overall breadth of the programme offered to pupils and, therefore, some of its impact. There is good support from the subject for pupils' social development and literacy skills, particularly for speaking and listening skills. Resources are satisfactory, but there is too little use made of specialist equipment for less able pupils. The school hall/gymnasium is unsuitable for secondary age pupils.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

128. Pupils of all ages and abilities achieve well and make very good progress. This is because of the consistently at least good and often very good teaching, high expectations for pupils to learn and achieve, and because of pupils' own positive attitudes and very good behaviour. There have been significant improvements in all aspects of the subject since the last inspection but particularly in teaching and learning.
129. By Year 6, pupils were developing their knowledge and understanding of Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Sikhism, which are all represented by faith communities in Wolverhampton and in the school. They made very good progress because teachers presented activities that were relevant, motivating and well

matched to their interests and abilities. In addition, pupils were offered good opportunities to reflect upon, and respond to, a range of experiences.

130. In a Reception to Year 3 lesson, for example, the very youngest pupils gave an amazingly mature and well-ordered presentation to the whole school on the importance of sharing, by acting out the story of 'The Selfish Crocodile'. Lots of practice and thorough preparation beforehand ensured that pupils knew what was expected of them. While the teacher played a leading role by reading and linking the story, the pupils' level of participation was excellent - taking on the role of jungle creatures with stick masks, marching in time to percussion around the hall, and dancing and moving in time to the music in celebration of the crocodile's recovery.
131. In a Year 5 lesson, pupils began to understand that stories often contain inner meanings and messages through sharing the parable of the 'Prodigal Son'. The good use of questions gave pupils the opportunity to express opinions and understand the idea of forgiveness. A simple lighted candle and darkened room gave pupils the opportunity to reflect on personal experiences. The teacher prompted them to think of things they have done that they regret, and they spontaneously shared their own most recent wrongdoing with each other. Pupils in Year 7 learned about sacred texts; pupils in Year 9 considered their own and different religious responses to accidental, natural and intentional suffering.
132. By Year 11, pupils have consolidated their knowledge and understanding of world religions, practices and values, including Judaism and Buddhism, and were able to think more clearly for themselves about religion. They continued their work on the significance of Christian festivals. They made very good progress because there is considerable strength in the teachers' subject knowledge and in the range of teaching strategies used - explanations, questioning, discussion, drama, role play and a variety of worksheets matched to pupils' needs. Teachers always introduce lessons well by telling pupils what they will learn. However, because of very large classes, the quality of individual support and small group work suffers. Pupils in Year 11, work towards accredited courses through the ASDAN 'Transition Challenge'.
133. Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well and their positive use of praise raises self-esteem and encourages them to respond more readily. Relationships are excellent and this contributes to a purposeful and productive ethos in most lessons. Resources for the subject are good and teachers make effective use of artefacts, video extracts, the overhead projector and religious art to enhance and extend learning. Progress and achievement are appropriately reviewed and celebrated at the end of lessons.
134. Teachers make deliberate links to other subjects; to PSHE, art and design, history, geography and citizenship. Literacy skills are continually reinforced with numerous opportunities for pupils to present their feelings and ideas verbally and in writing and through the regular emphasis on key words. ICT is used appropriately to enhance pupils' skills of religious enquiry and to record experiences through the use of the digital camera.
135. An analysis of pupils' work shows they benefit from a programme of visits to churches, mosques and temples and from a variety of visitors to school from different faiths. Pupils celebrate different religious festivals, for example Diwali, and take part in Wolverhampton Multi-Faith Celebration Service. Religious education lessons reflect the school ethos well and clearly make a very good contribution to

pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils' learning in religious education is extended by appropriately set homework in line with the school policy.

136. The whole school subject leader provides very good leadership and has produced an effective curriculum plan that corresponds to the locally agreed syllabus and supports teachers well in their planning.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION (PSHE)**

137. Pupils' achievement and progress is good across the school. There is a close relationship to the work-related curriculum, citizenship and careers education. This represents an improved situation since the previous inspection when PSHE was not taught in formal lessons. The curriculum plans suitably include both sex education, relationships and also drugs education.
138. By Year 6, pupils have made good progress in the development of social behaviour. They have learned about their bodies, a healthy diet, exercise and the importance of good manners and living by the rules. They have also learned how to keep themselves safe. For example, pupils in Year 5 begin to understand possible dangers around them. They used very good communication skills when they told a story of something they had done which was dangerous, such as running over the road. The teacher encouraged the pupils to write their own safety song in the style of 'rap music'. Pupils enjoyed this challenge and therefore responded very well and made very good progress.
139. By Year 11, pupils understand about different emotions, behaviour linked to different roles, a healthy diet and the importance of exercise. They discussed road safety and the risks of smoking, alcohol and drugs. They considered different cultures and what constitutes racist behaviour. As part of sex education, pupils learned about hormonal and body changes, contraception and becoming a parent. In Years 10 and 11, more emphasis is put upon preparing for adult life, making choices and planning for the future.
140. The quality of teaching in PSHE lessons is good overall. During a lesson with Years R to 3, there was excellent management of pupils as they learned to listen to others and to take turns in speaking. The teacher used very good questioning, reinforced by PECs symbols, to help pupils to say how different people help them. In some lessons in Years 7 to 11, pupils were expected to discuss a topic for too long and this lack of variety of activity led to them losing interest and becoming unresponsive. There were too few opportunities for the pupils to write about what they have learnt; where older pupils have produced neat and thoughtful written work, some is incorrect and a large amount is unmarked.
141. The leadership of the subject is satisfactory. Pupils' achievements are accredited through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). The school uses the community to help with some aspects of PSHE. During the drug awareness week, two visitors worked with all classes informing them about legal and illegal drugs and warning them of the dangers of aerosols and alcohol. A local policeman came to assembly to talk about bullying and its effects

