

INSPECTION REPORT

MOUNTJOY SCHOOL

Bridport, Dorset

LEA area: Dorset

Unique reference number: 113957

Headteacher: Mrs Pam Stewart

Lead inspector: Jacque Cook

Dates of inspection: 20 – 23 September 2004

Inspection number: 268600

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community Special
Age range of pupils:	2 – 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	41
School address:	Flood Lane Bridport Dorset
Postcode:	DT6 3QG
Telephone number:	01308 422250
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Ivan Kent
Date of previous inspection:	15 March 1999

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Mountjoy is a mixed, community, day special school for 43 pupils aged 2 to 19 catering for a range of special needs including severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders. Pupils' attainment on entry is very low. Forty full time pupils including 12 in Years 12 to 14 and one part time nursery aged child are currently on roll and there are four times as many boys as girls. One pupil is in public care and all pupils are of white British ethnicity. There are no pupils that speak English as an additional language. Very few pupils move into or out of the school at times other than at the beginning of the school year. Since the last inspection, the needs of the pupils have become significantly more complex. Pupils attending the school are largely from rural south and west Dorset, although a few travel from further afield, such as Blandford Forum in the east.

There is a developing outreach service from the school. At present one pupil is supported in a local primary school. Additionally, a very high number of pupils, 36, have lessons in local primary or secondary schools. The headteacher has been in post for two years and has made major changes to the organisation of the school.

In July 2002, the Local Education Authority made a decision to build a new school to solve the difficulties with the accommodation. However, discussions with a representative from the Local Education Authority during this inspection confirm that this decision is currently being reviewed.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
2351	Jacque Cook	Lead inspector	Mathematics Spanish Foundation Stage
9712	Jan Barber	Lay inspector	
20397	Rosa Blunt	Team inspector	English Art and design Religious education Special educational needs
15600	Colin Richardson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Music Personal, social, health and citizenship education Physical education Post-16
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

Mountjoy is an effective, very inclusive and improving school which is led and managed very well but its improvement in a number of areas is hindered by the continuing shortcomings of the accommodation. Nevertheless, the overall good quality of teaching and very positive attitudes of the pupils, lead to good, and at times, very good achievement and progress. The provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders is particularly good but occasionally, good progress is slowed to satisfactory for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Overall, value for money is good.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Pupils make very good progress in developing their communication skills.
- The headteacher has a clear vision and manages change very effectively.
- A very high number of pupils very successfully spend lessons in mainstream schools due to the excellent links that staff have established.
- The teamwork of the teaching, support staff and therapists is very good providing a good model for the outstanding relationships throughout the school.
- Staff are very good at helping pupils with behaviour difficulties to improve.
- The accommodation is unsatisfactory and poor for certain areas of the curriculum, including facilities for children of nursery or reception age, and this affects the quality of learning.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to give their views and ideas.

There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The key issues have been fully and successfully dealt with apart from the accommodation. Additional staff have been appointed, subject co-ordination re-assigned, information and communication technology, design and technology and music have improved and mathematics has sufficient time. Although considerable effort has been made to make the best of the inadequate buildings, the numerous shortfalls continue to place restrictions on pupils' learning and make the work of the staff more difficult. However, in spite of this and due to the hard work of the staff, pupils' progress and achievement have improved well. Additionally far more pupils now have lessons in mainstream schools and all pupils are taught in more age appropriate groups.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

There are insufficient children of nursery and reception age to make judgements about achievement and progress.

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 2	Good	Good
Year 6	Good	Good
Year 9	Good	Good
Year 11	Good	Good
Year 13	Good	Good

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

Pupils' achievement and progress are good. They are good overall in English, mathematics and science. Speaking and listening skills throughout the school improve very well and pupils in Years 7 to 9 make very good progress and achieve very well in mathematics and English. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders make very good gains in their learning as they begin to concentrate on activities. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties make good gains overall. Students in

Years 12 to 14 make good progress, particularly towards developing the skills and knowledge they need for looking after themselves.

Pupils' attitudes, values and behaviour are very good because their personal qualities develop very well, particularly their moral, social and cultural. Attendance is very good.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education is good. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall.

There is a significant amount of lessons where teaching and learning are very good and occasionally excellent and no lessons where teaching and learning are less than satisfactory. Teaching is particularly good in Years 7 to 9 for English and mathematics and pupils make very good gains in their knowledge and understanding in these subjects. Throughout the school, staff teach communication skills very effectively and as a result, pupils use their speaking and listening skills very well. Teachers have good levels of expertise, particularly in meeting the needs of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders, so these pupils learn very well. Strong relationships between pupils and staff lead to all pupils working hard. The teaching and learning of students in Years 12 to 14 are good. Students become more independent in the way they work. Assessment is good.

The curriculum is good and meets the needs of the pupils well. The excellent use of facilities and expertise in mainstream schools partly compensates for the unsatisfactory accommodation which channels the energies of staff away from their teaching. The care welfare and safety of pupils are very good and links with parents and with the community are very good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and the management of the school and of the developing outreach provision are very good. The headteacher, with the strong support of the senior management team, the staff and the governors has provided very effective leadership since being appointed two years ago. The school is managed very effectively and the governance is very good ensuring statutory requirements are met. Clear priorities are established to improve the school based on the results of comprehensive monitoring and evaluation. Improving the progress pupils make and ensuring they have the highest quality of education possible are fundamental to all decisions made and have led the drive to working closely with mainstream schools.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents are very pleased about the work of the school. They particularly like the caring environment and open door policy where any problems are quickly dealt with. They also feel there are a broad range of activities off site for their children, including the residential visits which are very beneficial. Concerns raised about the building and limited outdoor space are accurate. The team did not agree with a few parents that there was a lack of communication from the school. Regular newsletters, the newspaper produced by the pupils and the daily home-school books are effective.

Pupils enjoy school and particularly like computers, cooking, horse-riding, swimming and their work in mainstream schools. They say they feel safe and as one commented "the teachers are our friends".

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Continue to work with staff to ensure that pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties always have work at an appropriate level of difficulty.
- Ensure the facilities for children of nursery and reception age are suitable.
- Provide improved opportunities for pupils to give their views and ideas.
- Continue to work with the Local Education Authority to improve the unsatisfactory accommodation.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Pupils achieve well and make good progress.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make particularly good progress in English and in mathematics in Years 7 to 9.
- Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders often make very good progress.
- Pupils improve their communication skills very well.
- Pupils make very good progress in improving difficult behaviour.
- Occasionally, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties do not achieve as well as their peers.

Commentary

1. The progress and achievement that pupils make are a good improvement since the last inspection. It is largely the result of the high quality of lesson planning which ensures that in almost all instances, they have work at a suitably challenging level. There are two notable exceptions.
 - Pupils with autistic spectrum disorder make very good progress because staff are particularly good at teaching communication skills which opens the door to their learning. They are often taught intensely and systematically in a way they can understand.
 - In a few lessons, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties make satisfactory progress because the work, usually at the beginning of the lesson, is too difficult for them. In all their other lessons, their progress is good and at times very good.
 - Due to effective and targeted strategies, pupils with difficult behaviour are helped to focus on their work and begin making very good progress as a result.
2. Even though there are not as many girls as boys there is no measurable difference in their progress and achievement. Staff take care to choose topics that will interest all pupils, such as Ascot Day, where pupils and students studied and imitated the fashions worn. They also ensure that all pupils are included in lessons through specific questioning and well chosen activities.
3. All pupils have opportunities to gain Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) unit awards. Last year students added awards in outdoor pursuits to awards already gained in other areas including English, mathematics and personal, social and health education (PSHE). This year students are expected to gain far more awards in a broader range of subjects. For example, there are now fifteen in PSHE including many that are focussed on living skills, instead of three, and there are also awards in science, design and technology, music and gardening.
4. Last year, the targets set for Years 6, 9 and 11 were unrealistic for all the pupils and so were not fully met. Closer analysis of the data in school has resulted in more reasonable, but still sufficiently challenging, targets being set this year in the core subjects of English, mathematics and science and although it is early in the term, indications are that good progress is being made towards them.
5. It is not possible to make overall judgements about the progress and achievement of children of nursery and reception age, although records show language and literacy skills develop well. Their progress is hampered by the lack of opportunities to learn through structured play and they do not have access to a secure area outside the classroom.

6. Pupils in Years 1 to 7 and 9 to 11 make good progress and achieve well in English and mathematics. In Years 7 to 9, they make very good progress due to the very good quality of teaching and learning, particularly subject expertise and use of national strategies. In English, all pupils make very good progress in speaking and listening. This is due to the emphasis on teaching communication skills and the joint work with the speech and language therapists. The use of total communication (speaking, signing, pictures and symbols) helps pupils to make themselves understood. Their repertoire of signs and symbols increases. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders are helped with the use of the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) and learn to form simple sentences indicating what they want. Pupils' reading develops well. Those with profound and multiple learning difficulties enjoy stories that use all the senses to illustrate them. By Year 11, more able pupils are studying plays. Pupils' writing improves from making purposeful marks to producing pieces for the school newspaper. Support staff help those who have difficulties writing by scribing what they want to say. They use the computer well to assist them in their work. In mathematics, pupils begin to count and identify colours. The more able know the value of coins and use them in shops accurately. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, identify simple shapes and explore their properties. Many pupils with autistic spectrum disorders sequence shapes of different sizes and are able to repeat patterns. Their understanding of number grows.
7. In science pupils make good progress and achieve well. They develop curiosity exploring differences between hot and cold and the effects of forces. Their overall progress and achievement however, is difficult to improve further without better facilities in school. There is a similar problem due to the lack of suitable facilities for design and technology and food technology where progress and achievement are similarly good despite the problems. Through lessons in mainstream school this is partly overcome. In science, they learn to investigate and make predictions and they have the use of very well equipped workshops to design and make items in design and technology. As yet there is no additional provision for food technology.
8. Pupils make good progress in information and communication technology (ICT) and use these skills well in other areas of the curriculum. They also do well in religious education, physical education and personal, social and health education and citizenship.
9. The progress and achievement of students in Years 12 to 14 is good and they achieve well. Analysis of data shows an improvement in performance over time with improved language, literacy, numeracy and science skills. They make very good gains in learning to look after themselves, for example, in shopping and cooking. Students with profound multiple learning difficulties have increased the time they spend with their peers in school and in mainstream schools due to the recent effective implementation of the Learning for Life 14 to 16 curriculum.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good. Other aspects of their personal development, including their moral, social and cultural development are very good. Spiritual development is good. Pupils' attendance and punctuality are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils develop a sense of confidence and responsibility.
- Relationships are excellent throughout the school.
- Behaviour is very good: pupils who initially have behaviour difficulties learn to control their behaviour.
- There is no unauthorised absence.
- All staff offer very good role models for the pupils.
- Pupils show enthusiasm for learning and persevere with activities even when they find them difficult.

Commentary

10. Pupils enjoy coming to school, they comment, and their parents confirm, that they are happy and feel safe. One result is that pupils want to come to school resulting in the very high levels of attendance. This and the punctuality of the pupils is also due to the school's very good procedures and the support of the parents. This represents good improvement since the last inspection.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6.6	School data	0
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.

11. The very positive ethos of the school is mainly due to the excellent relationships that exist between pupils and staff, and those between pupils. Pupils rise to the high expectations set by staff. Those with profound and multiple learning difficulties respond to what is being said to them, particularly when adults give them the opportunity to choose an activity. Pupils follow the very good example set by staff by showing respect for each other and for everyone who works in the school. Older pupils help younger ones, an example of this is shown by older pupils acting as 'special friends' to the pupils in wheelchairs, amongst other responsibilities they push them into the hall for lunchtimes and at the end of the day.
12. There have been no exclusions from the school this is because procedures for monitoring and promoting discipline and behaviour are very good. There are clear rewards and sanctions which are consistently applied. Rules are consistently reinforced so that pupils know exactly what is expected of them in terms of behaviour around the school. Clear, positive strategies to improve behaviour are reinforced through expressions such as "kind lips, kind hands, kind feet" and used very successfully, for example to deal with incidents of kicking. Specific behaviour plans work very well as specific areas of behaviour are targeted and changed. The pupils are polite to visitors and often spontaneously greet them when seen around the school. Bullying and oppressive behaviour are not a problem. On the very rare occasions when isolated incidents occur, they are well handled.
13. Pupils are keen to do well. Their concentration levels are often very high due to their own enthusiasm and to the interesting tasks the teachers provide. Many pupils take part in day-to-day routines by helping, for example, to take the register to the office and even the youngest children show independence by selecting activities, whether in lessons or at play. As they get older, more responsibility is given, such as joining the editorial panel for the school newspaper, the *Mountjoy Bell*. Students in Years 12 to 14 have specific responsibilities, including going round each class in the morning to collect dinner numbers. They have opportunities to choose what they would like for their lunch, ensuring the ingredients are healthy, shop for it at the local store then cook and eat it.
14. Assemblies encourage pupils to reflect about their own and others' lives. Good links are made between personal experience, the experience of the school community and the wider world. There are opportunities for reflection in lessons. Pupils develop a strong sense of right and wrong, which is taught very effectively through PSHE and citizenship lessons. Many pupils show a growing awareness of the needs of others partly due to the school's support for various charities. These include, Children in Need, the local Children's Hospice and taking part in the Lions Swimathon. Pupils also distribute the produce from their harvest festival to local people and organisations.

15. During their time at the school, children learn to co-operate with adults, work in pairs and small groups and socialise with one another. Pupils participate in residential trips, school visits and performing arts events where they socialise with a wide range of other children and adults, often working as part of a team. An example of this is the school's handbell ringing group who are much in demand at functions during the Christmas period and last year played at a wedding. Pupils also improve their social skills through their work in the community and local mainstream primary, middle and secondary schools.
16. Pupils study world religions and cultures and celebrate festivals including Diwali and Chinese New Year. As a result, they are well prepared for living in a diverse multi-cultural society. What they learn encourages them to respect and tolerate the faiths and beliefs of others and to respect the differences between people. Pupils explore other cultures through cooking and eating different foods, watching traditional dancing and learning about music and art. Events such as the Mexico day give pupils a very good experience of the customs and language of other countries.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The quality of education is good. Particular strengths are in the links made with other schools and colleges, with parents and the local community and in the welfare and safety of the pupils.

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good. Assessment is good and developing further.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lesson planning is good with activities and strategies suited to the needs, age and ability level of all the pupils.
- The teaching of English and mathematics in Years 7 to 9 is very good.
- A positive atmosphere helps pupils to succeed.
- Relationships between the staff and pupils are excellent so pupils try their best.
- Staff deal with difficult behaviour very well.
- Support staff are very effective in helping pupils learn.
- Occasionally there is a lack of consistency.

Commentary

17. The quality of teaching and learning has improved well since the last inspection. The amount of very good or excellent teaching and learning has more than trebled and there is much less that is merely satisfactory. This reflects the success of the strong monitoring and evaluation systems and effective staff training established by the headteacher and the involvement of subject co-ordinators in the process.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 50 lessons. An additional 7 lessons were seen which were not graded because they were taught by staff from other schools, or instructors at the swimming pool.

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2 (4%)	15 (30%)	26 (52%)	7 (14%)	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; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

18. The improvement in teaching and learning is more remarkable when the effects of the recent changes to class groupings are taken into account. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties are now taught with their peers for many of their lessons. Staff have therefore developed new skills to teach a broader range of needs than previously. The quality of the lesson planning is a key factor as the needs of pupils are identified and catered for effectively. This includes using national strategies, such as literacy, numeracy and Key Stage 3 where appropriate, and those that help pupils learn best. For instance, pupils with autistic spectrum disorders learn effectively when they have the very clear structure provided by the modified Treatment and Education of Autistic and Related Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH) method. They learn to “check schedule” and to use transition cards to move from one activity to another. As a result, as they get used to the system, they move smoothly from one activity to another and often concentrate on a series of activities for a relatively long period when working on a one-to-one basis with a member of staff. Many of these pupils and other pupils with communication difficulties have been taught to use PECS successfully, which helps them understand that pictures, symbols and words have meaning and use them well to make their wants and needs known. Planning also includes methods that use the senses which is particularly effective for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Students in Years 12, 13 and 14, for example, are helped to throw a dice that they have to feel the holes (in place of the dots) as a support assistant counts each one. However, there are instances where parts of lessons, often the beginning when pupils are all together, are not sufficiently geared towards ensuring pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties have work at an appropriate level.
19. Teaching and learning are very good in English and mathematics in Years 7 to 9. The very good subject knowledge of teachers is a contributory factor as well as the effective use of national strategies.
20. In all classes staff use a great deal of praise and encouragement. Pupils feel they are succeeding and rise to challenges. For example, to place coins in descending order of value having already arranged them in ascending order. Younger pupils work hard to gain stickers. The pupils genuinely want to please the staff they work with because the relationships are so positive. Levels of trust can be seen in the pool where pupils that are not yet able to swim will confidently launch themselves into the water supported by staff. Staff improve pupils’ difficult behaviour through winning trust. They follow behaviour plans effectively and “catch the pupils being good” so the positive atmosphere is continued. Pupils are distracted from inappropriate actions through being offered alternatives, for example a favourite book to read when they want to go out of the door.
21. Throughout the school, the teamwork of the staff is of high quality. Even when support staff are new to a class they are well briefed and supported by other members of staff who know the pupils and the routines. As a result, pupils have a continuity of provision which helps them to learn effectively. On a few occasions, however, pupils were confused because there was a lack of consistency. This was particularly noticeable with instructions to pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. For instance, instead of the desired simple two word communication of the pupil’s name followed by action “... waiting” the pupil was told “you need to wait” and “it’s not ready yet”. The role of support staff is vital. They are skilled and work very well with pupils whether one-to-one, small or large group. Their timely prompting often enthruses pupils, keeping them involved in an activity. For example, organising pupils and ensuring they have the right equipment to go out and do a traffic survey with them in a Year 9 mathematics lesson. Support staff are also very effective when they are with pupils in mainstream schools. Their familiarity and support give the pupils confidence to succeed.
22. Pupils are given good opportunities to work independently, for example using the computer with a mathematics program. When appropriate, staff will work with pupils but at every opportunity they encourage pupils to work on their own. Paired work is used very effectively. Year 9 pupils use techniques from television quiz shows, such as “phone a friend” when they are stuck. They pose the problem and get clear help from their partner.

23. Teachers and support staff are skilled in the use of questions to assess how much a pupil has understood or learnt. They are clear about what a pupil is expected to learn and aware of the content of each individual education plan. So targets from other curriculum areas are practised, such as, remembering capital letters, or listening to other people. This reinforces in the pupils' minds what they are aiming for and helps them to succeed. Often a member of the support staff will have responsibility for recording progress, either on a one-to-one basis with a pupil, or during a session with the larger group. This is effective as they are able to concentrate on watching the pupils' responses. Pupils become involved in assessing how well they have done in a lesson and, in older classes, give themselves a grade for their efforts. This works particularly well for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
24. Very occasionally, towards the end of a lesson, the pace begins to slow which causes one or two pupils to begin to lose interest. For example, when discussions are allowed to go on for too long. On the other hand, in most lessons, the pace was brisk. In a lesson taken by a speech and language therapy assistant, although each pupil answered four questions, they were short and attention was refocussed on a new activity of choosing an item from a bag.

The curriculum

The curriculum is good and is enriched well. The provision of staff and resources is good but the quality of the accommodation is unsatisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum is appropriate and meets the needs of pupils well.
- The unsatisfactory accommodation adversely affects teaching and learning, though staff make considerable efforts to make best use of the building.
- Accreditation is vastly improved and improving further.
- Arrangements for pupils to have lessons in mainstream schools (inclusion) are a major improvement.
- The curriculum for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders is very good.
- The effective focus on the use of the senses (sensory curriculum) in specialist classes is developing well throughout the school.
- There is a very good range of enrichment activities.
- The curriculum for students in Years 12 to 14 is good.

Commentary

25. The curriculum is wide ranging and effective for all pupils and has improved well since the last inspection. Excellent opportunities have been made for pupils to work with their peers in school and in other schools.
 - The curriculum in science and design and technology has improved considerably through pupils using the very well equipped laboratories and workshops in a local secondary school and being taught by their specialist staff. Every pupil has the opportunity to work with first class resources.
 - Pupils' knowledge of a modern foreign language has broadened through the use of expertise and the teaching by a modern language assistant from the same school which is also a specialist language college.
 - Over the last two years, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and those with autistic spectrum disorder have increased the number of lessons where they are taught in age appropriate groups.
 - A significant number of pupils attend local schools for sessions during the week broadening their experiences.

26. Pupils are currently involved in innovative work as part of a national programme sponsored by a large charity to help with social and personal development. Pupils use the very latest technology such as digital cameras and videos to produce information about themselves to send to pupils in a link school. They send the details gathered through interview and discussion via a computer before meeting the other pupils. This engages pupils who take great pride in preparing a passport of their best features to send to pupils in a link, mainstream school.
27. The curriculum is carefully planned throughout the school in order to meet the wide range of special educational needs of the pupils. Co-ordinators have established systems to ensure that teachers organise lessons to meet the needs of all. Teachers use the specialist sensory rooms and areas effectively to support pupils' learning in a range of subjects. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are helped to extend their experiences using the sensory curriculum which includes a sensory trail in the garden. A broad range of systems and strategies (total communication) improve and encourage communication for all pupils and particularly for those with autistic spectrum disorders. Techniques such as PECS as well as signing and using symbols are used well throughout the school. Aspects of TEACCH are used very effectively to provide the structure needed for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders to learn very effectively. National strategies have been adapted well to meet the needs of all pupils. Throughout the school basic skills lessons are timetabled and support the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills well. Many pupils also benefit from an extensive therapy programme including music therapy.
28. The programme to support pupils' personal and social development is wide ranging and successful. Sex education and relationships are taught effectively mainly through PSHE but also through religious education and science. More formal sessions are undertaken with older pupils and students in consultation with parents. Drug education and education in alcohol misuse are taught through sessions on personal safety. Recently a number of groups visited to promote citizenship when pupils learned about other people's jobs and people who help within the community.
29. Children of nursery and reception age have an appropriate curriculum based on the areas of learning. However, there are limited opportunities for them to learn through play due to the lack of space in the classroom and inadequate fencing of the outside area.
30. The curriculum is well planned for older pupils and students from Years 10 to 14. It provides a good balance of studies, vocational and academic, including accreditation. The range and number of courses that have an award have grown significantly and continue to improve. Now, most subjects, with the exception of ICT and physical education, and many areas concerning life skills have unit awards written or planned for the near future, so that all pupils leave with certificates. The recently introduced *Learning for Life course*, works well providing key skills and specific elements reflecting the needs of the individual student. Preparation for later stages of education and employment is good throughout the school but satisfactory in Years 12 to 14 due to the lack of suitable college provision for pupils and students with profound and multiple learning difficulties.
31. Teachers plan an extensive range of enrichment activities to interest pupils. These include activities at lunchtime and educational visits relating to their lessons and topics. This year a residential visit to Freshwater was shared successfully with pupils from a school they have close links with in Jersey. Younger pupils participate in riding for the disabled and, for older pupils, there is a comprehensive outdoor pursuits programme.
32. The number and match to the curriculum of teaching and support staff are good. Resources are good and of high quality. Audits, subject and school improvement plans lead to each subject having the learning resources required to meet the pupils' needs. The accommodation of the school is outdated, inappropriate and insufficient. The accommodation for science, design and technology, and food technology is poor and there are limited facilities for music,

art and physical education. This has inhibited the development of these subjects and affects teaching and learning. Even though the best use is made of available space, the site is small and has been reduced further recently to provide necessary and safer car parking. The gardens are well planned and used, a sign of the determination of staff to overcome the problems. The older pupils and students use the garden to grow for the kitchen; this forms part of the education for life and the work related learning.

Care, guidance and support

The school cares very well for its pupils' welfare, health and safety and their support and guidance is good. The way the school involves pupils through seeking, valuing and acting on their views is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses:

- Staff are very caring and supportive and know the pupils and their learning needs very well.
- Pupils have excellent relationships with the adults who work with them.
- Improved methods of recording and monitoring progress are providing staff with good information to help pupils make progress.
- Individual education plans are used effectively to focus staff and pupils' efforts.
- There are not sufficient opportunities for pupils to give their views and for their requests about their school to be gathered and considered.

Commentary

33. Staff place the welfare, health and safety of the pupils of foremost importance. They have taken great care to ensure that this has not been compromised due to the changes in class groupings to include pupils in classes with their peers. Overall, improvement since the last inspection is good. Procedures for ensuring child protection are good. The deputy headteacher is the designated liaison person and all staff are well trained and informed. The school receives good support from other agencies and visiting professionals.
34. Monitoring of pupils' progress and personal development is good, especially now there are improved methods of recording. The information is used well to review progress and set targets, which, following training, are now more focussed and used well in individual education plans. The understanding and knowledge of pupils by staff ensures that the personal development of each pupil is monitored well.
35. The trusting relationships built between staff and children enable pupils to make choices and voice any concerns. When asked, pupils stated that they are happy at school and enjoy the opportunities offered. However, there are no regularly used or formal procedures in place to consult the pupils, for example, a questionnaire or school council, so that pupils can have a say in the running of the school.
36. There are good procedures for new pupils to make sure they settle well into school. Those entering the school are offered a home visit and may attend part time initially. This ensures that parents are involved with their children's education from the start and is a valuable opportunity to voice any concerns and for exchange of information. There is also thorough attention to the process when pupils return to mainstream schools, either for particular subjects or on a permanent basis, through well established links.
37. Despite the shortcomings of the buildings, the classrooms and grounds are very well cared for and health and safety checks are regularly carried out. Litter and graffiti are non-existent due to the vigilance of the caretaker and the care of their environment by the pupils. The welcoming displays, especially on corridor walls, are enjoyed and valued by the pupils.

38. The teaching staff have forged very good links with employers and colleges of further education. As a result, pupils have a wide choice of work experience and suitable college placements. Staff ensure that secondary age pupils have appropriate information and guidance concerning suitable courses or career opportunities. A representative from the Connexions service attends the annual review in Year 9, but they do not otherwise work in the school to support and guide students directly towards career choices.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school works very well in partnership with parents and the community. There are excellent links with mainstream schools. Outreach services, although limited, are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent links with local schools promote inclusion very effectively.
- The Friends of Mountjoy Special School are very active and effective.
- Parents are very supportive of the work of the school.
- Communications between parents and the school are very good but there are inconsistencies in clearly reporting pupils' progress.

Commentary

39. Parents consider staff to be approachable and welcoming and are generally confident in raising concerns informally with them. The supportive parents' and friends association raises considerable sums of money for the school and is very effective in gaining the support of local businesses that often sponsor events or provide prizes. Events are organised so that parents can meet up. This is particularly important as the school serves such a wide geographical area.
40. The quality of information provided for parents is good overall. Regular informative newsletters are sent home from the school, and the fortnightly school newspaper, the *Mountjoy Bell*, produced by the students, has many informative articles. The home-school books keep the parents informed on a daily basis and many parents use them to let the school know any pertinent facts straightaway. The prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents fully comply with statutory requirements and are well presented. Parents appreciate the arrangements at annual reviews, which provide a comprehensive assessment of pupils' abilities, strengths, weaknesses, including any health problems and behaviour issues. They also involve other professionals where appropriate. Annual reports, however, do not always give information about pupils' progress. There are instances where what a pupil has experienced are described rather than what they have learnt. These inconsistencies are being addressed and the most recent examples are much improved.
41. Pupils are helped to make progress and maintain their place in mainstream school through the support of staff from Mountjoy. Although only recently established, this outreach facility is well-led and managed and valued by the schools in which support is provided. The outcomes for pupils are very well evaluated, demonstrating the success in helping them learn effectively.
42. The transfer of information about pupils with partner schools in the Bridport Pyramid is highly productive and systematic. The school has developed an impressive range of formal and informal links with many schools to enable pupils to experience a wider curriculum. Younger pupils attend mainstream schools on an individual basis for particular sessions and senior pupils attend the local secondary school as a whole class each week for lessons in science and design and technology to maximise the provision available. Pupils' Spanish is greatly improved through being taught by the language assistant from this school, which specialises in language teaching. The joint work between the staff of the two schools shares expertise very effectively. Jointly organised curriculum projects take place, for example, an International Day. Pupils attend another local secondary school for events such as a dance, drama and sports

day where they work with their mainstream peers and the staff. They gain a great deal and use facilities such as a drama studio and sports hall.

43. Further afield the school also has good links with the Weymouth Outdoor Education Centre and the West Dorset Land and Food Trust. The school takes part in community events such as the Bridport Carnival, recently winning the most colourful float category. The community provides a range of work experience placements, use of facilities and opportunities for visits. These include horse-riding for the disabled and swimming at the local leisure centre. There are regular visits to the school from musicians and dancers. Local preachers lead school assemblies regularly throughout the year and the Christmas tree service is held at the local church. The school buildings and hydrotherapy pool are used by several organisations including the Girl Guides. Overall since the last inspection, improvement is good.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management are very good. The leadership of the school is very good and the management is very good. The governance of the school is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Leadership provided by the headteacher and the senior management team is very good.
- There is very strong teamwork throughout the school.
- Very clear strategic management is based on effective self-evaluation and has ensured that difficulties are overcome and improvements implemented successfully.
- Change has been managed very well.
- Governors have a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- The shortcomings of the buildings have been minimised as far as possible.
- The management of finance and the day-to-day running of the school are very smooth and effective.

Commentary

44. The very good leadership of the headteacher, who has been in post for two years, is firmly based on a clear vision for the future of the school and a strong commitment to the further improvement of standards. A very effective, enlarged senior management team has been quickly established. Together, the headteacher and the senior management team work very well to plan for and bring about the necessary changes to ensure that pupils make as much progress as they can. Members of staff are empowered to take responsibility and make appropriate decisions. Teachers and support assistants accept these responsibilities, feel trusted and valued and this leads to very strong teamwork throughout the school. Staff and governors are resilient. They have maintained a high morale in spite of recent news that the new school may not be built. These elements are the most significant aids the school has to further improvement. The most significant barrier to achievement is the woefully inadequate accommodation.
45. The quality of strategic planning is very good. The headteacher and senior management team have monitored and evaluated the work of the school and have used the information to develop a very thorough map for the school's future. Through the monitoring, the headteacher has correctly identified areas that need development, for example, focussing on developing further the teaching of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Curriculum areas are well led and a carefully planned series of developments to raise standards are taking place. The improvements have included changes to groupings, minimising the effects of the poor accommodation, the increasing use of signing and symbols and the appointment of staff with specialist skills. These changes have ensured that pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and those with autistic spectrum disorders can be more successfully taught with their peers.

46. The school has a clear commitment to personal evaluation, performance management and continuing professional development. Teaching and learning, planning and pupils' work and achievements are all carefully monitored and analysed. Staff are encouraged to keep their own personal development files to identify their training needs and to gain training to help develop their skills. The emphasis on enhancing staff skills is seen as very important and valuable by both teachers and teaching assistants. There are very good systems for the induction of new staff. As a result, staff have been able successfully to adapt their teaching to ensure they focus on the progress of all the pupils in their classes.
47. The governors ensure all statutory requirements are met including those concerning race discrimination. They are very well placed to help shape the vision for the future of the school because they have a thorough first hand knowledge from information they gather, their visits to the school and links with subject co-ordinators. They each take an interest in a particular subject or area of the school's work. Governors are supportive and where necessary challenge the managers of the school to give explanations of proposals made.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2003 to March 2004

Income and expenditure (£)		Balances (£)	
Total income	759,798	Balance from previous year	74,365*
Total expenditure	748,551	Balance carried forward to the next	85,612*
Expenditure per pupil	17,822		

* This figure includes £50,000 held in "Reserve"

48. The financial management is very good. The development plans and priorities are clearly linked to financial planning. The headteacher and governors' finance working group carefully set budgets to enable the school to meet its commitments and work towards the improvements it plans. Spending decisions are carefully considered and good practice in seeking best value is followed. A fine balance has been maintained between improving the quality of the accommodation and maintaining funds to support the move to the new school. For example, purchases such as the pavilion have been made with a view to being able to move them to the new school. The administrative team are effective in supporting the smooth day-to-day running of the school. Good outcomes in terms of pupils' progress and achievement, and their very good attitudes and behaviour show clearly that the school provides good value for money.
49. There has been good improvement in the leadership and management since the last inspection. The role model provided by the headteacher and senior managers, the shared commitment and teamwork of staff are key factors in this improvement.

WORK RELATED LEARNING

The effectiveness of work related learning (WRL) is very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- A very good range of experiences and opportunities for students has been developed.
- The links forged with the community and with mainstream schools are used extremely well to provide WRL.
- Work experience is organised well.

- The business enterprise is very good.

Commentary

50. Pupils follow programmes preparing them very well for leaving school and beginning new placements in colleges, at work or in residential provision. These programmes that are part of the Year 10 to Year 14 curriculum are based on the needs of pupils and introduce them effectively to the world of work and to greater independence. Lessons in design and technology, which pupils attend in a mainstream school, are designed to give them experience and knowledge of the smallest details of manufacture and design. They undertake work in costing, quality checking and analysing the best way to produce items. At present, this involves mass production of toys, the overlap into designing and manufacturing is scheduled to be included as the projects widen.
51. Students in Years 12 to 14 are well prepared for learning from their work experience. They gain from opportunities to meet new people as well as gaining a valuable insight into the world of work. There is a broad range to suit all students in a number of venues in the community and in the school. For example, they work in gardens, help in charity shops and in a café.
52. The school has adopted the principles and intentions of the enterprise education programmes effectively. The projects already begun illustrate their depth of commitment. The most impressive project is the *Mountjoy Bell* newspaper where the pupils have followed the guidelines on problem solving, planning, marketing and production. They have a mentor from business and the paper makes a profit. Staff in school and members of the community provide inspiration for the pupils. The editorial board, made up of parents and students, manages the paper and ensures there is variety. The pupils interview people for articles and collect advertising revenue from businesses in the town. The board decides on content, and the layout. They also learn how to behave like business people, for example, they have a day out bowling to enjoy some of their profits as a reward for their labours. This production illustrates very positive methods of joining many subjects together with one goal.
53. Work related learning is enriched through excellent programmes such as those organised by the West Dorset Food and Land Trust. The centre has a teacher and volunteers who help students complete their work units. Students follow healthy eating plans and cook healthy meals. They use, where possible, local produce, some of which they have grown at school, gaining skills in cultivation and harvesting. Following the Olympic Games theme, students prepared and cooked a Greek meal. Students' independence skills are also developed as where possible, they find their own way to the centre.

PART C: THE QUALITY OF EDUCATION IN AREAS OF LEARNING, SUBJECTS AND COURSES

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

The provision for children in the foundation stage is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Communication skills are taught well.
- There are good strategies to help children improve their behaviour.
- Progress is limited by the lack of suitable accommodation for play, inside and outside.

Commentary

54. It was not possible to make judgements about the progress and achievement of children of nursery and reception age as there was only one part time child, who had just started school, attending at the time of the inspection.
55. There are good opportunities for developing children's **language and literacy skills**. Staff use signs and symbols to support communication effectively and records show that older pupils that started in the nursery and reception years have done well in this area of learning. Children's **personal, social and emotional development** is underpinned by effective strategies to improve behaviour and encourage children to work with others. For example, during circle time, or turn taking when selecting stars to go on a chart. Their confidence is boosted through staff using plenty of praise and as a result, they are prepared to try new activities. Numeracy skills are taught frequently, supporting **mathematical development** well. Children count, match and identify colours gradually building up an understanding of what numbers mean. Sessions of hydrotherapy and swimming improve **physical development** and children learn to control their movements in physical education and dance lessons. Art lessons help **develop creative skills** and **children's knowledge and understanding of the world** is broadened through using computer programs, learning about festivals and exploring materials to find out about their properties. However, in all the areas of learning, there are insufficient opportunities for children to learn through structured play or to be able to use the area outside to play in. This is because the accommodation is poor and is the major factor in the deterioration of the provision since the last inspection. The room is too small to establish discrete areas where equipment such as sand and water trays, construction toys or a 'home corner' with dressing up clothes for imaginative play can be easily accessible. The outside area is in the process of being fenced and has been unsafe to use because it was not secure.
56. The co-ordinator has clear expertise in working with nursery and reception aged children and has done a great deal to organise the classroom to support the teaching and learning of older pupils, those with autistic spectrum disorder and nursery and reception aged pupils together.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 1 to 4 and Post-16

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

Modern Foreign Language

Spanish

57. Following a very successful pilot, last year, Spanish is the modern foreign language taught. An exciting and innovative solution to the lack of subject expertise has been developed with the local specialist language college:

- A modern language assistant teaches at Mountjoy each week;
 - Regular planning and monitoring meetings are held with staff at the college;
 - Pupils from Mountjoy broaden their experiences of modern foreign languages through attending events such as International Day and a French breakfast at the college.
58. The new assistant was not in post at the time of the inspection, however, a group of Years 10 to 14 pupils demonstrated their skills in a registration session. A number showed good recall for example of days of the week, numbers and colours from their teaching last year. Good use was made of flashcards and skilful hints and clues by the member of staff.
59. The co-ordinator has a clear view of how to develop the subject further. For example, at present pupils receive a certificate produced by the college at the end of their course. It is planned for example, to gain external accreditation through unit awards.

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teachers' planning is high.
- Good and at times very good teaching ensures pupils learn well.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 9 make very good progress.
- The use of communication strategies has improved well which helps pupils to achieve in all areas of the curriculum. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders make particularly good progress.
- The subject is well led and managed.
- There is very good work with speech and language therapists.

Commentary

60. Pupils achieve well in English and their progress is good. At times they do very well, particularly in speaking and listening. The quality of teachers' planning is good. It is based on their good understanding of individual pupils' needs and linked to pupils' individual targets. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders develop very effective strategies to communicate, particularly using PECS. Their understanding that pictures and symbols have meaning improves and for many their vocabulary grows significantly.
61. In Year 2, pupils play a matching game where they match sounds to pictures, for example, laughing, crying. They concentrate well and respond in a variety of ways including eye pointing and gesture as well as speech. These responses are carefully noted and built upon by the staff who use simple signing and pictures well. Careful questioning makes sure that pupils understand what is expected of them and tasks are carefully matched to the pupils' abilities. When they are reading a book using the interactive whiteboard, pupils name the characters and point them out. More able pupils make their own book with pictures of the characters and labels of their names. They are keen to read the book they have made with a support assistant and are rightly proud of their efforts. Less able pupils carry out matching activities and the consistent use by staff of signing and symbols supports their achievement.
62. During Years 3 to 6, pupils continue to develop their skills in communication. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties take part in story sessions that use textures and sound to illustrate them. They achieve well, becoming alert and animated and responding to well known routines. More able pupils develop their mark making and writing skills and use the computer well to write simple texts. Pupils in Year 6 use the interactive whiteboard to look at books from a reading scheme and to extend their knowledge of phonics by focussing on initial letter sounds. Teachers carefully link this work with sensory approaches where objects

beginning with the chosen sound are produced discussed touched and in the case of 'a' for apple eaten! The work is extended into reading and writing with pupils finding words on the computer and typing them while others write words they can think of starting with the target letter.

63. Pupils in Year 9 have made very good progress and are achieving very well. They work hard and have opportunities, through clearly understood routines, to learn more independently. Staff still help and support appropriately and encourage pupils' collaborative working, for example suggesting to a pupil who found difficulty with a worksheet that he "phone a friend". The pupil mimed phoning and his peer responded, helping him to understand what he needed to do. These approaches add to the growing maturity of pupils and give them confidence in communicating. Work with speech and language staff developing responses to "who, where, what and when?" is very successful in improving pupils' understanding, thinking skills and use of language as they take turns to speak and listen to each other. Pupils are encouraged to read widely and to write for different purposes for example recording, writing letters, or making lists.
64. Year 11 pupils study a variety of texts including plays. They study *Romeo and Juliet* and use the library to support their learning. Skilful teaching, well planned at the appropriate level makes sure that all pupils can join in and all feel a real sense of achievement when they have completed tasks set, for example, to find out six facts about Shakespeare. Pupils are helped to use a variety of sources including books, DVDs and the Internet to help them. Their growing confidence and maturity are acknowledged by the teacher who combines humour with interactions that are based on a genuine respect for each other. Continued work with speech and language therapists helps to make sure that the pupils understand the social conventions of conversation and they make good progress in becoming more confident in giving opinions and listening carefully to their peers.
65. Students in Years 12 to 14 continue to improve their communication skills effectively. Staff encourage them to use their skills in the community with a broader range of people including staff at the leisure centre and assistants in shops. Students with profound and multiple learning difficulties use switches well to make choices but find activities such as discriminating vowels too difficult. Reading and writing skills are enhanced through work on the *Mountjoy Bell*. Students use the computer to write articles and support staff are very effective in scribing, for example, to caption a photograph.
66. The co-ordinator has good subject knowledge. The focus on total communication (using a broad range of communication aids including signing, symbols and language programmes) and clear development plan means that there is a very good emphasis on pupils' achievement. The literacy strategy is well used throughout the school. The way speech and language therapists work with staff, particularly the class lessons taken by the therapists, helps pupils to improve their communication skills effectively. Good records are kept of pupils' progress towards their targets. The pupils are constantly reminded of what they are aiming to achieve which helps them to succeed. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

Literacy across the curriculum

67. The development of pupils' literacy and language skills is good across the curriculum. Teachers plan opportunities in their lessons for language development, reading and writing. For example, pupils read numbers in mathematics, use specialist vocabulary in science, have discussions in PSHE and citizenship and conversations in music and physical education. Pupils practise their communication and literacy skills when writing for the school magazine the *Mountjoy Bell*. For example, they interviewed the lead inspector with carefully prepared questions and wrote up the responses under the heading "Goodbye, Inspectors" which was read with great amusement.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils make good progress and achieve well in mathematics overall and make very good progress during Years 7 to 9.
- Many pupils with autistic spectrum disorder make particularly good progress.
- Lessons are often very well planned to cater for the needs of all the pupils in the class.
- The work for students in Year 12 and above is suitable for their age.
- Opportunities for pupils to gain awards are increased this year.

Commentary

68. Pupils do well in mathematics because teachers plan lessons carefully to ensure that all pupils have work that is suitably difficult and is interesting. Pupils in Years 1 to 2 are helped to learn to count through singing number songs such as *One Little Sailing Boat* and counting as they place the picture of a boat on the card. They choose which colour they would like and name it accurately. Practical activities are also used well in helping pupils with autistic spectrum disorder to learn very effectively. Their tasks, such as stacking shapes in order, cutting out a circle and completing an inset clock puzzle, naming the numbers with a very good degree of concentration are organised very well.
69. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties improve their ability to discriminate between shapes and to track objects through well chosen activities. For example, they use a switch to operate a computer program making the circles change from screen to screen. They locate a circle on a large soft dice and track a lighted sphere in a darkened area.
70. Very good use of national strategies contributes to the very good teaching and learning and the very good progress in Years 7 to 9. The group activity at the beginning of the lesson uses questions pitched at the right level for each pupil and the main activities are also suitably matched to ability. The main part of the lesson often includes several activities, such as participating in a traffic survey and recording details graphically and working on programs on the computers. When learning about money, pupils in Years 10 and 11 sort real money, identify coins and order them according to value. Pupils are encouraged to use their mathematical skills, for example, to purchase their folders at the local shops and to establish which is the most expensive. Practical situations are used effectively for students in Years 12 to 14. They consolidate and improve their counting skills through activities that are also very suitable for their leisure time. The more able play darts and add up the scores and others including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties play bar skittles counting those knocked over often with appropriate help from peers.
71. The co-ordinator for mathematics leads and manages the subject well. As a result, improvement since the last inspection is good. There is now appropriate time allocated to teaching and the co-ordinator checks that this is maintained. Importantly, there is no longer any unsatisfactory progress and the use of mathematical skills has developed well. Pupils' progress is monitored and steps taken to establish why a particular group may not be doing so well and steps are taken to make improvements. Lessons are monitored and resources audited to ensure expenditure, which is linked to a subject improvement plan, is accurately targeted. There are opportunities, this year, for pupils to gain an increased number of unit awards in a broader range of topics.

Mathematics across the curriculum

72. Pupils use their mathematical skills effectively in a broad range of subjects. Staff are skilled in getting pupils to count, for example, the number of pupils in the class, shoes and socks when dressing after swimming and the number of pieces needed for each kebab in food technology. In design and technology, pupils measure accurately, timing how long it takes to complete the item which is then compared with mass production techniques to make a saving of three minutes!

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils from Year 7 have their science lessons in a local mainstream school. This provision is excellent; it provides first class resources and personal development for pupils.
- Pupils make good progress and achieve well because they are well taught by teachers with good subject expertise.
- Pupils learn to find things out for themselves.
- Good use is made of resources in the school
- Accommodation in school is poor.

Commentary

73. Teachers use their expertise well to plan interesting lessons that include exciting practical activities which are suitably difficult. This results in good overall achievement. Discussion at the beginning of each lesson ensures all pupils know exactly what they have to do. As a result, pupils' confidence increases and they develop good skills in observing and finding out what happens, such as, when heat is applied to a range of substances. Because lessons are interesting, pupils also enjoy what they do. In a Year 2 lesson, a pupil with profound and multiple learning difficulties used investigational skills and smiled and laughed while exploring the tools to be used in an experiment. Staff are very aware of the need for basic skills being developed to increase pupils' curiosity. For example the differences between hot and cold are explored in cooking as well as in reporting the weather. By Year 6, pupils' levels of concentration are high for example, when they use magnets to determine which materials are metal. They check out predictions and are able to produce a good record of their experiment.
74. The expertise of the staff in the mainstream school laboratory is used well. They and the accompanying staff from Mountjoy take great care to understand dangers and follow health and safety procedures. They remind pupils how to turn on Bunsen burners correctly, have clear routines, for example, for lighting the gas, and are constantly vigilant; their efforts are rewarded when pupils remember what they have to do. Firm, well established routines help pupils with autistic spectrum disorders to achieve very well in science. The support staff ensure that programmes have symbols and familiar references so pupils take part fully. These pupils reinforce basic work on forces when working with push and pull toys. The use of key vocabulary throughout the lessons helps all pupils with their literacy and communication skills.
75. In Years 10 and 11, pupils work towards a satisfactory number of awards which are increasing this year. They organise planting trees and develop skills in making predictions about trees and bulbs. These older pupils are learning self-evaluation techniques. They build on skills of observation and research learnt previously to develop effective investigational skills. For example, they explore decomposing rubbish collected the previous lesson, describing it as "disgusting". Pupils with profound and multiple learning disabilities show interest in experiments and in the workshops. They are aware of changes in materials, explore textures

and switch lights on and off. The practical lessons help them to experience simple consequences of actions

76. Accommodation in the school does not enable pupils to participate fully in experimental work as there is insufficient space particularly for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties to be involved as part of a class. Although staff work tremendously hard to make science possible, the curriculum is limited.
77. The subject is well managed by an experienced co-ordinator who is new to post. The planning and vision of the future of science in every subject area is a strong indicator of quality. The links with mainstream schools are developed extremely well. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

Provision in information and communication technology (ICT) is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning is good overall throughout the school.
- Leadership of the subject is good but some strands of ICT are not taught consistently throughout the school.
- An increased use of ICT supports subject teaching and learning well.

Commentary

78. Overall, pupils make good progress and achieve well. Good and effective efforts have been made to improve the quality and quantity of computers. Teachers' competence and confidence in the use of ICT have also improved well since the previous inspection. They effectively use interactive whiteboards for whole class teaching and pupils too enjoy using them. Through good lesson planning pupils' learning is both interesting and appropriate. As a result, in Year 2, pupils are using the mouse with increased confidence to navigate through programs. Although pupils with autistic spectrum disorders may show reluctance at using the computer they gain in confidence and will touch the computer keyboard.
79. Teachers' make good use of their knowledge of pupils to shape direct questioning to guide pupils' learning. Additionally, teaching and learning support assistants provide very good support to their pupils' which further enables the pupils' learning. By Year 6, pupils are using the program *Writing with Symbols*, some using *Big Keys* a large keyboard, to write their names and addresses and use the symbols as part of their communication programmes. They are also beginning to learn how to control floor devices, such as the *Roamer*, through a simple sequence of instructions, forwards and backwards. In one such lesson the pupil was evidently pleased with himself in using his mathematical knowledge to move the device on 'one more'.
80. Pupils, by Year 9, show an increasing confidence in their use of ICT through word processing, mouse control in navigating through subject discrete programs. They are being introduced to the use of a digital camera. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties improve or consolidate their use of switches to use computer programs or control devices such as tape recorders. In Years 10 and 11 pupils use their word processing skills well in other subjects and search the Internet for information. The higher ability pupils use different font size and type in their text and are also begin to learn to make presentations using the program PowerPoint.
81. Students in Years 12 to 14 make good use of their ICT skills. For example, in their production of the school's *Mountjoy Bell* newspaper they word process the copy, use the Internet for information and digitised photographs to illustrate features.

82. Occasionally, where teaching is less than good the pace of lessons is sometimes too fast for the lower achievers to follow and work is not set at an appropriate level to encourage pupils to learn. This applies in particular to pupils and students with profound and multiple learning difficulties where the presentation of learning objects is too abstract and the use of objects of reference to make the learning more visible is not always planned for.
83. Leadership of the subject is good. The co-ordinator has improved the provision despite the lack of space preventing the provision of an ICT suite. Every class but one has an interactive whiteboard which is linked to the Internet providing a well used source for information and teaching resources. At present, the applications of ICT such as graphics and data handling are not consistently taught throughout the school but this is being addressed. Although overall, the improvement since the last inspection is good, there is inadequate provision for accreditation to enable pupils and students to demonstrate their achievements.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

84. Information and communication technology is used well by both teachers and pupils to support subject teaching and learning. Teachers have researched and acquired a range of subject specific programs and encourage pupils to use such applications as word processing well to support their learning. For example, in a Year 4 literacy lesson pupils used *Writing with Symbols* and an animated program to reinforce their learning of initial letter sounds. In mathematics ICT is effectively used to provide Year 12 students with experience of coin recognition and giving the correct sums of money to purchase items. Nursery aged and Year 2 pupils gain a great deal from using a range of programs to improve their mathematical understanding and their language and literacy.

HUMANITIES

85. One lesson was seen in humanities with a **geography** focus. Effective teamwork of staff ensured all pupils learnt about climate differences. They used a good range of resources well including computers, books and globes. There is clear evidence from the co-ordinators' planning and from lesson plans and work scrutiny that work in geography is varied and interesting. The new co-ordinator has good plans for the subject and is developing a scheme to combine history and geography in humanities. The subjects do already work hand-in-hand, for example in Year 9, pupils are studying the local area for geography and the Bridport Charter in history. Other topics lend themselves to be covered in a range of subjects. When water is the theme, pupils study weather and ancient boats.
86. No lessons were seen in **history** due to the timetable arrangements for the term. There is good evidence to indicate that work in history is well planned to meet individual needs of pupils. There is a good range of resources and artefacts. Also the local area is used well to illustrate why towns grow and how businesses develop. Visits are used effectively to reinforce the basic skills and knowledge.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is an appropriate curriculum based upon the Local Agreed Syllabus which meets pupils' needs well.
- Teaching is good overall with a range of activities well matched to pupils' abilities and age.
- Pupils respond well to carefully planned lessons that use sensory experiences to develop their understanding.
- The subject is well led and managed.

Commentary

87. Pupils' progress and achievement in religious education are good. They have good opportunities to find out about and then celebrate the festivals of a range of faiths which they often do during assemblies. The Local Agreed Syllabus has been well used as the basis for the school's detailed plan of what will be taught, helping teachers to plan effectively. As a result, pupils in Year 2, for example, learn about and develop their understanding of the creation story. Skilful use of a background board so that pupils can add cut-outs works well. Pupils listen intently and are keen to choose animals and fishes to add to the picture. Careful questioning by the teacher ensures that pupils make progress, for example, from thinking that Old Macdonald put all the animals on earth to being able to say that some faiths believe that God made them all.
88. Less able pupils are encouraged to use all their senses to learn. Staff ensure a good range of resources helps pupils to participate. For example, when learning about the creation story and living creatures, pupils become animated when experiencing dark and then light. They focus on objects, reacting with excitement when activating the sound beam (a piece of equipment that makes sounds in response to movement) to make the sound of water. They learn that fish smell strongly and animal fur is soft. Their responses are carefully noted in their assessments. Good use is also made of additional resources, for example, Year 9 pupils brought things from home, such as uniforms from scouts and pictures of churches and other groups to illustrate belonging.
89. There is a very appropriately mature approach to learning for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and Years 12 to 14. Pupils and students make good progress in understanding that not everyone believes the same thing. Time is taken to encourage all pupils to express opinions explaining what they think and believe about the world and to listen to the views of others.
90. Religious education is well led and managed throughout the school. The co-ordinator has clear plans and is appropriately developing assessment and monitoring systems. Non-specialist staff have access to a range of helpful information and books. There is a good range of artefacts from many faiths together with information about the uses and beliefs associated with them. These artefacts are carefully kept and stored and treated respectfully. Improvement since the last inspection is good.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

91. During the inspection it was only possible to observe one lesson of **art and design** therefore judgements cannot be made about the overall quality of teaching and learning. However evidence from teacher plans, records, an extensive display of pupils' work and from discussions with the subject co-ordinator show that pupils use a wide range of different media in their work. Pupils are also introduced to the work of artists and join with other schools in working with local artists.
92. Teachers' planning is good, resources used well and links made with other areas of learning. Pupils are interested in their work in making 'magic power shields' as part of the current project about Native American Indians. A very appropriate emphasis on the use of materials and activities that require the use of the senses ensures that all pupils are able to take part successfully. In the lesson seen, all make choices, selecting colour and decorative feathers and beads carefully, using eye pointing, gesture or verbal choice. There is no specific accommodation for teaching art and design which restricts the breadth of media and techniques that can be used. This limits the overall progress pupils make.
93. Only two **music** lessons were observed and a limited amount of work was sampled, therefore, it is not possible to make a firm judgement on provision for the subject. Particularly good teaching and learning was seen in a predominately Year 6 lesson on rhythm and turn taking. Very appropriate resources were used that maintained the interest and attention of the pupils,

many of whom have autistic spectrum disorders. The teacher's enthusiasm for the subject, an excellent teaching style and class management, very well supported by learning support assistants, enabled the pupils' excellent learning. Students in Years 12, to 14 continue to learn about and appreciate music. In a very good lesson based upon *Zorba's Dance* they practised sequences of steps that changed in direction and timing. The facial expressions of the students with profound and multiple learning difficulties, who were totally included supported by learning support and teaching assistants, and cries of achievement from other students indicated their enjoyment in their learning.

94. Music therapy sessions for a number of pupils are a relatively recent provision. In two such sessions that were sampled, pupils responded well to a change in rhythm, pace and mood of the music that encouraged their communication and tolerance of others very well.
95. The co-ordinator provides good leadership and management of the subject. Realising that teachers do not possess the higher order skills, such as to teach instrumental music, a development plan for the subject has been produced which aims to establish links with the music departments of mainstream schools to provide the required specialist teaching. A group of pupils and students have formed a hand bell ringing group and have achieved considerable success and popularity being in demand to perform at functions within the local community.

Design and technology

Provision in design and technology is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are practical opportunities for pupils to design and make using power machines.
- The curriculum is greatly improved; the strength of planning ensures a breadth of curriculum in design technology.
- Support for pupils in lessons is very effective.
- The quality of teaching and learning is good and at times very good.
- Food studies provide excellent opportunities for students to learn self-help skills.
- Accommodation in school is poor.

Commentary

96. Overall, pupils do well and their achievement is good, which is a good improvement since the last inspection. They make very good progress when using the facilities at the local mainstream school as well as in courses that focus on the preparation for leaving and learning for life. Work is stimulating and pupils use the very good resources in the mainstream school workshops. For example, their activities on mass production techniques require the use of tools such as electric lathes and drills. They learn to use them safely and accurately to cut, drill, sand and join, in the production of toys.
97. Throughout all lessons the support staff, including volunteers are very effective. In the 'healthy living' project at the West Dorset Food and Land Trust, pupils, teachers and volunteers work together very well. The design and testing procedures are consistently applied, for example, when arranging the kebabs on the sticks. Staff ensure that every pupil participates fully: they use individual schedules to keep pupils with autistic spectrum disorders involved successfully. Pupils' understanding of nutrition improves as they learn about healthy meals.
98. In food technology, good questioning ensures, for example, that pupils in Year 6 understand about hygiene and apply the principles when they work. They use the techniques of stirring and mixing effectively when making lemon biscuits. Pupils in Year 2 enjoy a more sensory experience when choosing ingredients for a healthy pizza. They look closely at, touch, taste

and smell items. Students enjoy their course on *survival cooking* where they learn about nutrition and how to prepare meals. Food studies are popular with pupils at every age, but the most impressive work is observed in work with resistant materials. Pupils make boxes with plastic inserts. This requires many skills and pupils are especially pleased with results. Students gain from the preparation for leaving activities, learning for life is an important part of their timetable. They shop for ingredients for their meals and make good use of equipment such as a microwave.

99. The leadership and management of the subject is good, pupils are already benefiting from the clear vision and detailed planning. The various elements of the provision are drawn together effectively to ensure the necessary areas are taught. The design part of the *Mountjoy Bell* demonstrates how pupils apply the ideas, planning and production skills they have learnt. However, there is a barrier to improving the progress of pupils further because there is no workshop and the food technology room is inappropriate. It is in the area used to serve school meals and inadequate for pupils with profound and multiple disabilities. The effects of the accommodation have been partly overcome for older pupils by the innovative use of facilities elsewhere but this entails a great deal of time for planning and practical work cannot be reinforced in school.

Physical education

Provision in physical education is **good**.

Main strength and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are consistently good and at times very good, teachers plan lessons well.
- Good inclusion links with other schools and establishments overcome the lack of appropriate accommodation for indoor and outdoor activities.
- Management is good but accreditation unsatisfactory

Commentary

100. Pupils enjoy their learning; they listen and respond to their teachers' instructions well. Lesson planning is good. Teachers know their pupils and how they learn best and they have very good relationships with them. Tasks are set at an appropriate level for pupils of differing abilities which encourages them to learn. Consequently, pupils achieve well. In Year 2, for example, pupils improve their confidence and individual water skills in the hydrotherapy pool. The more able swimmers swim independently, including the pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. Others are supported by either teaching assistants or using support aids. Pupils in Year 6 enjoy exercises. Clear instructions from the teacher and a fast pace keep them involved and improve their control, moving fast and slow, walking and running and taking part in group activities. In Years 7 to 11 most pupils are improving their ball skills, passing the ball by throwing, rolling or bouncing and sending, receiving and travelling with the ball. They also practise hockey and basketball skills at a local mainstream school. Students in Years 12 to 14 have opportunities to improve their swimming skills at a local leisure centre and outdoor pursuits such as canoeing and orienteering at Weymouth Outdoor Education Centre (WOEC)
101. Accommodation is unsatisfactory with a lack of wall apparatus and large apparatus for gymnastics in the school hall and there is no grassed area for track and sport. However, throughout the year, all aspects of the National Curriculum are taught using both school facilities and those in the community.
102. The coordinator has recently taken up the post and has worked hard to maintain the provision. This ensures the broadest possible curriculum and facilities to enable all pupils, whatever their skills, to achieve to the best of their abilities. Accreditation opportunities are too narrow a range, presently limited to AQA unit awards in canoeing, kayaking and swimming, and do not

reflect the wide range of subject skills that pupils and students achieve. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Provision in personal social and health education (PSHE) and citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning are good overall throughout the school and reflect the priority that school gives to the subject.
- The subject is taught across the wider curriculum.
- Pupils with profound multiple learning difficulties are now taught with their peers.
- Leadership is good, but the teaching of citizenship does not make the best use of opportunities developed in other subjects.

Commentary

103. Staff have worked well to ensure the same standard of provision for the subject, as at the previous inspection. Teachers have a good understanding of their pupils' individual needs, both academic and social. This is reflected in their good planning and the setting of work for pupils of differing abilities that encourages the pupils to learn. Opportunities are planned in circle time at the end of the school day for pupils to reflect on their attitudes and behaviour during the day. This is particularly helpful and effective to the learning of the pupils with autistic spectrum disorders.
104. Pupils' progress and achievements across the school are good. In Year 2 pupils play co-operatively in small groups and they are beginning to recognise how their behaviour affects others. They learn to share and to take turns. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorder learn to tolerate other pupils working in the same area. By Year 6, pupils are able to express their feelings. They use ICT well to identify their feelings using symbols. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their skills and attributes. For example, in a Year 9 lesson on the topic *All About Me*, pupils were able to discuss and give reasons why they selected certain photographs to send to a link school in Jersey. Teaching and support staff provide very good support particularly to the pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. They help to ensure that all pupils contribute to lessons and often assist in communication and interaction with pupils' peers. Throughout Years 10 and 11 pupils are helped to become more aware of their responsibilities within the school and, as they get older, in the community. At a board meeting of the school's newspaper, which students in Years 12 to 14 ran themselves, they willingly took on such roles as editor and reporter. Visits to the registry office and to the town hall have broadened their understanding. Students learnt about the procedures and the importance of the ceremony for a marriage. They also had opportunities to explore the role of the mayor and try on robes of office. Recently, discussions during a civic visit to the school of more than thirty mayors in their regalia broadened students' understanding further.
105. The co-ordinator has planned the subject well but has yet to map the teaching of citizenship in all subjects to ensure that pupils build on their learning. A very good range of contacts with local and the wider community has been established to broaden the subject and make it more relevant for the pupils. Although the school has optimised the use of accommodation areas for the social interaction of the older pupils, and particularly the students in Years 12 and 13, these areas are too small and do not encourage the learning and practising of social skills.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
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	3
Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	2
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	3
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	5
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	2
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
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	1
The leadership and management of the school	2
The governance of the school	2
The leadership of the headteacher	2
The leadership of other key staff	2

The effectiveness of management	2
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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 against individual targets and not national standards.*