

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **Dawn House School**

Rainworth, Mansfield

LEA area: Nottinghamshire

Unique reference number: 122956

Headteacher: Dr Jeff Wardle

Lead inspector: Steven Parker

Dates of inspection: 24<sup>th</sup> – 27<sup>th</sup> January 2005

Inspection number: 268554

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

© Crown copyright 2005

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Non-maintained
Age range of pupils:	5 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	84
School address:	Helmsley Road Rainworth Mansfield Nottinghamshire
Postcode:	NG21 0DQ
Telephone number:	01623 795361
Fax number:	01623 491173
Appropriate authority:	The proprietor of the school, I CAN
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Sean Nesbitt
Date of previous inspection:	5 <sup>th</sup> July 1999

## **CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL**

Dawn House School is a non-maintained day and residential special school for pupils aged between five and 19 who have severe and/or complex speech, language and communication difficulties. A small post 16 department has just been opened in the current academic year, as the result of recent approval by the Department for Education and Skills (DFES). It is planned that this department should grow rapidly to accommodate pupils from the current large Year 11 in Autumn 2005. The school is one of two owned and run by the national charity, I CAN. Both schools provide a programme of integrated therapy, education and care, through a highly structured multi-professional approach. All pupils at Dawn House have Statements of Special Educational Need and are funded by 35 local education authorities, spread over the whole UK mainland. There are currently 84 pupils on roll, of whom three quarters are boys. This is a ratio commonly found in such schools, and reflects the national picture in relation to the significant proportion of pupils in the school who have one or more additional needs, such as moderate learning difficulties, dyspraxia, dyslexia, emotional fragility, autistic traits or challenging behaviour. The latter of these is becoming more prevalent. Pupils are referred to the school throughout the primary and secondary age range and numbers are consequently uneven across the year groups. The great majority of pupils are of white UK heritage and none are identified as having English as an additional language. The attainment of pupils on entry is low. Over half the pupils benefit from opportunities provided in the residential setting. This aspect of the school has been subject to inspection on an annual basis, previously by the National Care Standards Commission (NCSC) and very recently by the Commission for Social Care Standards (CSCI).

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
13033	Steven Parker	Lead inspector	French, art and design, design and technology, music, physical education.
32676	Nicolas Power	Lay inspector	
29452	Christine Emerson	Team inspector	Science, history, geography.
32244	Barbara Mole	Team inspector	English, religious education.
23412	Alvin Jeffs	Team inspector	Mathematics, information and communication technology, personal, social and health education and citizenship

The inspection contractor was:

Altecq Inspections Ltd  
102 Bath Road  
Cheltenham  
GL53 7JX

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be made initially to the inspection contractor. The procedures are set out in the leaflet '*Complaining about Ofsted Inspections*', which is available from Ofsted Publications Centre (telephone 07002 637833) or Ofsted's website ([www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)).

## **REPORT CONTENTS**

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE MAIN INSPECTION FINDINGS</b>	
<b>STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS</b>	<b>8</b>
Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses	
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	
<b>QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL</b>	<b>10</b>
Teaching and learning	
The curriculum	
Care, guidance and support	
Partnership with parents, other schools and the community	
<b>LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS</b>	<b>31</b>

## PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

Dawn House is a **very effective** school, where teaching and learning are very good. As a result, pupils make very impressive progress in developing their speech, language and communication skills, as well as in their personal and social development, fulfilling the school's primary aims to very good effect. The extremely committed headteacher has had a significant improving impact on the school since he was appointed in September 2003. He works in a very successful partnership with his highly supportive senior management colleagues. Parents' considerable confidence and satisfaction are clearly well founded. The school provides very good value for money.

### The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Exemplary collaborative teamwork between teachers, learning support assistants, speech and language and other therapists and care staff, which very successfully promotes pupils' ability to communicate and become confident and mature young adults.
- The headteacher's excellent leadership that inspires and motivates his colleagues to work with him to achieve his very clear vision for the school's future success.
- There is a very tangible commitment to including all pupils in activities, the promotion of equal opportunities and meeting the needs of each individual pupil.
- Pupils' outstanding attitudes, behaviour and social skills, which are the result of highly positive and thoughtfully structured support that always seeks to encourage their independence.
- Wide ranging, extremely relevant learning opportunities, which include much valued residential education, very high quality provision at a local further education college for older pupils and enriching use of sport, music and the wider community.
- Very successful links with parents and carers enable close and purposeful working partnerships between home and school.
- Formal procedures to demonstrate how well pupils are progressing over time in subjects of the curriculum and to help in the planning of their future work require further development.
- There is a need to further develop links with local mainstream schools, so that more pupils have the opportunity to participate in inclusive educational activity.

The school has achieved good improvements since its previous inspection. The rate of pupils' progress in English and mathematics between Years 7 and 9 has been raised and strategies for teaching speaking and listening, comprehension, grammar, handwriting and spelling are now applied consistently across the school. The teaching of music for pupils in Years 7 to 9 has been fully re-established. There is now significantly improved equipment, software and training for teaching information and communication technology (ICT) and it is used to better effect in other subjects, although there is still room for further improvement.

### STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 6	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Very good</b>
Year 9	<b>Good</b>	<b>Very good</b>
Year 11	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Very good</b>
Year 13	<b>Very good</b>	<b>Very good</b>

*Inspectors make judgements in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor.*

Achievement is **very good** overall, particularly for the school's main educational focus. All pupils make very good, and, in many cases, excellent progress, in the development of their ability to communicate effectively. They consequently achieve very impressive improvements in their personal and social skills and self confidence. There are no variations in achievements or progress for individuals or pupils with particular needs, because all staff are committed to including all pupils

successfully in all activities. Achievements for pupils in Years 7 to 9 are slightly lower than in the rest of the school. Progress is consistently very good in all aspects of English, where the dedicated, collaborative multi-professional team is at its most effective. Progress is very good in mathematics and good in science and ICT. Many pupils excel in physical education. Pupils get off to an especially good start across all subjects in the primary department and then achieve very creditable results at 16 in a wide range of relevant externally accredited courses. Pupils' spiritual moral and social development is **very good** and their cultural development is good. This results in there being a harmonious and productive atmosphere, in which pupils feel highly valued, making them very well prepared for life after school. Attitudes to school and learning are very positive and behaviour is very good, especially when considering the difficulties associated with significant impaired communication. Attendance is good.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION**

The school provides **very high quality** education, enabling all pupils to learn very successfully. Teaching is **very good**. Its most important strength is that planning for and delivery of all lessons incorporates detailed targets for speech and language, resulting from the exemplary assessment approaches of therapists. Assessment arrangements for subjects of the curriculum are not quite up to this very high standard, but are, nevertheless, still good. The very good curriculum benefits from similar appropriate adaptation and focused priorities to meet the needs of all pupils. Care, welfare and guidance are very effective, always taking full account of pupils' views. Residential provision is of a very high quality. Pupils work and play in a safe and attractive environment, where relationships are positive and highly supportive. Many recent, high quality improvements have been made to the accommodation. Detailed plans are in place to continue with these, right across the school. There are very successful partnerships with parents, a local college and the wider community. The school recognizes the need to develop its links with local mainstream schools.

## **LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT**

Leadership and management are **very good**. The headteacher provides outstanding leadership. He is ambitious for the school to be even more successful with its core activities, and, to this end, has recently successfully negotiated Department for Education approval for post 16 provision. The highly successful, multidisciplinary senior management team is working very effectively to establish and deliver a clear plan for developing the school into a regional specialist centre. All this change is being very sensitively managed, in close collaboration with the governing body and the I CAN executive and trustees. All staff have a very clear picture of the school's strengths and necessary areas for improvement because of their close involvement in very thorough evaluation and planning processes. Governance of the school is good.

## **PARENTS AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

Parents are very happy with the work of the school and the often substantial impact that it has had on their children's capabilities and self esteem. They feel very involved in their children's education, despite the often long distances between home and school. Pupils are very ready to express their high levels of satisfaction. They particularly appreciate the sensitive pastoral care they receive from all staff and the wide range of engaging and enjoyable activities that are available to them.

## **IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED**

The most important things the school should do to improve are:

- Further develop the existing good assessment arrangements, including marking and moderation arrangements, to ensure consistency of practice, improve the school's ability to plan for individuals and groups and demonstrate pupils' progress over time in subjects of the curriculum;
- Substantially increase the range of projects with local mainstream schools in order to increase flexibility in individual programmes.

Both these development points are well covered in the current very good school improvement plan.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS**

### **STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS**

#### **Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses**

Achievement is **very good overall** for all pupils, irrespective of age, special educational need or gender.

#### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- All pupils make rapid progress, often from a very unpromising start.
- The most significant achievements are in speech, language and communication and personal and social skills.
- Results in exams are very good.

#### **Commentary**

1. The youngest pupils often arrive with poor communication skills, limited personal and social skills and related delay in their overall learning. They get off to a flying start because their needs are very thoroughly assessed. This supports very good teaching by the whole staff team in the primary department, together with highly focused support and encouragement. The curriculum is very carefully structured to combine appropriate individual targets with comprehensive coverage of National Curriculum subjects so that each pupil is presented with work that matches their age and ability. As a result, they achieve very well in everything that they do, their success being firmly rooted in the very impressive progress they make in developing their speaking, listening and communication skills. Pupils who have been in the school for a long time have clearly benefited enormously from this solid foundation for their future learning.
2. Most pupils are referred to the school at a later stage, some well into their secondary studies, and this provides a significant challenge for staff. This means that achievements in Years 7 to 9 are not quite up to the rate of progress in other parts of the school. Nonetheless, pupils do make good progress and, following this period, many pupils in Years 10 and 11 find themselves thinking realistically about gaining GCSEs or other externally accredited qualifications and, perhaps, going on to further education, often against their original expectations. One parent, clearly speaking for many others summed this situation up by saying 'I can now believe that he has a future'. The reality is that pupils achieve very creditable results in GCSE, Entry Level Certificates and the Bronze Youth Award Scheme in a wide range of subjects, preparing them very well for the next stage of their education or training when they leave school. There are very detailed plans in place, with an appropriate curriculum and assessment arrangements, to ensure that pupils who go on to the post 16 department will have similar opportunities for accrediting their achievements. There are already clear signs that these older pupils are likely to achieve comparable success to their younger peers.
3. Whenever pupils start at the school, the same thorough, multi professional approach is employed as in the primary department to structure their learning, with a major focus on improving their communication capabilities. Consequently, their progress is very good in all aspects of English and this then has a major impact on their self confidence, so that they consequently make very significant progress in their personal and social development. Achievement in mathematics is very good, and good in the other core subjects of science and ICT. Pupils' progress in music is very good and very impressive in physical education, resulting in school teams achieving considerable success in County competitions in a very wide range of sports.
4. Individual education plans (IEPS) are very carefully written, effectively involving pupils and their parents in the process, to provide challenging but achievable targets, and motivating pupils very

successfully to succeed. Whole school targets are equally rigorous to ensure good and often very good results in statutory and other assessments.

5. There has been good improvement in all aspects of progress and achievement since the last inspection.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities**

Pupils' attitudes to the school, their behaviour and their spiritual, moral and social development are **very good**. Their appreciation of their own and others' cultures is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils develop very positive attitudes to the school, work and succeeding in all that they do.
- The progress in pupils' confidence and self-esteem could not be better.
- Pupils develop very good relationships with staff and other pupils alike.
- Pupils develop very well as individuals, being able to appreciate and accept others well.
- Pupils demonstrate very good progress in social awareness and, by fourteen, are well able to participate in life and college beyond the school.

### **Commentary**

6. When entering the school most pupils have had negative experiences of education and often behave and react accordingly. This negativity soon disappears and all pupils were keen to tell the inspection team how much they enjoy school. Many now arrive early and take part in a wide range of after-school activities. As a result of this development, pupils progress extremely well in confidence and self-esteem. It is the overriding strength of the school that pupils quickly develop a very positive image of themselves. This, in turn, provides a sound basis for learning and for pupils to mature. The inspection team was able to see this in the comparison between some pupils recently arrived in the school and those who had been pupils for some while. Those pupils interviewed indicated that they had written themselves off, but were now more confident and willing to work with others, take part in social activities, such as sport and performance, and tackle individual challenges such as college and work experience.
7. The accepting atmosphere within school and the willingness of all staff to be there for pupils, whatever their problems, ensures that very good, productive relationships develop between staff and pupils. In this context, the high expectations expressed by care and classroom staff alike, relating to both conduct and academic achievement, are seen as fair and motivating by pupils. Professional visitors to the school testify to the maturity that pupils develop as a result of this. The school has a very positive reputation for the fairness its pupils demonstrate on the sports field and for their enthusiasm and commitment in work experience settings.
8. The very successful way in which staff respond to pupils' experience of suffering self-doubt and the loss of confidence often associated with language difficulties provides a very good model of helpful attitudes. This is taken up by the pupils themselves and its success is clear in the way that they support each other and accept periods of unhappiness. In one good Year 9 ICT lesson, a pupil struggled for some while to make a response to the teacher. None of his peers made any comment or lost interest. There was a strong feeling that they had been there and knew what it was like; a very important quality that assists in the rounded personalities that most pupils develop.
9. The school is successful at fostering a spiritual quality in pupils, both in the valuing of others, but, above all, in the celebration of others for who they are, rather than what they can do. This is consolidated by opportunities, in assemblies and within pastoral lessons, to reflect on issues within their own lives and the world in general. Pupils' initiative in raising money for charity is a very good example. Lessons provide good opportunities for pupils to understand the clear rules

for behaviour and how best to work in pairs and small groups. Turn taking, sensible speaking and listening and a wish to contribute are well developed and reinforced by all staff.

10. Although pupils have good opportunities to discuss and study other faiths and their own and others' cultures, this is an area that is not fully realised. Not enough opportunities are taken to meet, visit and research why different people live and celebrate their lives in so many different ways.

11. Pupils clearly enjoy coming to school, but some pupils do not always arrive promptly for lessons. Behaviour across the school is very good, because any difficulties or challenges are very quickly and effectively dealt with by all staff. Whilst there were 12 fixed period and one permanent exclusion during the last reporting year, which were in response to violent and aggressive behaviour, and the pupils were excluded to protect the safety of others, no pupils have been excluded during the current academic year. This is because considerable investment has been made in developing staff skills and confidence to fulfil the requirements of the very well thought out policy for behaviour management and pupils are highly motivated by the rewards that encourage appropriate behaviour.

## Exclusions

### 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	84	12	1

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

## Attendance

Attendance is good and punctuality is **satisfactory**.

### Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	4.4	School data	0.5
National data	n/a	National data	n/a

*The table gives the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.*

## QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides **very high quality** education. Teaching and learning are very good. The curriculum is very good. Care, guidance and support are very good. Partnership with parents and the community are very good and links with other schools are good.

### Teaching and learning

Teaching and learning are **very good**. Assessment and its use are **good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers, speech and language therapists, learning support staff and care staff work extremely effectively together in seamless teams to ensure that all pupils learn very well.

- Lessons are very carefully planned and incorporate detailed targets to enable pupils to develop their language and communication skills.
- Pupils are highly motivated and keen to learn because they have very good relationships with members of staff, and lessons are interesting.
- Although pupils are assessed very thoroughly, there are not yet robust procedures in place to ensure consistency in marking and assessment or to analyse information generated.
- The school is very skilled at matching work set and lesson delivery to the age and interests of pupils.
- Teachers make very good use of the interactive whiteboards to promote pupils' learning.

## Commentary

12. There has been good improvement in teaching since the previous inspection. In particular, the planning for lessons to incorporate detailed targets for speech and language has significantly improved. Teachers and support staff work very closely together to plan and deliver lessons. Support staff are very effectively deployed, so that pupils are given just the right amount of help. All staff are very clear about their respective roles and about what they are trying to achieve with individual pupils. Consequently, all pupils, including those with additional special needs such as autistic spectrum disorder, are fully included in lessons and achieve very well.
13. Lessons are very carefully planned to ensure that pupils' personal, social, language and communication skills are promoted in all subjects and courses. This means that pupils' primary special educational needs are very effectively addressed. A particular strength of the planning is the very detailed speech and language targets which are drawn up by the speech and language therapists and woven very skilfully into all lessons. The targets are introduced to the pupils at the beginning of lessons and they are given constant reminders of how well they are doing in target areas as lessons progress. Led by the speech and language therapists, all staff use every opportunity to develop pupils' speech and language skills. An example of this was in an excellent science lesson for pupils in Year 7, where the speech and language therapist and the teacher asked probing questions to help pupils to organise and communicate their ideas about the Solar System. The teacher then repeated the pupils' answers clearly so that all pupils could understand. Meanwhile, a pupil with severe speech and language difficulties was given excellent support by the speech and language therapist so that he was able to use an augmentative communication device very effectively and take a full part in the class discussion.
14. Because teachers and support staff have very good relationships with the pupils, they are very successful in using strategies such as humour to motivate them. The strong relationships and consistent use of clear and well drawn up behavioural plans ensure that incidents of difficult behaviour are dealt with quickly and effectively. Consequently, there is a happy and purposeful learning ethos in lessons and pupils achieve their individual learning targets. Teaching methods are very well matched to the age and particular needs of the pupils. For example, pupils in the primary class are taught important skills, such as how to join in a discussion, appreciate the contribution which others make to it and take turns in speaking. Staff are very aware of the need to support pupils to become independent learners. This is particularly noticeable in the post 16 department, where students are treated as young adults. They respond very well to this. For example, in a lesson to learn how to administer first aid, most pupils were extremely self assured, mature and sensible.
15. Teachers are skilled at using the new interactive whiteboards to help pupils understand topics and to make lessons interesting and fun. Primary aged pupils focus well when the teacher uses the whiteboard to highlight their individual targets. Pupils enjoy using the whiteboards and this motivates them very well. An example of this was when a Year 11 pupil worked with the teacher to create a graph to show the results of an experiment to investigate the effects of force on a spring. The pupil was fascinated by the whiteboard and he made very good progress in learning how to draw and interpret graphs. The majority of lessons are taught at a good pace with well timed activities. However, in a small number of lessons the pace of a few activities can be too slow. Where this happens a few pupils lose focus, and learning time is lost. Work carried out in

school is consolidated well through homework which pupils undertake in the residence or in their homes.

16. Pupils are assessed very thoroughly and information obtained is used very effectively to plan lessons and set individual targets. Before they are admitted to the school, all pupils undergo a very comprehensive multidisciplinary assessment to enable the school to determine how best to meet their needs. This is then followed up by further assessment when the pupils have settled in. All aspects of pupils' progress are monitored. For example, the play therapist prepares reports to assess the progress of those pupils who attend play therapy sessions. The assessments which are carried out with all pupils by the speech and language therapists are exemplary. Pupils are assessed very regularly, drawing from a comprehensive range of specialist tests, and information obtained is used to set precise speech and language targets. Very effective assessment strategies are in place in English, including tests to measure pupils' progress in reading. Information gained through assessment is used to set accurate and measurable targets in pupils' individual education plans (IEPs). The school prepares very high quality and detailed reports for annual reviews, which include an assessment of pupils' levels in the attainment targets of the National Curriculum in all subjects taught. Pupils are involved well in evaluating their own progress towards their personal and social targets. In particular, they help to set and monitor how well they do in their 'worth a mention' (WAM) targets in the twice daily pastoral sessions. There are good examples of ongoing assessment in lessons. For example, in a Year 7 mathematics lesson, a learning support assistant noted down how well particular pupils were achieving the class target of 'active listening'. Several times during the lesson, the teacher asked the assistant to show the pupils the tally chart she was making. This was an effective strategy in involving the pupils in monitoring their own behaviour and inspiring them to try harder.

17. The school has recently introduced a well regarded commercial scheme (B-Squared) for assessing pupils' progress in the different subjects of the curriculum. However, the collection of data is not yet sufficiently advanced for the school to use the computer software to analyse the results to set whole school targets and compare the progress of different groups of pupils. The marking policy is under review. At the moment, pupils' work is not always marked to show when work was completed and the amount of support pupils' required. This makes it harder to evaluate the progress which the pupils are making. Although some work gives very helpful feedback to pupils, teachers do not always clearly explain in their marking what the pupils can do to improve. At the present time, the school does not have collections of assessed work to guide teachers' assessments. The headteacher is acutely aware of what the school needs to do to improve assessment and has drawn up very realistic and appropriate targets in the school improvement plan.

**Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 45 lessons**

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3 (7%)	17 (38%)	23 (51%)	2 (4%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

**The curriculum**

The curriculum is **very good**, with a wide range of enrichment opportunities. Resources for learning are very good, but the accommodation for several subjects and sport needs updating.

**Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The school provides a very good range of subjects and courses, with improved accreditation opportunities for pupils in Year 11.

- The curriculum meets the needs of the whole range of pupils, including those with additional special needs.
- The curriculum promotes pupils' personal development very well.
- Opportunities for extra activities beyond the school day are very good.
- Some aspects of the accommodation require updating.
- Opportunities to share curriculum activities with pupils in mainstream schools are underdeveloped.

## Commentary

19. The school has continued to develop the curriculum and accreditation opportunities well since the last inspection. Up-dated schemes of work provide for a wide range of motivating learning activities with an appropriate bias towards language and communication. The pastoral programme, sport, and English and drama are particular strengths. Regular 'theme days' are planned, often led by learning support assistants. These opportunities for creative learning, freed from the restrictions of the normal timetable, are greatly enjoyed by the pupils. For example, an 'Olympics' theme day was based on the recent Olympic Games. Each class was allocated a country and a sport to research. An all-day marathon and quiz involved all pupils and, at the end of the day, each class reported back to the rest of the school, when prizes were awarded for good research and team-work.
20. An improved range of accreditation opportunities is available. During the last two years of compulsory schooling, pupils study for Entry levels, GCSEs and the Youth Award Scheme which can be awarded at different levels. Pupils gain an award which recognises their skills and abilities, providing a good foundation for further study at college. Post 16 students spend half their time in a local college of further education, supported by staff from Dawn House. During the previous two years they have visited the college and taken part in 'taster' courses to prepare them for making an informed choice of future study options with the help of the Connexions adviser. During their time back at school they have separate, high quality, purpose built study facilities, where they work to consolidate their learning and continue to improve literacy and numeracy.
21. The school provides very good, targeted support for pupils who have additional special needs. For example, story boards are used to help pupils with autistic spectrum disorder to cope with changes, such as visits to college, and an occupational therapist is normally available to support pupils with dyspraxia, for example with hand-writing. This post is currently vacant, but a new appointment is expected imminently.
22. Excellent partnerships, particularly between teaching staff and speech and language therapists, ensure that pupils' progress is continually and effectively promoted in all aspects of the curriculum. The curriculum affords many opportunities for pupils to excel, enhancing their confidence and self-esteem. For example the excellent sports programme ensures that pupils experience a competitive environment; pastoral sessions are planned and used effectively to support personal and social development and the drama programme also provides a wealth of opportunities for personal growth. The resources within the local community could be used more fully to support the humanities curriculum.
23. The curriculum is often enriched by whole-school events, such as World Book Day, and visits made in support of learning, such as the visit to Eyam to find out more about the plague. Outside speakers contribute to the pastoral curriculum, such as a representative from the RNIB and from The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds. There are many and varied opportunities for pupils to develop their interests outside of the school day, for example lunch-time clubs operate each day and include table tennis, ICT, art club or board games. A computer club is available after school. Pupils who are resident at the school may visit a local snooker club, attend Sunday school, or participate in a wealth of other activities, according to their interests.

24. Whilst the majority of the school building is fit for purpose, some teaching areas are in need of updating. These include facilities for teaching design technology, art and design and drama. The school's plans to modernise the sporting and outdoor facilities are highly appropriate. The music room has undergone recent refurbishment and now provides a much better facility. Learning resources are generally good throughout the curriculum. The school has made a good level of investment in computer equipment and plans to purchase more interactive whiteboards.
25. There are limited opportunities available for pupils to work with their mainstream peers, although, again, the school recognises this and has appropriate plans in place to extend these. During the inspection, a group of Year 11 pupils fed back their recent experience of visiting a local comprehensive school. This raised many issues for the other pupils, which were discussed in the pastoral session following the assembly, thus raising their awareness of what they might expect and helping to prepare them.

### **Care, guidance and support**

The school gives its pupils **very good** support, advice and guidance and ensures their care and welfare very successfully. The school seeks, values and acts on pupils' views very effectively.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils are very well involved in the life, work and development of the school.
- Relationships at all levels within the school mean that pupils receive very good guidance and support.
- The school's arrangements for helping pupils to settle into their school are very good.

### **Commentary**

26. Pupils are confident that they can talk to adults, and all adults are sensitive to the needs of every pupil. Individual education plans and care plans are thorough and identify clearly the help that pupils need. The handovers between school and care staff at the beginning and end of the day are well managed, so that any difficulties encountered by pupils during the day or night are dealt with sensitively after the handover. The school places a high importance on ensuring that pupils are safe. All staff, permanent or temporary, teaching or non-teaching have received detailed training in child protection. Risk assessments of the site, visits and risks associated with the curriculum are thorough. Any problems identified in the day-to-day running of the premises are quickly dealt with by the highly efficient premises manager. The very good care surrounding pupils means that they are able to focus on their learning and development. They were certainly very ready to express their considerable appreciation of the consistently sensitive and encouraging support they receive from everyone at the school.
27. The school values the views of pupils and encourages them to share their thoughts. They are involved in shaping the life and development of the school. The school council is effective in giving all pupils a voice and staff (including the senior management team) regularly seek their views through discussion and assemblies. A recent success has been the establishment of a Year 11 common room as a result of seeking pupils' views. Pupils feel valued and enjoy helping their school to develop.
28. All staff know the pupils very well and have very good relationships with them and the guidance and support that they receive is very good. When they need to, pupils are able to make use of a good range of high quality support staff. As an example, a number of pupils have difficulties in modifying their behaviour due to the frustration caused by poor communication skills. This is dealt with in a number of ways, including referral to the learning mentor or play therapist. Specific targets relating to behaviour are set and closely monitored with the young person, and all staff concerned are aware of these and often refer to them, using praise judiciously when appropriate.

29. Pupils settle very quickly into life at school as a result of thorough, tailored induction programmes and highly sensitive, individualised support.

## **RESIDENTIAL EDUCATION**

Residential provision is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils benefit from very good individualised support and guidance.
- Productive partnerships between care and education staff ensure that there is very good continuity of learning for all pupils.
- All the accommodation is being upgraded to a very high quality.
- Current systems for information exchange between care and school staff are under review to ensure greater efficiency.

### **Commentary**

30. Annual Social Services inspections have consistently judged this provision to be of high quality and this inspection was able to concur fully with that view. Over half the pupils attend school on a residential basis, either weekly or fortnightly. Each pupil is assigned a key worker who has an overview of their development in the care setting. They are responsible for compiling the pupils' detailed care plan, which integrates very well with their individual education plan. The key workers liaise very well with the rest of an assigned core team, consisting of a teacher, learning support assistant and speech and language therapist, to ensure that the pupil experiences well integrated support across both the care and school settings. They also work closely with the pupil's family to encourage regular contact for the pupil with their home and to ensure there is a productive dialogue between home and school. Parents express great appreciation of this contact and praise the quality and empathy of the staff they work with. Pupils also value the unsentimental, but sensitive, support and encouragement they receive from all the staff.

31. Care staff make pupils' time in school as enjoyable and productive as possible by organising a very wide range of activities out of school hours, both in school and make good use of facilities out in the community, including scouts, guides and other organisations. The school's success in sports is also supported very well in this way. Pupils are encouraged to develop their own interests, using the school's facilities well to support this.

32. Pupils are currently excited by the work that is being done to improve their accommodation and are impressed by those areas that have already been refurbished. Recent changes in the way the houses are organised to create mixed age groups are enabling older pupils to help their younger peers. This is typical of the school's core principle of encouraging independence. The whole package that pupils experience in this setting makes a very significant contribution to their personal and social development.

33. The residential provision is very effectively managed and there is a very tangible sense of team work and open dialogue between all staff. The current healthy debate relates to the changes that have been made in the way care and school staff communicate, and how well the handovers between the two settings are handled. The advantages of the mixed age accommodation for the care setting has created some difficulties for staff in sharing information with teachers, but is expected that this situation will soon be resolved on the basis of lessons learned.

### **Partnership with parents, other schools and the community**

The school has **very good** links with parents and the community. Links with other schools and colleges are **good overall**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good links with the community support pupils' experience of work very effectively.
- The school supports parents very well and receives very good support from them.
- The school's links with colleges support pupils' learning and development very successfully, but links with local schools require further development.

## Commentary

34. The school has very productive links with the business community to develop pupils' understanding of the world of work. Staff put a great deal of effort into providing the support pupils need on placement by liaising successfully with the various businesses and organisations involved to ensure that placements are as productive as possible. The school has recently placed pupils in a wide variety of businesses, including garages, animal sanctuaries, farms, day nurseries and garden centres. These placements help pupils to develop their independence and social skills very successfully.
35. Parents are kept very well informed about their children's progress and there are many mechanisms for parents to communicate with the school. For example, home-school diaries may be used, or personal contact with the many professionals that teach or care for pupils. The school's much appreciated family and community liaison worker is proactive in seeking links with parents and helps to support parents through their children's school years. This is another very good feature that benefits the pupils, the parents and the school because of the collaborative approach to enhancing pupils' wellbeing. Parents appreciate very much the work of the school and feel involved in their children's education, despite the long distances often involved.
36. There is a very successful link with a local further education college. School and college staff work closely together to ensure that the courses that pupils attend are relevant and that pupils receive appropriate support whilst at college. Pupils are given the opportunity to try several different courses before they choose the one which they wish to follow in greater depth. Pupils mix with pupils from mainstream schools and this helps them to develop their social skills. The school has an existing link with the neighbouring primary school, which is to be re-instated in the near future. The school also plans to foster links with the local secondary school and other schools in the vicinity. This will then help to provide more opportunities for Dawn House pupils to work alongside and have productive relationships with their mainstream peers.

## LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are **very good overall**. The leadership of the headteacher is **outstanding**. Governance of the school is **good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very strong leadership, based on the headteachers' clear vision, empowers all staff to play a full role in improving the school;
- All developments are based on an extremely well informed picture of the school's strengths and areas for improvement;
- The school places a very high priority on collaborative teamwork and provides impressive support to enable all staff to develop their skills and effectiveness to the full;
- The I CAN executive and trustees work well with an improving governing body to support planned strategic developments and fulfil their wider responsibilities.

## Commentary

37. From his appointment in Autumn 2003, the headteacher has had a powerful impact on the work of the school and, consequently, pupils' achievements. Working in highly effective partnership with his very able, multidisciplinary senior management colleagues, he has raised staff morale

and provided clear leadership with an ambitious plan for the school's expansion and development into a regional specialist centre. The very recent Department for Education and Skills approval to establish and further develop provision for post 16 students illustrates this approach very well. Senior managers have provided significant focused support in their own areas of expertise to formulate and follow through detailed planning to improve the learning and residential environments, develop a highly appropriate curriculum and negotiate a very productive relationship with a local college. The small post 16 department has, thereby, been running very well for a term and is now very well placed to expand significantly into a large, autonomous unit in Autumn 2005. By the same token, many other high quality improvements are being effected now and are planned for the future to the buildings, learning resources and outdoor environment. The premises manager is playing a pivotal role as project manager in all this activity. The I CAN executive and trustees are supporting the developments and providing the necessary planning and financial resources to enable their completion. The governing body is equally supportive and signed up to the headteacher's plans. It has benefited from some very recent appointments and is clearly committed to developing its ability to 'check and test', to which end the chairman is encouraging his colleagues to make more active focused visits and apply their own expertise in specific areas of the school's work.

38. The school improvement plan provides a comprehensive agenda for change and is based on continuous supported self review, in which all staff are involved. This has enabled the identification of strengths and priorities for development and has informed very clear strategic thinking and planning for improvement. In this way, for example, development of an over arching assessment package that will more usefully analyse data and illustrate pupils' progress over time has been identified as a priority. By giving ownership and responsibility to those most interested in its success, the headteacher ensures that planning for improvement becomes a shared process and encourages a culture of reflection and evaluation. In such a climate, all staff welcome and value rigorous monitoring and evaluation of their work.
39. The school places great importance on the appointment, induction and development of new staff. The recent staffing difficulties experienced, because of turnover and long term sickness, have been very well managed. Newly appointed and temporary staff speak highly of procedures to help them to quickly become established and effective. The performance management of staff, right across all disciplines, is thorough and effective, and contributes very well to the high standards in teaching and learning. Professional development opportunities are closely linked to the needs of the school, particularly those of meeting the challenge of a changing school population and the priorities for development. The deputy headteacher has made a significant contribution to this whole process and works very well in partnership with the headteacher to ensure a strongly supportive and encouraging ethos.
40. The I CAN organisation's very structured operating framework, based on its own educational philosophy and long term business plan, efficiently provides central financial and human resources. Day to day management of the school is highly effective and all the administrative staff make a very significant contribution to its smooth running. Local management of finances is managed very efficiently by the headteacher and his very able office manager, who is also developing increasingly sophisticated applications for ICT across all aspects of the school's operation. Although the school's costs are comparatively high in relation to local education authority provision, they represent very good value for money when taking into account the very high quality multidisciplinary model, the very good residential arrangements and pupils' very good overall achievements.

**Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004**

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	2,416,088
Total expenditure	2,465,866
Expenditure per pupil	29,010

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	-123,132*
Balance from current year	-49,778*

*\* Deficit balances are absorbed at year end by I CAN*

**WORK RELATED LEARNING**

Provision is **very good**.

**Mains strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils learn very successfully about the world of work.
- There is a very wide variety of opportunities on offer.
- Pupils mature greatly as a result of their experiences.

**Commentary**

41. All pupils in Year 10 successfully complete one weeks work experience in June each year. This is very well organised and supervised, making full use of the good will that has been developed in the local community. As a result, pupils have benefited from placements in shops, pre-school nurseries, garden centres, a haulage firm, a garage, animal sanctuaries, a farm and a garden centre. Where appropriate, other pupils have been supported in placements nearer their own homes or within the school itself, in the laundry, grounds and the office. Records and pupils' own recounting of their experiences prove that these placements have been of considerable value and have built very successfully on the preparatory work that has been done in school and at college. The taster and vocational courses that pupils study help them to develop an understanding about the world of work and the way they need to adapt their behaviour to succeed in those settings. They are also helped to become enterprising and autonomous through the school's avowed aim to encourage independence and team working. There is clear evidence to suggest that this aspect of the school's provision makes a significant contribution to pupils' increasing maturity and self confidence.

## PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION SUBJECTS AND COURSES

### ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

#### French

*Since only one lesson was observed in French, insufficient evidence was gained to support an overall judgement on provision. Samples of pupils' work and records were sampled and a discussion was held with the subject leader.*

42. Planning and records show that progress in French is good overall. During the one lesson observed, pupils achieved well and showed that they enjoyed using a foreign language, which often provides them with another useful tool in developing their overall communication skills. The focus was on consolidating colour vocabulary and learning new words for clothing. This was aided by judicious use of Paget signing, audio tape and the target language and the whole lesson had engaging pace and variety. The learning support assistant made a valuable contribution in terms of supporting and encouraging one particularly resistant pupil, who did contribute well by the end of the lesson.
43. The subject is taught to pupils in Years 7 to 9 by a teacher who has made considerable effort to develop her own skills by attending a specialist course in France. This has informed her good development of the curriculum, learning resources and assessment approaches. The subject makes a valuable contribution to pupils' confidence and cultural development. Standards have improved since the last inspection, when the subject was taught by a number of temporary teachers.

#### English

*Eight lessons were seen in English. Evidence was also gathered from pupils' work, discussions with teachers, speech and language therapists and learning support staff, planning documents and assessment records.*

Provision in English is **very good**.

#### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Close collaboration between teachers and therapists and detailed assessments ensure that pupils' are helped to learn very effectively.
- All pupils have the opportunity to gain a recognised qualification.
- All staff have high expectations of the pupils.
- The drama programme enhances pupils' learning in English and boosts their confidence.
- Well thought out schemes of work ensure that the work is interesting.
- The English co-ordinator provides strong leadership for colleagues.

#### Commentary

44. Pupils throughout the school make very good overall progress in all aspects of English, and often excellent progress in their speech, language and communication, due to the high level of targeted support they receive. They are assessed in depth by speech and language therapists in all aspects of communication and phonics skills as well as underlying traits such as the ability to sequence information and infer meaning. The information gathered about pupils' individual abilities is shared with teaching staff who ensure that individual needs are well met in lessons. This collaboration is a very effective way of working and ensures that each pupil makes the best possible progress in communication, reading and writing regardless of their starting-point. Partnership with other professionals such as the learning mentor and play therapist, as well as individual speech therapy sessions ensure that additional special needs are addressed very effectively.

45. All pupils are entered for an accredited course or courses in Year 10, although a few pupils may not complete all the units of study for reasons of ill-health or prolonged absence. The range of qualifications offered ensures that all pupils enter the next phase of their education with a good grounding on which to build. Those who go into the post 16 department or enter the local college continue to work on their literacy skills as part of their Key Skills programme.
46. Teachers, therapists and support staff have high expectations and they challenge pupils to do their best. For example, pupils are often reminded of their targets and praised when they achieve these. Adults constantly use encouragement, demonstration, reminders and positive feedback to lead the pupils to higher levels of achievement and, as a result, pupils are well motivated to try their best.
47. Drama lessons make a significant contribution to pupils' confidence and provide a vehicle for practising communication skills in a different context. In one lesson for Year 10 pupils seen during the inspection, a short film had been planned; the script had been written by groups of pupils in a previous lesson, and props, venues and roles decided upon. This was the final rehearsal, but when the time came to speak into a microphone, courage failed the 'reporter'. With calm reassurance, a therapist stepped in to give support and this was sufficient to enable the pupil to perform the task. Success clearly raised his self-esteem and the next day he was able to read the part independently.
48. Planning for English lessons is adjusted as required to reflect the changing needs of groups of pupils as they move through the school. It provides a good level of detail to assist teachers in their planning, providing a framework for new or temporary staff and ensuring that English is taught to a consistent standard throughout the school. It is wide-ranging and imaginative, and forms the basis of a programme of work which is age-appropriate whilst enabling pupils to consolidate their skills. For example, pupils study the story of the Titanic, *The Race to the Moon*, modern poetry, ghost stories, *Treasure Island*, *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. In the primary department, work is planned on a four year rolling programme, ensuring variety in the content, although skills are well matched to pupils' needs and abilities. The activities are well chosen to motivate and inspire pupils to do their best, and they respond positively. Links with other curriculum areas are identified, for example, *The Children of Winter* about the great plague, studied by 12 and 13 year-olds has links to both history and geography. ICT is used appropriately for word-processing and developing research skills. Specific software is used to teach literacy skills such as reading and spelling.
49. The subject co-ordinator provides strong leadership by supporting non-specialist or temporary teachers, for example by providing a file of useful background information. Much time is invested in professional dialogue, which helps to ensure the English syllabus is coherent and supports pupils' transition through the school. Resources are generally very good. The library is stocked with a good range of recent fiction to appeal to all ages. ICT is used well, but as yet there is no interactive whiteboard in the English room.
50. At the last inspection, English provision was judged to be good overall, although very good for speaking and listening across the school. Reading and writing were very good up to and including the first year of the secondary school. For the later years, it was found to be less consistent. This is now no longer the case, and English provision is very good for all age groups. This is due to the leadership of the subject co-ordinator, the detailed scheme of work, updated resources and better accreditation opportunities.

### **Language and literacy across the curriculum**

51. Many pupils find difficulty with imaginative writing and require skilled support to sequence their ideas. Consequently, the volume of writing produced is relatively small, especially in Years 7 to 9, and this is also true in other subjects. Sometimes opportunities to reinforce literacy skills in other curriculum areas are insufficiently developed; for example key vocabulary is not always displayed.

## MATHEMATICS

*Seven lessons were seen in mathematics. Evidence was also gathered from pupils' work, discussions with teachers, speech and language therapists and learning support staff, planning documents and assessment records.*

Provision for mathematics is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make very good progress in learning to apply their mathematical learning in practical situations.
- Teachers and learning support staff make the subject fun through their enthusiasm.
- Pupils experience a rich curriculum that engages their interest.
- There is a good range of accreditation opportunities for older pupils.
- ICT and individual target-setting are not used effectively with secondary age pupils.

### Commentary

52. Most pupils achieve very well in mathematics. The achievement of junior age pupils is characterised by consistency in counting, the development of mathematical vocabulary and accuracy in measurement. There is also the development of individual strategies which assist flexibility and success in later work. Thus, in a very good lesson for younger pupils, they showed great enthusiasm for the subject. Lower attaining pupils used number lines and other equipment well to consolidate their ability to count from one to twenty. The more advanced pupils were clearly developing good mental control of these early processes and showing consistent ability to double numbers up to 20, writing number symbols well and understanding that there were many ways to solve even a simple addition sum. Their understanding of how they were developing was exemplified by one pupil who didn't hand in his number line because 'I've got my number line in my head'.
53. The achievement of pupils aged 12 to 14 is a significant improvement since the previous inspection, when progress was seen as only satisfactory, although it still doesn't quite reach the very high standards elsewhere. The emphasis placed on the development of mathematical technical vocabulary, developing strategies that work for individuals and checking work for accuracy are impressive. There is the same enthusiasm as with younger pupils and all pupils display the wish to contribute to lessons and get the answers to group work assignments. By the age of 14, pupils are ready for and keen to participate in a range of accredited courses. The success of seven pupils at GCSE in the 2004 examinations was testimony to the fact that early success is well built upon and enthusiasm for mathematics continues throughout the school.
54. Teaching is very good across the school. For younger primary aged pupils, very good use is made of the new interactive whiteboards, the teaching carried out by teaching assistants is of a very high quality indeed and time is used very efficiently. This means that pupils are focused on the task from the first minute of the lesson and do not 'switch off' until the very end. This pace means that there is no time for inappropriate behaviour and all staff are well prepared, so that each pupil is challenged consistently throughout the lesson. With older pupils, there is the same very good use of the new whiteboards. There are many lessons which are very good, with a quiet and thorough approach to each individual, and high expectations of behaviour. The knowledge displayed by mathematics staff and their clear interest in the progress pupils make means that pupils are keen to achieve and progress well in all aspects of mathematics. Post 16 students are appropriately taught using an adult numeracy format. This is well planned and enables pupils to see the relevance of the subject.
55. The subject is well managed with a good, imaginative junior school curriculum giving regular opportunities to use information technology such as floor robots to develop angles of turn and develop work on shapes and patterns. Pupils' progress is well monitored and all staff keep

detailed and effective records. These contribute well to the development of very well focused targets within lesson plans. At the secondary stage, there is now a coherent curriculum for pupils in Years 7 to 9, a significant improvement since the last inspection. For post 16 students, there is a strong emphasis on the practical application of mathematics, which further increases the relevance of this subject for these students.

56. Assessment is detailed and staff know their subject and the pupils well. The present curriculum, however, is low on the effective use of ICT and there is not enough sharing of individual subject targets with the pupils themselves.

### **Mathematics across the curriculum**

57. While not formally planned as part of the teaching in other subjects, mathematical skills are practised in many of them. Thus, younger pupils practise sequencing the days of the week, while older ones reinforce number skills in science, music and physical education. In a good food technology lesson for Year 9, the inspector was impressed by the way that key mathematical vocabulary was used and an emphasis placed on accuracy in weighing out the ingredients for bread. In another, ICT lesson, pupils were encouraged to use the internet to find the prices of household goods such as toasters, beds and bicycles, making comparisons with prices across a range of websites.

### **SCIENCE**

*Five lessons were seen in science. Evidence was also gathered from pupils' work, discussions with teachers, speech and language therapists and learning support staff, planning documents and assessment records.*

Provision in science is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils make very good progress in using scientific vocabulary to describe their observations.
- Teachers, speech and language therapists and learning support assistants work very effectively together to ensure that all pupils are fully involved in lessons.
- Pupils follow a broad curriculum which covers all the different areas of science well.
- Lessons are carefully planned and learning targets are well matched to the needs of individual pupils.
- Marking does not always give useful feedback to pupils about how they can improve their work.
- The science laboratory and resources for science need updating.

### **Commentary**

58. Pupils achieve well across the school. There is a very good focus in all science lessons on helping pupils to make observations using correct scientific vocabulary. This was evident in a lesson for primary aged pupils where they were learning to recognise the differences between solids, liquids and gases. The pupils were introduced to words such as 'compressed' and taught how to say them by clapping out the syllables. Through very careful questioning and explanation the teacher then developed the pupils' capacity to use the new words in the discussion. Consequently, the pupils made very good progress with one pupil volunteering that 'compressed' is another word for 'squeezed'.

59. Teaching is good overall. Staff work very effectively together and give very good support to individual pupils. This means that all pupils, including those with severe communication problems or autistic spectrum disorders play a full part in lessons. This was typified in a lesson for Year 11 pupils about forces, where the speech and language therapist and learning support assistant dealt very effectively with a pupil who was finding it difficult being in a group. When the pupil became distressed, they were skilful in moving him to an area of the classroom where he

felt secure. This meant that the lesson was not disrupted and the teacher was able to carry on outlining the lesson objectives. During the practical part of the lesson, the support assistant set up the experiment for the pupil in his safe area. The teacher had made different instruction sheets to show the pupils what to do. Those who find reading difficult used sheets with pictures as well as words. Because the lesson was very carefully planned and organised, and pupils were very well supported, they all achieved the lesson objective of carrying out the investigation and recording their results in a table.

60. Pupils follow a well balanced curriculum and have opportunities to test out ideas through simple experiments. They make good progress in investigative work and in learning about living things, materials and physical processes, such as electrical circuits. This is evident in their performance in the National Tests at eleven and fourteen and in the results of assessed courses at the end of Year 11. In 2004, six Year 11 pupils achieved Entry Level passes at grades 1 and 2 and four pupils achieved GCSE passes at grades E–F. Teachers prepare very detailed reports about pupils' progress in science for their annual reviews, which include a detailed assessment of their national curriculum levels in each of the areas assessed. However, pupils' work is not always marked to show how much support they received to complete it. This makes it more difficult to measure the progress they are making. At the present time, there is no collection of assessed work to ensure that teachers use the same criteria when assessing pupils' work. Although some marking gives good feedback to pupils about how to improve their work, the use of constructive comments in marking needs developing.
61. Although there is a specialist laboratory, almost half the lessons for secondary aged pupils take place in classrooms. This means that teachers have to arrange to bring equipment from the laboratory and experiments are restricted by safety considerations and the lack of facilities to heat or cool materials. The laboratory is small and the fume cupboard cannot be used at present. Resources are limited, for example there is a shortage of specialist equipment such as oscilloscopes. Although the school has had a period without a subject leader, they have made good arrangements to maintain standards. This has included developing links with a science specialist at a local mainstream school. The recently appointed science specialist has a clear vision of how to develop the subject further and the headteacher is committed to improving accommodation and resources as part of the ongoing refurbishment of the school. There has been good improvement in provision for science since the last inspection. Teaching has improved and pupils now have access to a suitable range of accreditation.

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

*Three lessons were seen in ICT. Evidence was also gathered from pupils' work, discussions with teachers, speech and language therapists and learning support staff, planning documents and assessment records.*

Provision for information and communication technology is **good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Pupils enjoy this subject and achieve well, particularly in their confidence in using the Internet.
- Teaching is well planned, informed and motivational.
- Resources are of a very high quality and there are many opportunities to develop ICT skills.
- Computers are used well within residential settings as well as in the classroom.
- Links with the local college have made a strong contribution to the progress achieved by older pupils.
- Despite staffing difficulties, there has been good leadership in the subject and very good progress since the last inspection report.
- Assessment is not yet detailed enough to identify clearly all areas of individual progress.

### **Commentary**

62. Pupils' achievement is good across the school, because ICT is a subject that they value highly. As a result, they develop well in terms of being able to access the internet and work within the most popular word processing, data collection and presentation programmes. Their enjoyment was evident to inspectors during lessons, within classrooms and during the lunchtime and after school clubs.
63. The quality of teaching is good overall. A well constructed training programme undertaken by staff has paid off and contributed very effectively to informed and highly motivating teaching by teachers and teaching assistants. In particular, staff demonstrate skill and imagination in the use of the interactive whiteboards, recently installed within the school. This enhances lessons, such as mathematics and science by providing pupils with colourful and interactive presentations, which hold their attention and encourage them to participate.
64. In addition to the whiteboards, the school has also installed three computers within each classroom and laptops for each member of the post 16 department. There is also a 'wireless' facility which enhances the possibilities for ICT usage in classrooms. The room used for ICT is spacious and well laid out, providing a very good working environment. The software used has been reviewed and all staff are keen to develop their own subject with up-to-date and relevant packages. The end result is an enthusiasm that permeates the work of staff and pupils alike. One teaching assistant provides high quality skilled advice, and this means that pupils and staff are seldom delayed in their use of hard or software.
65. The fact that ICT clubs are run at lunchtimes and after school, together with the opportunity for residential pupils to have full access to equipment and programmes throughout the evening and at weekends, means that the most is made of the high level of motivation created.
66. Courses offered at the local college are very good. Pupils from Years 10 and 11 and post 16 students have the opportunity to work in an adult environment on programmes and courses for a wide range of abilities. These courses are tailor-made and contribute very well to students' progress in ICT. Not only is there very good tutoring at the college, but it provides students with the opportunity to mix with fellow mainstream students in a social setting.
67. The school has experienced staffing difficulties which have complicated the development of skilled teaching within ICT. However, good temporary leadership of the subject by the headteacher and the skill shown by new staff have combined to ensure that pupils continue to be stimulated and taught well in ICT. The new equipment, programmes and training have combined to move this subject on very well since the last inspection, when concerns were expressed about pupil progress. It is important that the school now stabilises the teaching of this subject to build on the high quality resources and pupil enthusiasm.
68. There is now a good, detailed curriculum with a new, suitable method of recording progress. Currently, however, inadequate past teaching records and insufficiently well annotated and dated samples of work make it difficult to track individual pupils' past progress and inform future planning.

### **Information and communication technology across the curriculum**

69. This aspect is only satisfactory. The school has not yet maximised the use of ICT in other subject areas, particularly in English and mathematics. While good use is made in introductions to lessons, there is significant room for the development of programmes that can challenge pupils in all subjects and build on the interest and confidence that is clearly developing.

## **HUMANITIES**

*Since only one lesson was observed in geography and none in history, insufficient evidence was gained to support an overall judgement on provision. A limited amount of the pupils' work and records was sampled for both subjects and a discussion was held with the subject leader.*

## **Geography**

70. Pupils follow a broad curriculum which enables them to learn about the physical environment and their own and other countries. For example, primary aged pupils have learned about the importance and uses of water in a variety of environments. They know that deserts are dry places, and, with support, have located major deserts on a world map.
71. In the lesson observed, which was about why communities developed in particular places, the teacher and speech and language therapist worked very effectively together to help Year 8 pupils to learn relevant vocabulary, organise their ideas and communicate them to others. All pupils were very well involved in the lesson because they received very good support and work was well matched to their individual needs. Throughout the lesson, the learning support assistant recorded the progress the pupils were making towards achieving their targets. All pupils made very good progress in understanding why settlements developed in particular areas and in communicating their ideas and listening to the views of others. With support, the pupils were able to record their ideas and use a key to colour in a map.

## **History**

72. All teachers and support staff place a major emphasis on teaching pupils key words so that they can join in historical discussions. Primary aged pupils have had interesting opportunities to use sources, such as photographs, to study a variety of topics like changes in transport and holidays over the last hundred years. They have learned to use the appropriate vocabulary of 'long ago', 'in the olden days', 'modern' and 'recent'. Older pupils begin to develop an understanding about what peoples' lives were like in different times. For example, Year 9 pupils have studied the 'trade triangle and slave trade'. They have written about the lives of slaves and drawn a story board to show what a slave's day would have been like on a plantation.
73. The subject leader, who teaches all humanities in the secondary department, has developed provision for humanities well. She has rewritten the schemes of work in both geography and history to include speech and language targets. Careful liaison and planning with the teacher in the primary department ensures that work set builds well on previous achievements and pupils do not repeat topics as they progress up the school. The school could make more effective use of the local community to promote pupils' interest and progress in geography and history.

## **Religious education**

*Whilst only one lesson was observed in religious education, sufficient evidence was also gathered from pupils' work, discussions with the temporary co-ordinator, planning documents and assessment records to inform judgements.*

Provision for religious education is **good**.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Teaching and planning of lessons is well thought out.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' personal development.

74. Pupils' achievements and progress are good, maintaining the standards seen at the last inspection. They study a comprehensive and age appropriate range of multi faith topics. For example, primary aged pupils have designed a baptism certificate, a greetings card for a Baisakhi using Sikh symbols and a postcard following an imaginary visit to the Golden Temple. Older pupils study religious education through the 'Belief and Values' section of the Youth Award Scheme which contributes to accreditation at the end of year 11. Assemblies are well

used to foster an understanding of other faiths and develop pupils' spiritual awareness, ensuring an appreciation of the relevance of beliefs in the way pupils live their lives.

75. The subject is being well led on a short-term basis by the co-ordinator for humanities, due to current temporary staff shortages. She has been given the responsibility for updating the scheme of work and this is well under way. There are relevant plans to develop the subject further by bringing in representatives of other faiths and taking the pupils out into the community to visit a range of religious venues. There are good resources available, including videos and artefacts and teachers are well supported with thoughtful lesson plans and advice.

## **CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS**

*One lesson was seen in art and design, two in design and technology two in music and four in physical education. Evidence was also gathered from pupils' work, discussions with teachers, speech and language therapists and learning support staff, planning documents and assessment records.*

### **Art and design**

76. It was possible to gain a clear view of the quality of pupils' work across the school through scrutiny of a wide range of their work, both in their detailed sketch books and high quality portfolios of work and displays around the school. The recently appointed co-ordinator was also able to provide solid evidence of pupils' good achievements from his own records, and accredited results for Year 11 pupils.

77. Pupils continue to make good progress in their work, often achieving well in GCSE and Entry Level exams. They study a wide range of techniques, including painting, collage, ceramics, screen printing and digital photography, using computers to develop and enhance their work through graphics and other programmes. They also learn about the work of famous artists and apply this learning imaginatively to develop their own individual styles. In the one lesson observed, a group of year 7 pupils took digital photographs as part of a well structured miniatures project and started to manipulate the images they had chosen, using a computer paint programme. They were well taught and rose to the challenge enthusiastically, collaborating very successfully with each other to produce good quality ideas.

78. The co-ordinator has many thoughtful ideas about how he might develop the subject further and take full advantage of the planned improvements to accommodation. He has a clear picture of how he will work co-operatively with the co-ordinator for design and technology when she returns from her current long term sick leave.

### **Design and technology**

79. Pupils benefit from working in both a resistant materials workshop and a food technology room and have applied 'design, make and evaluate principles' well in, for example, the production of furniture for Certificate of Achievement exams. They have used the full range of tools and materials, and studied levers and linkages, electronics, circuit design, simple hydraulics and food, in producing good quality pieces. In the two food technology lessons observed, pupils were successful in making different sorts of breads and learning about the processes involved. Their success was due both to their own thoughtful application of the principles learned and the teacher's enthusiastic teaching and well focused support, which encouraged independence throughout both lessons. This same teacher, who is providing good temporary cover for the absent co-ordinator, has set up a design and technology club to provide pupils with the opportunity to develop their own ideas further.

80. There are very advanced plans in place to improve provision for this subject, through building new workshops, taking full account of the valuable relationships between this subject and art and design and introducing a wider range of resources and techniques, including computer assisted design.

## Music

Provision for this subject is **very good**.

### Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' enthusiasm for music is nurtured and harnessed very successfully.
- The subject has benefited from considerable recent investment.
- The new co-ordinator has made a significant impact in her short time in post.

### Commentary

81. Pupils make very good progress and achieve very well, because teaching is very strong and their curriculum is exciting and engaging. Pupils are all given similar opportunities to play instruments, so they learn how to make music as well as how music is made. They appreciate and enjoy the sound and rhythm of a variety of instruments, listening thoughtfully and playing and singing enthusiastically. Music promotes a sense of community across the school.
82. All pupils are attentive during lessons and respond very positively to the teacher's energetic lead. The carefully thought out structure and pace of learning ensures that pupils experience early success and develop confidence and skill at a very impressive rate. This was best illustrated in an African drumming lesson, when a group of Year 9 pupils very quickly learned three main rhythms, how to follow the leader's prompts and very successfully put the patterns together in unison. They rose to the teacher's clearly expressed very high expectations and managed to perform their first piece very successfully by the end. Similar skills were applied by the teacher in a very different lesson that introduced Baroque music to a group of Year 9 pupils. They learned very quickly about the 'ground bass' concept and were able to follow it through a recording of Pachelbel's *Canon* and then its application in a modern pop song. They consolidated their learning well through the individual use of electronic keyboards at the end.
83. Music makes an important contribution to pupils' personal development and self esteem. The music club, which runs three lunchtimes a week, provides valuable opportunities for some of the most challenging and withdrawn pupils to get very personal attention and explore the potential of their chosen medium or instrument. Through these opportunities, and performing with their peers, they learn valuable lessons about co-operation and partnership, whilst developing another important and valuable way of expressing themselves.
84. Leadership and management of the subject is very good. Its impressive development since the last inspection has been led by the headteacher, who has followed it through as a project over the past year, working recently with the new, very able specialist music teacher/co-ordinator. The subject has been re-sited in its own dedicated room and significant high quality resources (including ICT), have been purchased. The co-ordinator is developing the curriculum and assessment approaches very imaginatively. One important element of these plans is to extend the use of visiting musicians in the school and further development of collaborative work with local mainstream teachers and pupils.

## Physical education

Provision for the subject is **very good**.

## Main strengths and weaknesses

- Highly skilled teachers have very high expectations, which pupils live up to.
- Pupils' develop very good self esteem as a result of their impressive achievements.
- Very impressive success in competitive sports involves pupils and their school extremely well within the wider community.
- The subject makes a considerable contribution to learning in speech language and communication and personal and social development.

## Commentary

85. Standards have been maintained and improved on since the last inspection, so that pupils now make very good progress across a very wide range of games and sporting activities and achieve very high standards, often to the level of national expectations for their age. The school recognises that many of its pupils experience considerable difficulties with physical co-ordination and managing their bodies in space, so that the success they experience in this subject is doubly impressive. Lessons are very carefully planned to take full account of a range of detailed advice from therapists and ensure success at every stage, always looking to ensure that the language of the activity is carefully integrated. Pupils, consequently, experience control of their movements and gain in confidence as their performance improves. In this way, they are prepared to tackle challenges across an unusually varied menu of activities that include football, basketball, netball, cricket, hockey, badminton, volleyball, cross country, dance, gymnastics, athletics, swimming, and even snooker.

86. Individuals and teams develop their skills through a combination of enthusiastic and highly skilled teaching and their own considerable commitment. Care staff make a significant contribution to pupils' achievements through their reinforcement and consolidation of pupils' learning and supporting teaching staff outside school hours. School teams have experienced much success in competitions with other special school and mainstream peers across the county, in football, cricket, cross country and basketball. Individual pupils also have their efforts and achievements validated through GCSE, Entry Level Certificates, Five Star Athletics Awards and STA Swimming Certificates. All pupils are justifiably proud of their own and their peers' achievements. Individuals are very happy to tell of the difference that the subject has made to their own motivation and sense of self worth and records testify to the significant impact that physical and sporting success has had on their overall performance in school.

87. The subject is extremely well co-ordinated by a specialist teacher, who has made a great deal of difference to the effectiveness and status of the subject during the three years he has been in post. He is very well supported in his work by very capable learning support assistants, some of whom have specialist qualifications, other teachers and therapists. The curriculum includes an appropriate focus on healthy living and pupils' achievements are very thoroughly assessed to inform future planning. Productive links with the local college give older pupils the opportunity to participate in aerobics and fitness training. The school benefits from a very good, indoor heated pool and some good equipment. It recognises, however, that some facilities, especially outdoors, are not as good as they could be, and there are costed plans in place to improve them with an all weather surface and athletic facilities in the near future.

## PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP (PSHCE)

*Eleven lessons were seen in PSHCE. Evidence was also gathered from pupils' work, discussions with teachers, speech and language therapists, learning support and care staff, planning documents and assessment records.*

Provision for PSHCE is **very good** and is a strength of the school.

## **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- The PSHCE curriculum provides the backbone of the school's provision and makes a major contribution to pupils' maturity and independence.
- Care and classroom staff provide a very wide range of valuable social and health experiences that assist in the very good development of pupils' feelings of self worth.
- Pupils enter college and work settings with knowledge and confidence.
- Work in PSHCE is characterised by very good teamwork and the full involvement of pupils and parents.
- Very good use is made of a wide range of outside agencies.
- PSHCE records and assessments are not dated and annotated, and this reduces their value.

## **Commentary**

88. Pupils make very impressive progress and achieve very well. The school has developed a very good PSHCE curriculum. It incorporates the full range of health, social and independence skills necessary for pupils who enter the school with reduced confidence and a negative view of themselves. Teaching incorporates work by outside bodies, such as an alcohol abuse drama team. The consistency with which the curriculum is taught in pastoral lessons and in many other subjects provides pupils with very good guidance and an enhanced understanding of the world. It makes a major contribution to the independence and security that older pupils demonstrate in talking to visitors, performing in assembly and visiting local colleges.
89. The subject is shared and co-ordinated very successfully between classroom and care staff. Planning is discussed by all staff. Targets are relevant both to the curriculum and to the individual personal needs of pupils. There is a good sex and drug awareness education programme, but every effort is taken to ensure that these matters are also addressed when and where they are relevant for individual pupils. This means that pupils gain a good body of knowledge and have the opportunity to discuss issues within their peer groups. However, they can always receive additional counselling and advice when problems or issues arise for individuals.
90. The success of PSHCE work, the development of a school council and the respect shown to individual pupils' ideas and concerns means that all pupils quickly begin to understand what it is to live within a community, how they need to adapt and what is accepted and required behaviour in different settings. As a result they are able to enter college and take up work placements with a good knowledge of personal and social health and safety. In addition, they have good experience of how to present themselves in different settings and this is noticeable to professionals beyond the school.
91. PSHCE teaching is characterised by very good teamwork. Not only do educational and care staff contribute and support the reviewing and planning of individual programmes, but outside services, such as a very good and imaginative Connexions service are harnessed to further enrich the discussion and advice to Dawn House pupils as they move through the upper part of the school. The school is currently involved in an exemplary programme of support for a pupil who came as a school refuser and was recently a finalist for a national Young Achiever Award in relation to her NVQ college studies.
92. A very good example of the high quality of teaching and teamwork arose in an excellent PSHCE lesson with pupils aged from eight to eleven. The teacher, working in tandem with the speech and language therapist talked through each pupil's targets with the full attention of every one, including a pupil visiting from a local primary school. The discussion was detailed but relevant to the whole group, very well supported by excellent use of the interactive whiteboard. The lesson built on an assembly dealing with inclusive work with a local secondary school. Every opportunity was given for pupils to think and reply, to talk in pairs and to discuss or contribute as and when they wished to. Teaching assistants provided a first class support for pupils with language difficulties, ensuring that all pupils were fully involved and contributed well.

93. Work within personal education is further strengthened by the close involvement of pupils and parents. Their contributions are highly valued by the school and notice taken of their comments and advice in the development of personal targets and in reviewing what is working and not working. There is a very strong respect within the school for pupils' own views and also for the real involvement of families.
94. The subject is very well led and organised. Recording of personal development is good, but at present records and assessments are not dated and annotated and this reduces their value.

## **POST-16 PROVISION**

*Three lessons were seen in post 16. Evidence was also gathered from pupils' work, discussions with teachers, speech and language therapists and learning support staff, planning documents and assessment records.*

Provision for students post 16 is **very good**.

### **Main strengths and weaknesses**

- Students are very well prepared for their life beyond school, including leisure.
- The curriculum balances vocational and life skills education very effectively.
- The ethos is age-appropriate.
- All students' work and achievements are accredited.

### **Commentary**

95. Post-16 pupils have their own study centre and a separate residential wing in the school, which have been recently refurbished to a high standard. Plans are in train to extend the study and residential facilities to provide well defined separate facilities, with individual study bedrooms and shared social areas. As a consequence, the current small group, which it is planned will expand to over 20 in the next academic year, can experience a mature setting, where high expectations of adult behaviour and independence are expressed by all staff. The curriculum and timetables are innovative, taking full account of national guidance and ensuring that all pupils experience a highly relevant programme, sometimes together and other times as individuals or in small groups. Students achieve very well because of the very high quality teaching they receive.
96. Students spend at least half their week at the local college, where they access mainstream vocational courses, appropriate to their interest and ability, very sensitively supported by Dawn House staff and taught by college staff, who display an impressive understanding of the students' needs. The rest of their studies are back at school and focus on their all important core curriculum, with a continued prioritisation of their speech language and communication needs, and wide ranging life skills activities. Close liaison with dedicated residential care staff ensures that pupils experience a co-ordinated 24 hour curriculum that consolidates learning and extends pupils' independence even further. All the activities are accredited and will lead to appropriate awards at the end of the one, two or three years spent in the department. The current model of delivery has been planned for complete flexibility, so that individual pupils can be supported in their own ambitions.

## PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<b>Grade</b>
<b>The overall effectiveness of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	2
<b>Overall standards achieved</b>	<b>2</b>
Pupils' achievement	2
<b>Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities</b>	<b>2</b>
Attendance	3
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
<b>The quality of education provided by the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The quality of teaching	2
How well pupils learn	2
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	2
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	2
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
<b>The leadership and management of the school</b>	<b>2</b>
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	1
The leadership of other key staff	2
The effectiveness of management	2

*Inspectors make judgements on a scale: excellent (grade 1); very good (2); good (3); satisfactory (4); unsatisfactory (5); poor (6); very poor (7).*

\* In a special school such as this, 'standards achieved' are judged in relation to students' individual targets and not in relation to national standards.