

INSPECTION REPORT

THE GRANTHAM SANDON SCHOOL

Grantham

LEA area: Lincolnshire

Unique reference number: 120748

Headteacher: Mrs J Roddis

Reporting inspector: Mr H J Phillips
16227

Dates of inspection: 27-30 May 2002

Inspection number: 193752

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Type of school: | Special |
| School category: | Community |
| Age range of pupils: | 2 to 19 |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| School address: | Sandon Close Grantham Lincs |
| Postcode: | NG31 9AX |
| Telephone number: | 01476 564994 |
| Fax number: | 01476 592195 |
| Appropriate authority: | The Governing Body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mrs M Pearl |
| Date of previous inspection: | May 1997 |

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members | | | Subject responsibilities | Aspect responsibilities |
|--------------|-----------------|----------------------|---|---|
| 16227 | Mr H J Phillips | Registered inspector | Art and design Design and technology Modern foreign languages Physical education Foundation stage | What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further? |
| 11072 | Ms S Elomari | Lay inspector | | Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school work in partnership with parents? |
| 2783 | Mr R F Spinks | Team inspector | Science Geography Music | How well are pupils taught? |
| 28106 | Ms M Majid | Team inspector | Mathematics Information and communication technology Special educational needs | How well does the school care for its pupils? |

| | | | | |
|-------|-----------------|----------------|---|--|
| 13623 | Mr J Waddington | Team inspector | English History Religious education Equal opportunities English as an additional language | How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? |
|-------|-----------------|----------------|---|--|

The inspection contractor was:

Staffordshire and Midlands Consortium

The Kingston Centre
Fairway
Stafford
ST16 3TW

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33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Grantham Sandon School is a special school for children with mainly severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties (SLD or PMLD). There are an increasing number with behavioural or severe communication difficulties or disorders within the autistic spectrum. At the time of the inspection 53 pupils aged between 2 to 19 years of age were enrolled including five pupils from a neighbouring local education authority. Pupils are grouped into seven classes according to age and key stage. Typically, pupils have very low academic attainment on entry to the school. They are from almost entirely white heritage families across the range of social backgrounds and all have English as their first language. Pupils are admitted to the school from the age of two after multidisciplinary assessment resulting in a statement of special educational needs. They may leave school at age 16 but invariably, they continue their education at the school until the age of 19. During the last year one pupil was excluded for a short period.

The school serves a wide catchment area which is mainly rural with two small towns. It is situated in very pleasant parkland area near the centre of Grantham with mainstream school playing fields adjacent to the site. Nursery/infants and primary schools are within walking distance. Links with these schools and local secondary schools and colleges enable pupils to have integrated opportunities with mainstream pupils or students according to their age.

In addition to the registered pupils, pre-school aged pupils, identified as having significant learning difficulties, and their parents/carers are involved in a 'Portage' programme in which the parents/carers work closely with school staff to meet their special educational and personal needs.

Recently the school has had significant changes of staff including teaching posts covered by experienced supply teachers. A new headteacher started at the beginning of the summer term. Additionally, recent changes in the governing body resulted in a new chair and vice-chair of governors.

The school is involved in local and national initiatives including a Literacy Working Group, training in the use of information and communication technology. The school has recently been awarded the Careers Mark Award and older students are taking part in a Millennium Volunteers project.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The Grantham Sandon School is a good school in which the quality of teaching is very good and results in pupils making very good progress. Since the last inspection good leadership and management has enabled the school to substantially improve provision which is now good value for money.

What the school does well

- The overall very good quality of teaching is a strength of the school. Teachers are very knowledgeable and experienced in meeting the special needs of the pupils. They continually promote pupils' independence.
- Relationships between staff and pupils, and the management of pupils' behaviour, are excellent and promote very good personal, social and educational development of pupils.
- The breadth, balance and relevance of the whole curriculum are very good. It is well matched to pupils' age and stage of development.
- Provision for pupils' social and cultural development is excellent and for spiritual and moral development it is very good.
- There are excellent partnerships with local schools and colleges and very good partnerships with parents and the community.
- The school's very positive and caring ethos results in pupils having excellent values and attitudes leading to them becoming increasingly caring and supportive of each other.

What could be improved

- Leadership and management skills of a significant number of recently appointed governors.
- The use of technology: to further extend the language and communication skills of pupils who cannot speak; to provide opportunities for pupils in wheelchairs to learn directional control of powered mobility devices; and the use of information and communication technology to support learning across the curriculum.
- The provision for, and professional development of, staff to meet the learning needs of autistic pupils.
- Facilities: for children under five and infants; for science particularly at secondary level; and for physical education.

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

Through its self-evaluation, the school has already identified the need for extending training to meet the needs of autistic pupils to all staff and the need to improve facilities for infants and children under five.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Overall, very good improvements have been made since the last inspection.

Much effort has been put in to improve the quality of teaching with excellent results. The quality of teaching overall is now judged to be very good. As a result of this standards of achievement by pupils are generally good and co-ordinators plan the programmes of study and monitor and evaluate the provision well in the subjects for which they are responsible.

Very good progress has been made in addressing the considerable weaknesses in curriculum provision identified in the last inspection in April 1997. The curriculum for students at Post-16 is now well matched to their age and needs and their achievements are suitably accredited through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN).

Curriculum planning has also been significantly improved enabling pupils to learn through real and meaningful experiences. These schemes are being suitably evaluated and refined to evolve into whole-school schemes of work.

Good progress has been made in improving assessments in terms of early learning goals, developmental steps, National Curriculum criteria and ASDAN modules. These are enabling staff to maintain good records of pupils' progress. Target setting for pupils' achievement has been very much improved and are now well matched to their needs.

STANDARDS

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

| Progress in: | by Year R | by Year 6 | by Year 11 | by Year 13 | Key |
|--|--------------|--------------|---------------|---------------|------------------|
| speaking and listening | B | B | B | B | very good A |
| reading | B | B | B | B | good B |
| writing | B | B | B | B | satisfactory C |
| mathematics | B | B | B | B | unsatisfactory D |
| personal, social and health education | A | A | A | A | poor E |
| other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs* | A | A | A | A | |

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

Standards of attainment are very low in relation to national averages but pupils' achievement in relation to their severe learning difficulties are good in educational development and very good in their personal, social and emotional development.

Pupils with **profound and multiple learning difficulties** (PMLD) make good very progress in the targets set for them in their individual education plans (IEPs). The very good multi-sensory approach to their education and the excellent care provided enables them to become increasingly responsive and interactive in their learning and aware and tolerant of new situations. They make very good progress in developing the basic concepts which enable them to make choices and communicate their likes and dislikes. By age 11 many use a single switch communicator to greet others and make short, recorded statements about a preference. However, there is insufficient opportunity for them to develop their alternative communication skills beyond this stage. As they progress through the school they become increasingly involved in practical activities such as cooking and community based activities, such as shopping, and less reliant on the co-active help of staff.

Pupils with **severe learning difficulties** (SLD) or difficulties within the **autistic spectrum** make

good progress at all stages of their schooling. Educational progress is consistently good across the range of curriculum subjects and most become good listeners, confident speakers, and increasingly independent in practical activities. Pupils with autism respond well to the encouraging approach to involve them in group activities and become more interactive in one-to-one teaching sessions. Some demonstrate skills within the average range in specific areas such as the use of computers. More able pupils achieve good basic reading and writing skills, are confident users of computers, learn to use money effectively and able to tell the time. They become increasingly independent in practical activity, use tools appropriately and safely and learn to prepare their own meals. They make very good progress in personal and social development. By the time they leave school they achieve a very good level of social competence and have developed mature attitudes of care and concern for others. Through very good opportunities such as attending courses at the local college of further education, enterprise activities and work experience, they become confident and prepared to move on and cope with the challenges of adult life.

Pupils with **emotional and behavioural difficulties and/or challenging behaviour** respond well to the very good support, encouragement and behavioural management procedures used by staff and most make very good progress both in self-control and the range of educational challenges.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Attitudes to the school | Excellent. Pupils enjoy coming to school and develop very positive attitudes to the wide range of activities and challenges provided. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Excellent. Pupils respond well to the excellent behaviour management techniques used consistently by staff. They show a good deal of interest and enthusiasm during lessons, reflecting the way teaching is very well matched to their needs. |
| Personal development and relationships | Excellent. The staff maintain an excellent balance between care and support and challenges for pupils to achieve and become increasingly independent. |
| Attendance | Good. The attendance levels average around 90 per cent. Taking into account the significant proportion of pupils with medical and health problems, this is good. |

The school has developed a very positive ethos in which there is a prevailing attitude of 'can do'. The excellent relationships between staff and pupils results in the pupils gaining positive attitudes and good moral values. Staff know their pupils very well and their encouraging approach enables the pupils to rapidly gain confidence. As a consequence pupils become increasingly independent and leave school confident to take the next step towards adult life.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils: | Nursery and Reception | Years 1 - 6 | Years 7 - 11 | Years 12 - 13 |
|----------------------|-----------------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| Lessons seen overall | Very good | Good | Very good | Good |

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

Overall the quality of teaching is very good and is a significant strength of the school. In all, 62 lessons or part lessons were observed during the inspection. In 56 lessons teaching was judged to be good or better with 23 judged to be very good or outstanding. No teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory.

Teachers' knowledge and understanding of teaching pupils with severe learning difficulties is very good. They have suitable expertise and experience in teaching the range of curriculum subjects and teaching of the required elements of English, mathematics and science is very good at all stages. They use very good strategies and methods to meet the range of needs of the pupils but with the increasing numbers of pupils with autistic disorders there is a need to extend training for teaching autistic pupils to all staff. Lesson planning and the on-going assessment of pupils' progress is good. The management of pupils' behaviour is excellent. Teaching of personal, social and health education is very good.

Teachers use their very good understanding of pupils' learning needs to effectively promote each pupils' communication skills and their understanding of basic concepts of shape, position, size, colour and number, throughout the range of curriculum activities. However, these opportunities for developing key skills are not clearly identified in teacher's planning. Despite good teamwork between teachers and learning support assistants, some opportunities are missed.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|---|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | A very good range of curriculum provision is made, both in terms of meeting pupils' needs and in meeting the requirements of the National Curriculum. As pupils progress through the school, the range of experiences provided and resources used are well matched to their age and promote increasingly mature attitudes and values. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Provision for personal development is excellent. Spiritual and moral development is very good. Social and cultural development is excellent. |
| How well the school cares | Excellent arrangements are made for the care and welfare of pupils. |

| | |
|----------------|---|
| for its pupils | Policies and procedures for child protection and health and safety. |
|----------------|---|

The school's curriculum provides pupils with a rich, meaningful and progressive range of experiences which meets the wide-ranging needs. Very good use is made of the school environment and the local community to provide real experiences which are appropriate to their learning needs.

Opportunities to integrate with mainstream pupils at infant, primary, secondary and Post-16 phases makes a significant contribution to educational and personal development.

There are some shortcomings in curriculum provision. These include insufficient experiences in design and technology for working with resistant materials, a lack of specialist facilities for science which limits the work of pupils, particularly at secondary age level, and insufficient opportunities for games and athletic activities due to a lack of access to a playing field.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | Overall the quality of leadership and management throughout the school is good. Despite the significant recent changes of headteacher and several of the school governors, including the chair and vice-chair, the good management of the school has been maintained. |
| How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities | The school governors at present fulfil their responsibilities satisfactorily. The experienced governors have maintained their good involvement in the school and have a good understanding of the school's development issues. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | There are good procedures in place for the school to evaluate its provision. Staff with responsibility for whole school aspects or curriculum areas monitor provision well and effectively present their evaluations for consideration in future planning. |
| The strategic use of resources | Good use is made of school finances and resources to support school development. |

Despite major recent changes in senior management and governors, the school has continued to be effectively managed. Since the last inspection good application of the principals of best value have been effective in overcoming a deficit budget. The substantial number of new governors are not yet experienced in their roles in school leadership and management. They are being suitably supported in this by their local education authority link officer and the need for governor training has been identified.

There are a suitable number of teachers and learning support assistants to meet the needs of the pupils. Good use is made of available resources and the school's accommodation. However, there are some aspects of accommodation which are barely adequate. These include the small nursery classroom and its unsatisfactory outside play area, the lack of access to a playing field and lack of specialist science facilities for pupils of secondary age.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|---|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The work of the school and the support provided for them and their children. They work together with the school to produce IEPs. • The challenges provided for students at Post-16 and the confidence they develop. • The information they receive. • Helping pupils learn right and wrong and good behaviour. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision in the playground is of some concern because of the available places to be 'out-of-sight'. • A few parents have concerns about the amount of homework set and feel that the school does not provide an interesting range of activities outside lessons. |

The inspection team agreed with the positive views expressed by parents but do not support the negative opinions. There is a strong liaison between parents and the school, and they are happy to discuss their or their children's concerns with the staff or headteacher. The staff now supervise the playground more effectively since the issue was raised by a parent. Evidence shows that the school provides an appropriate amount of homework and that teachers ensure that parents know how best to help their child.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

- 1 Because pupils have a range of severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD) it is not appropriate to compare their attainments with those of mainstream pupils. Consequently pupils' achievements are judged by the progress they make compared to their prior attainments, taking into account the nature of their learning difficulties. A substantial sample of the progress made by pupils with different needs, including those within the autistic spectrum and those with challenging behaviour, was tracked over their time in the school by the inspection team so that the effectiveness of the school's provision could be evaluated.
- 2 Through a very good 'total communication' approach including the use of signs and symbols, objects of reference and simple technological aids, all pupils, from the foundation stage onwards, make good progress in **English**. By the end of Key Stage 2, higher attaining pupils request and offer information using words and/or signs. Their writing skills develop in left to right movements and in simple tracing and copying tasks. They read their names and some familiar words. Pupils with PMLD significantly improve their communication skills, becoming increasingly responsive, making clear choices and indicating their likes and dislikes. They respond very well to greetings and meaningfully use an electronic touch-talker to say 'hello' to staff and class-mates.
- 3 During Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 pupils continue to make good progress in reading and writing skills. Many become confident in communicating verbally or with the support of signing. However, some pupils with PLMD or severe communication difficulties do not have sufficient opportunities to further develop their use of alternative communication devices such as programmable 'talkers' or computers. This significantly restricts their progress in communication.
- 4 Post-16 students gain in confidence in communicating with each other and working collaboratively as a team. They develop good functional social reading skills, and maintain a diary. Higher attaining students have the opportunity to study for accreditation of their basic literacy skills through ASDAN course modules.
- 5 At all ages pupils achieve well and make good progress in **mathematics** as a result of teachers' good understanding of the development of the basic mathematical concepts, their knowledge of, and excellent relationships with, the pupils. Pupils in the early years and in Key Stage 1 benefit from participation in number songs and games. They learn to make shapes from play-dough and match shapes and colours. The raising of expectation by the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy has contributed to the good progress made in Key Stage 2 and by pupils of secondary age.
- 6 In Key Stage 2 more able pupils put numbers 1 to 10 in the correct order. In Key Stage 3 pupils with PMLD begin to understand positional words of in, on and under, and recognise

shape as round or square. More able pupils in Year 9 understand opposite, next to, close and far, next, last and first. By the end of Key Stage 4 more able pupils use a calculator and read time using o'clock and half past, identify numbers up to 100 and carry out simple additions and subtractions. In the Transition Challenge programme in Key Stage 4 and ASDAN modules Post-16, pupils learn to use metric units for capacity, weight and length.

- 7 Pupils in all age groups, both primary and secondary, make very good progress in **science**. In Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, pupils are beginning to understand differences between living and non-living things, forces of pushing and pulling, and the basic properties and textures of different materials. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils show a good understanding of simple electrical circuits. Pupils in Key Stage 4 show a good understanding of light and shadows. Pupils with PMLD use switches in the sensory room to control light and colour. However, the lack of specialist science facilities reduces opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in experimental and investigative work.
- 8 In **other subjects** of the National Curriculum, pupils of all ages make consistently good progress in art and design, food technology, information and communication technology, geography, modern foreign languages and music, and in gymnastics, swimming and dance. Satisfactory progress is made in games and athletics. In religious education good progress is made through the key stages and satisfactory progress at Post-16. Many pupils develop confidence in the use of basic tools, equipment and materials. They produce effective paintings, simple meals and snacks. They greet each other in French, sing familiar songs and play percussion instruments. They become confident users of computers, follow instructions along a simple route and recognise landmarks on familiar journeys. Most become confident in water and many learn to swim and take part in games as members of a team. Through good collaboration between the physiotherapist and staff, pupils with severe movement difficulties steadily improve their physical skills, co-ordination, posture and muscle tone. They learn to use a range of switches to operate equipment, but do not have opportunities to learn directional control of mobility aids towards independent use of a motorised wheelchair.
- 9 Post-16 students make very good progress towards their accreditation of the modules within the ASDAN scheme and in their preparation for adult life. They achieve increasing competence in life-skills and apply their learning in literacy and numeracy in practical activities such as shopping, managing the school coffee shop, enterprise activities and understanding the world of work.
- 10 Children **under five** years of age make good progress within most of the six areas of learning of the foundation stage curriculum through very good teaching for both those who attend school and those at home during Portage sessions. However, the cramped accommodation and poor play facilities restrict opportunities for personal and social development and physical development.
- 11 In some aspects of their work, pupils' progress and experiences are limited by weaknesses in the available facilities and resources. Pupils have insufficient opportunities to develop their skills with three-dimensional artwork or to work with resistant materials in design and technology or undertake work on control systems and structures. Inadequate facilities

restrict pupils' progress in games and athletics and in practical and experimental work in science. In music, insufficient use is made of technology to develop composing skills.

- 12 History was not timetabled during the inspection and consequently there was not enough evidence to judge pupils' progress. However, the planned programme for history suitably meets with curriculum requirements and available evidence from pupils' work indicates that achievements are at least satisfactory.
- 13 Pupils make consistently good progress in the development of their **personal and social skills** including citizenship. Teachers are skilled in enabling all pupils to be successful by providing well-considered support but maintaining sufficient challenge for them to become increasingly independent.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 14 Pupils' attitudes to school are excellent. They enjoy the wide range of experiences provided for them and come to school happily, ready to learn. Almost all pupils have a very positive attitude to school, their teachers and their learning. Pupils come to school prepared to work and are often fully involved in their lessons. The excellent quality of relationships between teachers, support staff and pupils is a significant factor in the positive attitudes of pupils and represents a major strength of the school's work. Staff work hard to motivate their pupils and to manage their behaviour so that they are able to sustain their concentration and interest.
- 15 During the course of the inspection, in no lessons was behaviour judged to be unsatisfactory despite some isolated instances of challenging behaviour. In a fifth of lessons behaviour was judged to be excellent, in two-fifths it was very good and in the remaining two-fifths it was good. The very high standard of behaviour achieved is a major strength of the school's work. The youngest pupils respond very well to the calm, nurturing atmosphere in the classroom and try hard. The older pupils and students appreciate the interesting range of activities they experience; they work hardest when their interest is fully captured. There are many examples of pupils working very hard in lessons and showing very good levels of concentration and co-operation with adults and classmates. In a Year 9 science lesson, for example, the most able pupils were able to complete a challenging task and could demonstrate their understanding of circuits. In music lessons pupils respond to the music with interest and enjoyment and respond to the teacher's prompting by singing. Post-16 students concentrated very well in a food technology lesson when they worked well together while making buns.
- 16 Out of lessons, pupils are very well supervised and behaviour is generally very good. Pupils play well together, for example in a game of chase on the playground. They co-operate well when they use the computer or work with others, for example at the drama club. The very good example set by all staff helps to ensure that pupils maintain positive relationships with one another. When pupils and students are out of the school, for example for swimming lessons or at college, their behaviour is excellent and a credit to the school. There has been one fixed-term exclusion in the last year to enable effective measures to be implemented to

manage challenging behaviour. Exclusion is seen very much as a last resort.

- 17 Work done in assemblies, personal, health and social education, religious education and other lessons makes a very positive contribution to the development of social skills and excellent relationships. This enables pupils to grow in understanding of their own emotions and to recognise the feelings of others so that they take care of one another. They show increasing maturity in their responses as they move through the school. For example, in a Post-16 lesson one student gently and sensitively tried to calm another when she became distressed. Staff focus on the importance of respect and consistently remind pupils of the importance of treating others, property and the environment with due respect. Pupils' work is displayed in the classrooms and corridors and valued and respected by all pupils – retaining excellent condition. The very good respect shown by teachers and support staff to pupils also helps to foster their positive attitudes. The excellent relationships throughout the school and the very high expectations for behaviour ensure that there is no significant oppressive behaviour.
- 18 Pupils respond very positively to the many planned opportunities for their personal development. They enjoy working together in the classroom and co-operate well. They take pride in their achievements and in those of others. For example, during the review of achievements in assembly there was spontaneous applause and a pat on the back for one student who had managed to find his way independently around the nearby college. Staff encourage pupils to be responsible for themselves as much as possible, for example at mealtimes. In lessons, pupils are challenged by the high expectations of staff so that they support one another in their learning. During one food technology lesson, pupils helped to involve everyone by holding the mixing bowl in the easiest place for PMLD pupils to try to stir the mixture. In a science lesson, the more able pupils helped others to use switches to play music. The very good range of extra-curricular activities, visits and visitors makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development. Through these experiences pupils gain in confidence and learn to deal with the wider world.
- 19 There has been an improvement since the previous inspection in all aspects of pupils' behaviour and personal development. In particular, the improved curriculum for older pupils and students has led to an increasingly structured emphasis on personal development.
- 20 Attendance at the school is good. It is consistently above 91 per cent and levels of unauthorised absence are very low. When the complex medical needs of a significant number of pupils are considered, their attendance is very good. Most absence is due to medical reasons although some parents take their child out of school for holidays. Parents support the school by reporting the reasons for absence promptly, either by telephone to the school or to the transport driver. The school monitors attendance so that any concerns can be dealt with in the early stages. Pupils generally arrive on time in the morning although there are times when the transport is late. Lessons begin on time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

- 21 Overall the quality of teaching is very good and is a significant strength of the school. Pupils of all ages and abilities respond well to this very good teaching, learning very well and making at least good progress.
- 22 In all, 62 lessons or part lessons were observed during the inspection. In 56 lessons teaching was judged to be good or better with 23 judged to be very good or outstanding. No teaching was judged to be unsatisfactory. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection, where one in ten lessons were judged to be unsatisfactory. This represents a very good improvement in the quality of teaching and is the result of well-focused management and a lot of hard work by the staff.
- 23 Teaching of the youngest children was always at least good and in half the lessons seen was very good with one lesson judged to be outstanding. Teaching of infant pupils was always good and frequently very good. In the juniors, teaching was good in over half the lessons seen with the remainder balanced between very good or satisfactory. In Key Stage 3 teaching was consistently very good or outstanding and was never less than good. In Key Stage 4 teaching was consistently good with one in ten lessons judged to be very good. For the students Post-16, teaching was judged to be good with nearly one in five lessons very good.
- 24 Pupils with PMLD are effectively taught within the classes and there is very good teamwork between teachers and learning support assistants to ensure that not only are their personal and physical needs met but they are also included appropriately in lessons. Teachers' management of pupils' behaviour is excellent and excellent relationships are established between staff and pupils, which creates a very effective ethos for learning throughout the school. Pupils within the autistic spectrum benefit from the security provided by these strong relationships and increasingly become involved in group activities. However, when they become unable to cope in the busy classrooms there are no quiet areas available for them to take 'time-out' or work individually without distraction.
- 25 Overall teachers plan lessons well to ensure that the varied needs of pupils are met. Where teaching is very good and outstanding, teachers plan a range of activities which meet the different needs of the pupils and ensures that they make good progress in all aspects of their learning. A particular feature of this teaching is the wide range of additional key knowledge and understanding that teachers bring into the lesson, constantly reinforcing learning in a wide range of subject knowledge and skills. For example, in an outstanding music lesson for pupils in Year 9 the teacher expected the pupils to demonstrate their learning in geography by identifying the countries associated with the music, on a globe.
- 26 When teaching was good teachers delivered lively lessons at a brisk pace with a range of learning opportunities which pupils found motivating and interesting. The needs of all pupils, including those with severe disabilities and those with behavioural difficulties, were fully met. For example, in a French lesson, pupils were able to give the names of a range of common household items and were able to greet each other and the teacher saying *bonjour and bon apres midi*. The teacher progressively increased her use of French, which encouraged the

pupils to follow her example.

- 27 In the few lessons that were less good, although satisfactory, there were some strengths common to the good lesson but they were delivered with less focus or more slowly and this reduced the progress in pupils' learning. For example in a Year 5 and 6 religious education lesson, extending the work begun in the whole school service (assembly) in the morning, the pupils were eager to tell the teacher what they knew but were not given sufficient opportunity to do this. Therefore pupils were less motivated and learning slowed.
- 28 A key feature of all lessons is the significant contribution that support assistants and other adults make to the learning process. They are very well briefed by teachers and are fully aware of the needs of the pupils they support. They contribute fully to the learning process and regularly enhance pupils' learning of key language and number skills. They are also able to ensure that pupils with significant communication difficulties have access to learning experiences.
- 29 The teaching of literacy skills is consistently good and particular attention is paid to language and communication skill development in all lessons. The correct language is constantly reinforced and support assistants question and challenge individual pupils very well so increasing the progress pupils make. However, the opportunities for enabling pupils who are unable to speak to make progress in using technology for communication are not provided.
- 30 The teaching of numeracy skills is good. Numeracy lessons are very well planned with good whole group introductory work to promote progress from previous learning, group activities that are well matched to the needs of each group and effective plenary sessions in which pupils' learning is checked so that subsequent lesson plans may be made. Teachers use every opportunity to encourage pupils to count during other lessons. For example, in a practical activity in Year 1 a pupil was encouraged to count the sausages he had made from *play-dough*.
- 31 The teaching of science skills, particularly observation and practical skills, is very good. Pupils are encouraged to explore for themselves with support assistants helping some pupils to do so. For example in an excellent junior lesson on wind force pupils explored many different *blowing* forces and the adults used excellent questioning skills to give pupils choices and to help them to describe what they saw happening. Opportunities for experiments and investigations are limited by the lack of specialist science facilities.
- 32 Three lessons of information and communication technology were seen during the inspection. Teaching was judged to be good in all of them. Other evidence indicated that pupils' learning of these necessary skills was satisfactory. However, the use of technology to aid communication for some pupils is too limited.
- 33 All pupils have access to religious education lessons. Four lessons were observed during the inspection. Overall, the teaching in these lessons is good with pupils being given good opportunities to be involved as well as making personal responses to what they learn.

- 34 Overall, the teaching of all subjects was at least good, with the teachers interpreting well the national requirements and guidance to meet the very varied needs of their pupils. Teaching of physical education was restricted by the limited facilities and access to resources. The mixing of pupils with a wide variety of needs for physical education in the hall limited the opportunities for more physically able pupils to engage in lively and energetic activity.

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

- 35 The curriculum is very good. The statutory curriculum is in place and arrangements for implementing the Lincolnshire Agreed Syllabus for religious education are very good. Curriculum policy is comprehensive and the National Curriculum is very well adapted to meet the wide-ranging learning needs of pupils with severe learning difficulties. The three-year cycle of topics provides for good progression and continuity in pupils' learning experiences as they move through the school. Much of the curriculum is delivered through real and meaningful experiences within the classrooms, the school grounds and the local community. In this way all pupils benefit from first-hand experiences which enable them to learn according to their needs and abilities.
- 36 Teachers are deployed as subject co-ordinators and they effectively monitor the curriculum plans of colleagues and the outcomes of topic-work in relation to their subject. They have established good assessment criteria for evaluating pupils' progress but this has not been in place for sufficient time for them to evaluate the effectiveness of present provision and decide how to further improve the schemes of work. The outcomes of their evaluation of the breadth and balance of the coverage of their subjects in relation to the National Curriculum indicate that a few programmes of study are not effectively developed within the topic approach and need to be delivered as subject based lessons.
- 37 The curriculum for children under five is very good. It provides many rich experiences and, as they work towards their early learning goals, prepares them very well for later years where they receive their full entitlement to the National Curriculum.
- 38 Strategies for teaching literacy skills, using very carefully constructed individual and group sessions, are very good throughout the age range. The teaching of literacy is central to the work of the school and informs the curricular planning of a range of subjects. Good opportunities are taken to extend pupils' literacy skills throughout the curriculum with key vocabulary such as 'on, in, under and over' being applied in practical activities and, in particular, during physical education lessons. The importance of numeracy is emphasised in a range of subjects other than mathematics and opportunities are taken to develop pupils' skills in counting and their understanding of concepts of shape, size and colour. The school has used suitable sources for guidance effectively for curriculum planning.
- 39 Although the quality and range of learning opportunities offered by the school is good for those with profound and multiple learning difficulties and reflect many of those for other pupils, there are some weaknesses. At the time of the inspection, there were no residential opportunities for these pupils. In addition, the school lacks a suitable variety of technical

aids, for example the unavailability of electronic ‘talkers’ reduces the pace at which pupils and students can improve self-expression. There is insufficient emphasis in the curriculum on the development of control of directional movement for pupils using wheelchairs. This serves to limit the opportunity for those pupils and students to make a smooth progression to the use of powered wheelchairs in later life. In some aspects, curriculum provision is less effective in addressing some of the learning needs of autistic pupils. For example, providing suitable work settings to enable them to work with less distraction.

- 40 The curriculum Post-16 is good with some very good features. It provides a broad range of relevant experiences including a good programme of work-related education, which includes working in the school coffee shop and a well-developed mini-enterprise scheme which assists in students’ awareness of running a successful business. There is a very good emphasis on life skills to aid independent living through the externally accredited modular courses. Vocational taster days are offered through an independent residential provider for students with special educational needs.
- 41 The school meets the needs identified within pupils’ statements of special educational needs well. Pupils are admitted to the school following a full assessment of their needs or, if moving from another school, after good liaison and transfer of information. Pupils’ transfers from other schools are well planned with the new school provided with a summary report on progress, the pupils’ last annual review and copies of their current individual education plans. Records of achievement are well maintained and are available to transition schools, further education establishments and other agencies.
- 42 The school makes very good use of the specialist skills and experience of its well-trained teaching assistants and learning support assistants who enable pupils with complex needs to be taught individually or in very small groups. Through good training opportunities, staff skills are well matched with the changing intake of pupils, particularly for the increasing proportion of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The match of staff skills and abilities in dealing with the increasing number of pupils with autism is less well developed though it remains adequate. The school is aware of this. It plans to strengthen its curriculum arrangements to meet these changing needs, through further training of staff and through consideration of the use of accommodation to allow for one-to-one work and ‘time out’ counselling.
- 43 Baseline assessment is very good. The specialist environment provided for those with multi-sensory impairment is a very good feature of provision. This includes a sensory garden, which is well appreciated by pupils of the school. There are horticultural activities also for more able pupils. These have been particularly effective in meeting the needs of some pupils and students with challenging behaviour. Design and technology is well equipped both in the area of resistance materials and food technology. Opportunities for pupils and students to broaden their range of skills in working with resistant materials are limited by the lack of staff with suitable qualification. The school is aware of this deficiency and staff training to use drill presses and other machinery is to be put in place. Nevertheless, good use is made of these facilities within the context of the mini enterprise undertaken by older pupils and students. The quality of Post-16 provision in modern classrooms encourages good progress.

- 44 Links with partner institutions are excellent for pupils and students of all ages. At the early stages of education, pupils have the chance to meet and learn alongside other pupils in nearby primary and infants schools in jointly planned lessons in subjects such as music. At the secondary phase, some pupils study art and design together with pupils in a local mainstream high school. The curriculum for students continuing their education in further education is jointly planned and aspects of it are jointly delivered. A wide range of vocational courses is offered with the opportunity for students to make meaningful choices about their future when they reach the age of 19. At the college they are taught in mixed classes with young people from mainstream schools and those from other special schools. Opportunities for mixing socially are also very good. The curriculum fits very well with the current and projected range of educational provision available locally to students once they reach the age of 19. The majority of students embarking on college courses complete them and some proceed to entry onto nationally recognised vocational courses, such as, in catering and beauty therapy.
- 45 The school has recently been awarded a quality ‘charter mark’ by the local Connexions Service for the way it meets pupils’ needs in careers education, which starts when pupils reach the age of 14. It is very good and works well to assist the transition of pupils into a range of further education provision within and beyond the county, such as courses in horticulture. Staff involved at a neighbouring college of further education are well briefed in the provision to meet special needs. There are good strong links with external agencies over the students’ transition from school at age 19.
- 46 Extra-curricular enrichment, particularly for pupils with severe learning difficulties, is good. This means that pupils and students are able to behave appropriately in non-school settings, for example when making shared use of a regional community sports and leisure complex where minimal adult supervision is required. Pupils and students benefit from the voluntary contributions of a range of people representing the local community including the Rotary Club, volunteers from the retail sector and staff from the county fire service. The community, including parents, gives strong support to the school and has been effective in raising funds for a number of facilities including a new minibus.
- 47 Support for learning outside the normal school day is very good. Parents are supported in carrying forward the learning of their children in literacy and numeracy. They are kept informed by briefing meetings and monthly get-togethers. There are a range of lunch-time clubs which make excellent use of the limited time available. The Drama Club is a particular strength and pupils worked intensively and productively in creating a brief adaptation of a TV ‘soap’ during the period of the inspection. This made a valuable contribution to the effective use of communication skills for pupils with severe learning difficulties and included those with profound and multiple learning difficulties fully. It also reinforced their sense of achievement.
- 48 There is an annual residential experience for pupils and students with severe learning difficulties. This is very effective in developing independent living skills. Similarly, an annual camp helps to reinforce pupils’ self-esteem and they work collaboratively with other people of all ages. Pupils also work profitably with pupils from other schools during termly ‘focus

days' that are part of the school's very good programme of multi-cultural education.

- 49 Since the last inspection there has been a good level of improvement. The balance of the curriculum has been strengthened at subject level. Personal and social education remains of very good quality, though the school is as yet at an early stage in considering the issue of citizenship within the overall curriculum. Strategies to deliver the National Curriculum are fully in place and curriculum planning continues to develop. Pupils are now introduced to a modern foreign language in Key Stages 3 and 4. Schemes of work are of good quality and generally reflect the learning needs of pupils and students very well, although greater emphasis could be placed on the application and use of information and communication technology for all age groups.
- 50 Multi-cultural education is now a strength of the school and pupils are given regular and well considered opportunities to deepen their learning in this aspect of the curriculum. To improve further, the school needs to improve the range of the curriculum for pupils and students with profound and multiple learning difficulties and include them in residential experiences.

Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

- 51 The provision for pupils' **spiritual** development is very good. Whole school assemblies are held daily and linked to a religious or topical theme, the inspection week being the Queen's Jubilee. The pupils are very quiet for prayers and all respond. The learning support assistants sit amongst the pupils and are quietly involved in encouraging pupils to join in. On one occasion the prayer elicited significant personal responses of silence and listening. During the assembly there is clear interest and enjoyment as all pupils are involved. Pupils' responses were outstanding and unsolicited. When there is a song, every pupil possible is signing and singing. This is a very good community experience for all pupils and leads to a respect for themselves and for others. At home time, one pupil who was 'Queen' in worship that morning was still very proud and excited and showed a word processed sheet "I was Queen Elizabeth in worship this morning" that she has to show at home. This was an excellent boost to the already excellent confidence and esteem building in the school.
- 52 A display "Religions around the World" shows the pupils that different people have different buildings to worship in. There is a prayer thanking Jesus that everyone is different. There was a spiritual element at the end of circle time with Year 9 when a prayer was said for each pupil, thanking God for his "loving care". A prayer was said for a pupil with profound and multiple learning difficulties who always left a little early. There was an example of awe and wonder when in a very good information and communication technology lesson, the teacher showed pupils how to collate the pages with special binder. The pupils were astounded and one pupil said, "It's amazing what technology does".
- 53 There is an opportunity to record spiritual development in the assessment programme; for example, it is noted in the records of a Year 10 pupil that he "responds to warmth from carer and shows a sense of calm/relaxation when music is played"

- 54 **Moral** development within the school is very good, as the school provides a clear moral code for behaviour, which is promoted consistently throughout the school. For example, when the pupils enter the hall for assembly, music is playing and they enter well and sit quietly. The older pupils talk quietly and greet each other. As a result, the behaviour of the pupils is very good. The staff are very good role models. The pupils have a respect for resources and understand the difference between right and wrong. On an occasion when the pupils went swimming at the leisure centre, they sat patiently with minimal supervision, as they were aware of appropriate behaviour.
- 55 **Social** development within the school is very good. In ‘circle time’ at the end of the day, the pupils discuss how well they have done that day. In a very good session with a Year 9 class, the teacher and learning support staff congratulated each pupil for their achievements, for example “you were very helpful in geography, you helped other children”. This is a good way of making pupils aware of their achievements and also each other’s, as the pupils show pleasure in each other’s success. During the midday meal a lot of personal support and guidance is provided and most pupils are developing good independence skills, for example, being served at the hatch, carrying their own plate and clearing away their own dishes. There was a good opportunity for social integration when the pupils went for swimming at the leisure centre. They were able to make choices of drinks and take responsibility for paying for them with their own money, although not all were secure with money use. All pupils were, however, socially confident and able to communicate clearly with the staff in the coffee shop and also some of the poolside staff. The pupils used their own initiative to clear the tables. More able pupils used coin operated vending machines. Very good social progress is also evident in the link with a local secondary school. The secondary school students are very attentive to their partner and excellent relationships are developing as they talk about the task and other everyday things such as television programmes. The learning support assistants help with the interactions with some of the less socially able pupils.
- 56 **Cultural** development within the school is very good and the pupils have a variety of multi-cultural ‘focused’ experiences. The school was visited by an Indian dance company and the pupils took part in the dance and music. During an Afro-Caribbean week, the pupils learned about Afro-Caribbean art, music and religion. In an art and design lesson in the secondary school, pupils knew that they were looking at Aboriginal art and that the Aborigines were the first people to live in Australia. They listened intently to the music, which included rhythm sticks and didgeridoos. In the main hall, there is a good display of work produced by the pupils on the topic of Italy. The school has extended the pupils’ knowledge of the cultural imagery and language of Italy. They have drawn maps, made a model of the Leaning Tower of Pisa, found out about Italian food and learned some Italian words, such as *ciao*, *arrivederci* and *grazie*. They have studied Michelangelo and produced pictures “pretending to be Michelangelo” by lying on the floor with the paper stuck on the underside of a table. The pupils make local visits; for example, the football team visited Lincoln City stadium.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

Assessment

- 57 The school meets fully the statutory requirements of the statements of special educational need. Annual reviews take place and parents are fully involved in decisions about target setting.
- 58 Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are very good. Since the last inspection the school has undertaken considerable work and has succeeded in developing an effective approach to assessing pupils' progress. The school uses a Baseline Assessment Scheme, which is well used in planning a highly structured curriculum devised to meet the needs of each pupil. The school also uses effectively criteria derived from the Early Learning Goals of the National Foundation Curriculum. Individual education plans are used well and the teachers are very familiar with the next steps for each pupil's learning. Targets set are usually good. In science, for example, there is a portfolio of pupils' work for use in assessment as a comparison to levels of attainment and enables appropriate targets to be set. In other subjects, such as geography and music, because of the limited assessment data across the school, individual pupil targets are satisfactory. However, assessment would be improved by more explicitly linking the attainments of the more able pupils to the levels of performance defined in the National Curriculum. The school recognises this and is introducing assessment criteria that will address this issue.
- 59 The assessment procedures are not used consistently throughout the school. In some areas, the use of assessment procedures is very good, for instance in science, where the co-ordinator retains records of the progress made by each pupil. The co-ordinator of design and technology has a list of skill development, which enables good assessment of the progress and achievement of all pupils in the school. The Portage programme for an early years pupil is very well planned and structured with targets appropriate to the pupil's age and development and thus there is clear evidence of good progress. In geography and music, assessment procedures are only partially developed and are not yet co-ordinated throughout the school.
- 60 Overall, the school has established a good range of assessment criteria, in most subject areas, to enable staff to record pupils' achievements according to their needs and abilities. They use this well to plan lessons and set targets for learning that are matched to pupils' needs. The school is now well placed to begin to monitor the progress of individual pupils over time and to use this information to identify strengths and weaknesses in their teaching programme so that priorities for development can be targeted.
- 61 The school is very effective in ensuring the **welfare, health and safety** of all its pupils and students. The excellent quality of relationships throughout the school makes a significant contribution to the very high quality of care. Teachers and support staff know pupils very well and they use this knowledge sensitively in the pastoral care they provide. The excellent teamwork in classes also makes a very strong contribution to the quality of care. The school works well with a wide range of other agencies, such as social services, speech and language therapists, physiotherapists and medical staff. Teachers and support assistants work very closely with therapists and medical staff to ensure that the needs of pupils are met.

- 62 The school provides very good guidance and support for all pupils, informed by the very effective monitoring of personal development, attendance and behaviour. Pupils' achievements are celebrated through the good quality of display throughout the school, including the display of achievement certificates in the hall, during assemblies and with parents; this has a positive impact on pupils' motivation.
- 63 The health and safety procedures are very good. Regular checks are carried out. A few minor issues were drawn to the attention of the school during the inspection. Staff pay very close attention to health and safety in lessons; for example, by instilling the basic principles of hygiene in food technology and safe practice in science. Pupils are very well supervised at the start of the day, during breaks and at lunchtimes. Arrangements for child protection are very good, well known to staff and comply with the locally agreed procedures. Arrangements for dealing with medical needs and first aid are very good.
- 64 Good procedures are in place to promote the importance of regular **attendance** with parents and carers, who are well informed about them. These are reflected in the very good attendance achieved by most of the pupils. Attendance data is carefully analysed and any unauthorised absence is properly recorded and followed up.
- 65 Procedures to promote good **behaviour** are excellent. The school policy stresses the development of self respect, consideration and care towards others and is securely based around these positive aims. The use of praise and positive discipline is paramount and consistently applied by all staff. Pupils are motivated by the rewards and praise they receive, while the sanctions, such as withdrawal from the activity or situation, are very effective in discouraging unacceptable behaviour. Individual care and control plans are written for a significant number of pupils. These are very clearly focused and incorporate strategies known to work with the individual. They are shared with all staff so that implementation is consistent. However, there is insufficient provision to support classroom staff when emergencies arise.
- 66 Individual education plans often contain appropriate targets for the pupil's personal development, such as learning to take turns or to control attention-seeking behaviour. The procedures to monitor behaviour are also excellent. This is carried out either through the recording systems built into the care and control plans or through the class incident book. Both are very thorough. Positive and negative behaviour is noted together with the action taken. The close monitoring of behaviour, excellent quality of relationships and provision for personal development, ensure that there is virtually no bullying. The school has clear procedures in place for exclusion of pupils but these are rarely needed.
- 67 Pupils' **personal development** is very well promoted and monitored. Individual education plans contain appropriate targets for each pupil's personal development and staff keep thorough records of pupils' progress towards them. The school has a good programme of personal, social and health education in place, well focused on the needs of the pupils. Some aspects of citizenship are addressed and staff are involved in developing a programme for citizenship to fit the needs of pupils.

- 68 The school has recently been successful in gaining the Careers Mark award. The careers library contains a range of information about **careers and further education** opportunities. Students at Post-16 have the chance to undertake work experience, including residential experience at a college for people with learning disabilities where there are facilities for a wide range of job related learning.
- 69 Significant improvements have been achieved since the previous inspection in the quality of the personal, social and health education programme and in the procedures for monitoring pupils' personal development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 70 Almost all parents who made their views known to the inspection team are very supportive of the school. The overwhelming majority of parents states that their child likes school and is making good progress. Parents believe that the teaching is good, with teachers having high expectations for their child. They feel well informed about progress and state that the school works very closely with them, especially about issues such as behaviour and at the annual review of the statement of special educational need. Almost all believe that the school achieves high standards of good behaviour. A few parents have concerns about the amount of homework set and feel that the school does not provide an interesting range of activities outside lessons. A similar number would not feel comfortable to approach the school with questions or a problem. Inspection findings confirm parents' positive views but do not support the negative opinions. Evidence shows that the school provides an appropriate amount of homework and that teachers ensure that parents know how best to help their child. Lessons are enhanced by a range of interesting trips and visitors, such as the Indian dancers, walks to the local park and shops and by the links with other schools and colleges. There is also a range of interesting activities at lunchtime, especially for the Post-16 students. However, as these activities take place during the school day not all parents may appreciate their nature. The very recent arrival of the new headteacher may mean that not all parents yet feel happy to approach her, although she has begun to develop a good relationship with many parents.
- 71 The school works hard and with very good results to develop strong working partnership with parents. The quality of information provided for parents is very good. Both the prospectus and the annual report of governors contain the full range of required information. However, the annual report is a very long document and this may deter some parents from reading it. Staff keep parents very well informed on a day-to-day basis of the progress their child is making, using the home-school book. This is a very useful channel of communication between home and school. The teacher in charge of parent partnership produces a short, informative newsletter every two weeks that keeps parents up-to-date with events as well as providing an outline of the curriculum. Telephone contact with parents is frequent. Home visits are made when required. Parents are fully involved in the process of annual review of the statement of special educational need. The annual report, sent out in advance, gives details of suggested targets for the new individual education plan so that parents are well informed to participate in the discussion. The annual progress reports are of a very high quality and provide detailed information on the progress made by the pupil in all areas of the

curriculum. They clearly identify strengths and weaknesses but appropriately emphasise the positive. Parents and carers have the opportunity to meet with teachers to discuss the report in detail.

- 72 Links with parents make a very effective contribution to pupils' learning. Parents are fully involved in the annual review process, with 80 per cent of parents attending. Those parents who are unable or unwilling to attend are contacted individually. The very good quality of information they receive enables them to be well involved in their child's learning at every stage of his or her education. They know what their child is working towards both in lessons and with regard to behaviour and personal development. Staff provide very good support for parents and are readily available to talk with them. The Friends Association raises a significant amount of money each year to support the work of the school. The school manages a Portage programme to support pre-school age children and, for those who go on to attend the school, this forges strong relationships with parents. A parents group has also been established. Regular meetings are held with speakers providing information and advice on a wide range of subjects.
- 73 Parents support the school in a variety of ways. They offer help on the frequent trips and visits and attendance at events is very good. In particular, the coffee shop, run by Post-16 students, is well supported with parents stating that attending regularly was a way of putting something back into the school.
- 74 At the time of the previous inspection links with parents were judged to be satisfactory. They are now very good; a significant improvement.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 75 The leadership and management of the school have been interrupted during this school year by a change of headteacher, involving the deputy headteacher acting as headteacher for the Spring term and the new headteacher starting six weeks before the inspection. Additionally there have been major changes to the governing body with several new governors and changes of Chair and Vice-chair. Good leadership and shared responsibility of senior staff have enabled the school to maintain an overall good standard of provision during this unsettled period. Teachers lead their class teams of support staff very well. They ensure that the needs of all pupils are met through well-coordinated support which enables all pupils to be included in activities and encouraged to become increasingly independent. The supportive leadership of the new headteacher has encouraged good teamwork amongst staff and a renewed sense of purpose.
- 76 Since the last inspection the school has been very well managed. The issues for improvement, raised by the previous inspection, have been very well addressed. Clear annual targets are set in the school development plan (SDP) and have been evaluated and built on strategically during the intervening period. Also the school has set targets which respond to initiatives such as the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Development of provision has focused on the quality of pupils' learning, appropriate to their age and needs, with the emphasis on the issues of curriculum development and schemes of work

supported by assessment and target setting. Responsibility for these developments was suitably devolved to staff; and they have been effectively managed in their work to greatly improve curriculum provision and ensure that all aspects of provision comply with statutory requirements.

- 77 The school's strong shared sense of purpose is reflected in the way curriculum co-ordinators are working together with colleagues to refine schemes of work and assessment procedures within the school's well considered cycle of topics, so that pupils may learn through real and relevant experiences. The very good foundations that have been established are enabling the consistent assessment of pupils' achievements. Although at an early stage of implementation these assessments are intended to track pupils' progress over time and to identify those elements of subjects that need to be taught in lessons additional to the topics. Co-ordinators monitor effectively their colleagues' planning of lessons and the work done by pupils. They have not had opportunities to observe lessons in order to evaluate the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school in their subject areas. However, all staff have been involved in self-review and have contributed to the school's process of self-evaluation by reporting to the school governors on the developments in their designated curriculum responsibilities.
- 78 The senior management team has established a good system for the performance management of teachers which is having a positive effect on the quality of teaching and learning throughout the school. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have observed the work of staff and individual targets for development have been agreed. The professional development needs of staff and the school's priorities have been identified and addressed by a wide-ranging programme of in-service training which includes subject-specific courses for teachers, whole school training in literacy, numeracy, ICT, citizenship, planning and 'twilight' workshops on multi-cultural education. Good training opportunities are provided for learning support assistants (LSAs) who are included in whole-school training days and workshops as well as training appropriate to their needs, for example first aid, Makaton, moving and handling, paramedical issues and opportunities to gain further qualifications. The training provided for LSAs in 'Portage' by the very experienced teacher in charge of the area service is a good example of the way the school shares the expertise of staff. The school, commendably, is extending its performance management of teachers to include the learning support assistants.
- 79 The school governors have contributed to the school's self-review by visiting classes in their role as link-governor for a curriculum area. This has enabled the longer serving members to have a good over-view of school provision. The curriculum areas have recently been re-allocated appropriately to match the interests and experience of the present members. The several new members are keen to support the school but are inexperienced in school governance and have not yet had the benefit of governor training. The local education authority link officer provides good support and advice to the governing body and their statutory responsibilities are effectively met. External reviews by the local education authority have supported the monitoring and evaluation programme.
- 80 The governing body has a well-organised system for carrying out its responsibilities. There are suitable sub-committees which meet regularly and report to the full governing body on

their proposals and findings. Since the last inspection, all the required policies have been put in place and a suitable schedule for their review established. The school's finances have been very well managed and good use has been made of a range of specific grants. Difficult decisions have been implemented so that the previous deficit budget has been resolved and a small surplus is planned to cover contingencies. The school's targets for improvement set within the school development plan have been achieved as a result of strategic allocation of responsibility and funding with good regard to the principles of best value. However, the very high staffing costs result in insufficient funding for resources and site maintenance, with the school relying on voluntary work and fund-raising to support this expenditure. This results in areas of the school grounds being poorly maintained and significantly undermines the school's image and its aim for 'excellence for all'.

- 81 There are a satisfactory number of teachers and learning support assistants to meet the wide-ranging needs of the pupils. However, the increasing range of pupils' needs including pupils with severe challenging behaviour and autism needs to be more rigorously audited in relation to staffing. A strong feature of provision is the considerable collective expertise and experience of staff in meeting the needs of pupils with severe or profound and multiple learning difficulties. All five teachers who undertook threshold assessment were successful. Staff are also skilled in managing pupils with challenging behaviour but there is insufficient provision to support classroom staff when emergencies arise. The changing pattern of needs prevalent within the school has resulted in an increasing number of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and although some staff have had training in meeting these needs there is presently a shortfall in expertise and provision in this aspect. The school has correctly identified this as a priority for future development.
- 82 Staff are suitably deployed to make best use of their skills according to pupils' age and stage of development. Pupils are allocated to classes mainly on the basis of age and occasionally adjustments are made as new pupils are admitted. This has an unsettling affect when it happens during a school term. The number of pupils in class groups is broadly appropriate but insufficient audit of pupils' needs, in relation to the level of staffing required, is carried out to ensure the best deployment to meet the range of needs.
- 83 The school's accommodation is satisfactory overall with some good features and some unsatisfactory aspects. Good facilities are provided for meeting the needs of the students Post-16 and have a significant positive effect on their preparation for adult life. The good practical room for art and design and design and technology is used to good effect but pupils do not develop the more advanced skills in using machinery and power tools due to the lack of staff qualification in its use. The very good facilities for food technology are used to best effect. The school library is well situated centrally providing good opportunities for all classes. The computer network enables good access to the range of software, including the internet, to all classrooms but staff have only recently had the appropriate training and at present it is not used to best effect. Provision of specialist facilities for science are not available and this reduces the practical science opportunities significantly.
- 84 Provision for physical education is enhanced by a very well designed soft-play room but it is not sufficiently used, particularly with younger pupils. The small hall is barely adequate for

gymnastic and dance activities or indoor games and the school does not have a playing field for outdoor games and athletics. This adversely effects the range of activity for pupils. For children under five years of age the classroom is too small to accommodate the range of activity necessary for pupils across the six areas of learning and the small outdoor play area is generally unsuitable for its purpose.

- 85 A specialist sensory room provides very good learning opportunities for pupils with PMLD. Very good facilities enable pupils to gain self-help skills in their personal development as well as providing staff with the facilities for attending to the personal care needs of pupils with physical difficulties effectively and with dignity.
- 86 Resources for learning are generally satisfactory, both in terms of quantity and quality. The staff and governors actively seek out ways of obtaining value for money from specific grants and the small amount of the budget available for resources. Good attention to cost effectiveness is given in resourcing the priorities for improving provision to raise standards. The school is well supported in the acquisition of consumable materials and items to support topic-work by parents and donations from the community. The 'Friends of Sandon School' organisation, involving staff, parents and friends, raise significant funds to enable additional provision to be made, for example the school mini-bus with adaptations for transporting pupils in wheelchairs.
- 87 New technology is very well used in the effective day to day administration of the school's business, including a new finance system which links the school to the local education authority via the internet, leading to efficient processing of orders and up-to-date budget information. Good systems are in place for pupil records and these are well organised so that appropriate information may be securely shared when required.
- 88 Overall, the consistently good and often very good quality of teaching and learning, the good progress made by the pupils and the efficient and cost effective management of the school's budget clearly indicate that the school provides good value for money. The very good provision Post-16 prepares school leavers well for adult life. Consequently the overall effectiveness of the school is good.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

- 89 The headteacher, governors and staff of the school should tackle the following issues so as to improve pupils' achievements and the quality of their experiences.
- (1) Improve the leadership and management skills of a significant number of recently appointed governors.
(paragraphs 75, 79, 80)
 - (2) Extend the use of technology:
 - (i) to further extend the language and communication skills of pupils who cannot speak;
(paragraphs 3, 32, 39, 104, 153)
 - (ii) to provide opportunities for pupils in wheelchairs to learn directional control of powered mobility devices;
(paragraphs 8, 39)
 - (iii) and the use of information and communication technology to support learning across the curriculum.
(paragraphs 32, 148, 149, 156)
 - (3) Improve the provision for autistic pupils through the professional development of staff to meet their learning needs.
(paragraphs 24, 42, 81)
 - (4) Improve facilities:
 - (i) for children under five and infants;
(paragraphs 10, 84, 97)
 - (ii) for science particularly at secondary level;
(paragraphs 7, 11, 83, 130)
 - (iii) and for physical education.
(paragraphs 11, 84, 167, 173, 174)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

62

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

34

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| | Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|------------|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Number | 6 | 17 | 33 | 6 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage | 10 | 27 | 53 | 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 |

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

No of pupils

Number of pupils on the school's roll

53

Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals

12

English as an additional language

No of pupils

Number of pupils with English as an additional language

0

Pupil mobility in the last school year

No of pupils

Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission

7

Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving

0

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | % |
|-------------|------|
| School data | 8.6% |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|-------------|------|
| School data | 0.3% |

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

Ethnic background of pupils

| | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 0 |
| Black – African heritage | 0 |
| Black – other | 0 |
| Indian | 0 |
| Pakistani | 0 |
| Bangladeshi | 0 |
| Chinese | 0 |
| White | 39 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 1 |

Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Nursery – Y13

| | |
|--|-----|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 7.6 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 7.1 |
| Average class size | 7 |

Education support staff: Nursery – Y13

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 20 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 474 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

| | |
|----------------|---------|
| Financial year | 2000/01 |
|----------------|---------|

| | £ |
|--|--------|
| Total income | 566860 |
| Total expenditure | 547539 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 12168 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 8430 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 27751 |

Recruitment of teachers

| | |
|--|---|
| Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years | 2 |
| Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years | 2 |

| | |
|--|---|
| Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE) | 0 |
| Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE) | 0 |
| Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE) | 0 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 54 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 24 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 67 | 29 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 41 | 45 | 9 | 0 | 5 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 42 | 50 | 0 | 0 | 8 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 37 | 26 | 16 | 11 | 11 |
| The teaching is good. | 71 | 17 | 0 | 0 | 12 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 67 | 25 | 8 | 0 | 0 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 75 | 8 | 17 | 0 | 0 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 50 | 42 | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 58 | 38 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 62 | 25 | 4 | 0 | 8 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 50 | 32 | 14 | 0 | 5 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 35 | 39 | 17 | 0 | 9 |

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

- 90 Children under five are settled very quickly into the school and their needs are very well met by the experienced staff who enable them to make good progress towards the early learning goals of the foundation curriculum. Several children of pre-school age, who are not on the school roll, benefit from the support of the area Portage Service conducted through the school. This provides teaching in partnership with parents and enables these children also to make very good progress.
- 91 Teachers and support assistants have a good understanding of pupils' needs. The planned activities in this mixed age class of two to six year olds ensure that pupils make good progress in their learning. Much of the work is planned for individual pupils. Accurate records of pupils' achievements are used well to target specific activities to promote the best possible progress.

Personal, social and emotional development

- 92 Staff quickly establish close relationships with the children and provide support well matched to their individual needs. This enables the children to rapidly gain confidence and a positive attitude to taking part in activities. They respond well to the personal and social challenges that are sensitively set for them and begin to interact positively in greeting staff and classmates. They behave with increasing compliance in response to the very good use of praise and encouragement by the teacher and learning support assistants and make significant progress in their self-help skills of washing and dressing. The high quality of care and attention provided enables pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties to become increasingly tolerant to new situations and accepting of others.

Communication, language and literacy

- 93 The children respond quickly to the well-structured challenges for developing their communication skills. They learn to recognise the photographs, signs and gestures which are used consistently to support greetings and requests and use them as they greet each other each morning. They vocalise along with the greeting songs; and this effectively enables them to confidently attempt to use words, initially with intonation such as 'ehoh' for hello. They positively press the switch on a 'touch-talker' to 'say' a recorded response. Good progress is made with listening and pre-reading skills, for example, in interacting with stories which use repetitive language such as 'Going on a Bear Hunt'. Through activities based on 'big book' and shared reading approaches, children steadily develop the ability to anticipate what happens next, for example in *The Tiger Who Came To Tea*. They begin to identify the symbols that are used in conjunction with the Makaton signs for familiar requests such as 'drink' or 'toilet'. Their progress in this is significantly enhanced by parents being involved in the school's 'total communication' approaches. The visiting speech and language therapist provides good support in assessing needs and planning programmes for developing

their skills. Pre-writing skills are developing well as they use crayons, pens and paintbrushes with increasing independence and dexterity.

Mathematical development

- 94 Very good attention is given to developing the key concepts which are the basics for understanding mathematical relationships. Work is closely planned in one-to-one activities to encourage children to explore shape, texture and properties of a range of toys and materials. Through these, the children progress quickly from responding to a range of experiences to understanding cause and effect and beginning to know that hidden objects still exist. They start to anticipate and predict what happens next. Through participation in counting rhymes and songs involving numbers from one to five they begin to recognise the numbers. Such songs as “five green bottles” and “five little speckled frogs” are used with effective resources, - especially the speckled frogs! Pupils are encouraged to make shapes from play-dough, and appropriate computer programs are used to develop matching of shape and colour.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

- 95 Children have regular access to computers and they develop an awareness and use of information and communication technology. The computers in the classrooms are always in use, although often the program used does not relate to the lesson. Pupils develop mouse control and learn how to move a cursor with greater accuracy. More able pupils begin to understand and use the “clicking” feature of the mouse.
- 96 Teachers build on children’s natural curiosity and help them to understand the world in which they live. The school environment is used very well and opportunities are provided to promote the use of all senses, such as when using the sensory garden to experience different scents, or when listening to tape recordings of a train or bus. Displays and photographs highlight visits within the local community and visitors to the school. There is a good range of resources, which encourage children to develop their awareness of different materials. They play with an exciting variety of objects, use dough, blocks, water and sand safely, and are beginning to use words to comment on their experiences such as sand trickling or water dripping. Children learn about their locality through visits to such places as the railway station and bus station.

Physical development

- 97 Younger and less physically able children have their physical needs assessed thoroughly by a physiotherapist. They receive regular sessions of exercise designed to improve their posture, muscle tone and movement control. These are carried out by the learning support assistants and a physiotherapy assistant and very good progress is made towards the children walking independently. Teachers and learning support assistants provide very good programmes for older and more physically able children to develop control and co-ordination. They extend their movements when working with large, medium and small balls and beanbags. They achieve increasing control in rolling balls and throwing beanbags when

working with a partner or adult and more able children make good progress in catching skills. They are provided with good play opportunities to develop their physical skills such as pedalling cars and tricycles during outside playtime. However, the infant playground is in poor condition which discourages its effective use to promote physical development.

Creative development

- 98 Children are provided with a good range of activities to develop their creative skills. They use their senses to explore objects and demonstrate increasing awareness by tracking colourful items visually and looking for their reflection in a mirror. They enjoy using crayons to make marks on paper and use paintbrushes with increasing independence to create colourful shapes to represent familiar objects such as toy vehicles and buildings. They learn to match colours of paint to the colour of the items, for example, black for the wheels of vehicles. They build towers by stacking large blocks and with appropriate guidance and prompts, they explore through play the way toys move and use a range of construction kits to create recognisable houses, garages and wheeled vehicles with increasing independence.
- 99 Teachers and LSAs use songs very well to support children's learning and the children enjoy joining in with intonation and increasing anticipation. They explore simple instruments and quickly learn to make sounds by shaking rattles and bells. Imaginative play is suitably developed through good resources including the play-house on the playground which is used well by the children when weather and playground conditions are suitable.
- 100 Overall, children under five make good progress across the six areas of learning as a result of good and often very good teaching. The home-based Portage programme makes an important contribution to the identification and development of early learning and communication skills before their admission to a mainstream or special school is finalised. There are sufficient resources to support learning. The space in the classroom is limited and this reduces both the opportunities for pupils to choose from a range of different activities and the number of children who could be admitted to school at this important stage. Additionally, the outdoor playground is in poor condition and there is no suitable storage space available for the playground equipment; further restricting children's learning opportunities.

ENGLISH

- 101 Pupils achieve well in English at all key stages in relation to their attainment on entry to the school. Post-16 achievement is also good and higher attaining students have the opportunity to study for accreditation in a range of ASDAN course modules.
- 102 Pupils of middle ability and above across the school make good progress in **speaking and listening**. The use of drama to promote communication skills amongst all pupils, including those with profound and multiple learning difficulties is a strength of the school. This is reinforced for some pupils by participation in lunchtime drama club. In addition, it raises the self-esteem and confidence of pupils of all abilities.

- 103 In Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2, through regular group sessions using ‘big books’ and shared reading approaches, pupils steadily develop their knowledge and understanding of printed words. They enjoy stories and soon predict what happens next. Higher attaining pupils can request and offer information and use up to 20 words or signs. Pupils of all abilities listen attentively. The most able sign or talk with increasing confidence. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties respond to familiar sounds within the environment. In writing, higher ability pupils perform finger tracking and left to right movements and undertake simple tracing and copying tasks.
- 104 In Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 and Post-16, pupils and students continue to make good gains in **reading** skills. They benefit from the increasing use of age-appropriate resources that sometimes have to be modified to ensure access for pupils with physical difficulties. During this stage, pupils learn to discriminate between information and advertising text, for example in work on posters dealing with health and safety issues. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties make satisfactory progress in developing their **communication** skills and there is appropriate use of signing both between pupils and between the teacher and pupils. However the use multiple-choice ‘touch talkers’ is very limited; lack of the use of this technology acts as a restriction on the progress of learning for these pupils.
- 105 Additionally, Post-16 students gain in confidence in communicating with each other and working as teams, for example in activities associated with the mini enterprise scheme or in visits to the local leisure centre. Opportunities for extended writing are relatively limited, though all students maintain a diary, which is regularly discussed in circle time activities. More able students can recognise names, signs and symbols used in the community and develop a good social-sight vocabulary. They use computers to handle and manipulate simple text and make move pictures into text illustrate their writing. Less able students can write to a line with no letter reversals.
- 106 Pupils’ **behaviour** in class is generally very good, taking into account the range of disabilities. In the minority of situations where it is less than satisfactory, very good management by staff ensures that confrontations are skilfully avoided and opportunities to rejoin the group are carefully presented. This ensures that off-task behaviour in the lesson is kept to a minimum, even with some autistic pupils exhibiting challenging behaviour. Pupils can participate in group discussions in a constructive way, taking turns and listening both to the teacher and others and respecting a variety of views, such as in a Key Stage 3 lesson dealing with ‘happiness’ and ‘sadness’.
- 107 **Teaching and learning** are mainly good or very good. Lessons are varied and have a pace which is appropriate both to consolidating knowledge and understanding and maintaining interest and enthusiasm among pupils. The best teaching is characterised by careful preparation and briefing of learning support assistants together with the use of appropriate and imaginative props and artefacts. This was particularly well exemplified in an observed literacy hour session with pupils in Key Stage 3 where exotic fruits were used and circulated during a shared reading of a story based on life in Africa and the story of *Handa’s Surprise*.

- 108 Discussion sessions are well structured and ensure that there is maximum participation. Questioning is careful and deepens pupils' understanding. Thus in a Post-16 lesson there was good concentration on the explanation of key words in a lesson dealing with communication using new technology such as fax machines. Time is used effectively in lessons.
- 109 The teaching of basic literacy skills is very good. A wide variety of approaches including art and design and music are used to supplement more direct teaching. The effectiveness of teaching is enhanced by the time given to individual programmes of learning across the age range, and by the structured use of 'circle time' for plenary sessions where pupils are invariably encouraged to discuss what they have learned during the day. Pupils' independent learning is reinforced by reference to, and use of, the Internet, for example in work on cheese undertaken by Year 9 pupils.
- 110 **Leadership and management** of English are good. Schemes of work are well developed and give appropriate prompts to staff in planning specific lessons. There is a programme of lesson evaluation in place, though the opportunities for conducting such monitoring are limited. Assessment arrangements are well considered and are closely matched to the needs of the range of pupils attending the school. They also enable comparisons to be made with the performance of pupils in other subjects of the curriculum. There is good communication between both teaching and non-teaching staff, which ensures that lessons have a clear focus and that both pace and variety of activities are maintained. This in turn has the benefit that pupils realise the seriousness of their learning, and enhances relationships with pupils in the classroom.
- 111 **Improvement** since the last inspection has been good. The literacy hour has been effectively introduced throughout the key stages and has given improved focus to both the skills and pace of learning for pupils of all abilities. Schemes of work are now more fully developed. The role of the co-ordinator continues to evolve and there is a more structured approach to the monitoring of pupils' progress, particularly between the ages of five and 16. Record keeping is still uneven however. The needs to ensure that assessment data is gathered more consistently collated and used so that each pupil's progress through time can be measured for all classes within the school. There are an increasing number of age-related materials used for reading but this remains an area of further development as and when suitable publications become available. The emphasis in Post-16 is appropriately on functional literacy as a part of educating students towards independent living. Consideration should be given to increasing the access of more able students to literature and reading for pleasure.

MATHEMATICS

- 112 Overall, the provision for mathematics is good and there has been a good improvement since the last inspection.
- 113 At all ages pupils achieve well and make good progress in mathematics. This is because teaching is consistently good and sometimes very good and because the teachers' good

subject knowledge and excellent relationships with the pupils promote effective learning. In addition, the work of committed learning support assistants makes a consistent and notable contribution to the good achievement of pupils. An important development that has led to the good improvement is the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy. In the temporary absence of a co-ordinator for mathematics, the staff have worked together to produce effective curriculum planning. The planning provides an appropriate range to the curriculum and this is supported by improved and finely graded assessment procedures. Teachers set pupils clear and largely appropriate numeracy targets to achieve. These are not always as challenging as they could be, because the very good assessment procedures are not yet fully and consistently implemented.

- 114 In Key Stage 1 pupils make good progress in acquiring, consolidating and using early number skills. More able pupils can identify numbers to five and join in with the counting and number songs. Less able pupils have the opportunity to explore shapes and build towers. One, more able pupil, joins Years 2 to 6 for the whole-class sessions using the National Numeracy Strategy. Following one such lesson, he worked with different shapes, helped by a learning support assistant, and placed circles, squares and triangles in the correct spaces. Lessons are well planned and prepared so that learning is continuous.
- 115 In Key Stage 2, lessons follow the structure of the National Numeracy Strategy framework with whole class, group and plenary sessions. Teachers have a good understanding of pupils' special needs and know how best they learn. Because lessons proceed with pace and activities are interesting and varied, learning and progress are good. Pupils join in number songs, which develop familiarity with numbers up to 10. More able pupils count up to 20 and then count backwards to one. In a good lesson, pupils joined in counting in even numbers and one pupil was able to name the odd numbers, 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9. In the following group session, one pupil filled in successfully the missing numbers in a sequence of four. In another good lesson, the teacher made effective efforts to include pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and waited appropriately for a yes/no response to the question, for example, "Is this the number that comes next?" In the same lesson, a more able group were introduced to the + sign. They also created a honeycomb pattern using hexagon shapes and some named the shape correctly. Less able pupils worked on a one to one basis with learning support assistants, who used a multi-sensory approach to identifying circles and squares and rectangles.
- 116 Pupils in Key Stage 3 follow the National Numeracy Strategy, together with Key Stage 4. Pupils in Year 7/8 identify first as 1, second as 2 and so on up to 5. More able pupils put numbers 1 to 10 in the correct order. In a good group session, the less able were encouraged to count by using a drum to beat out the numbers and all pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties were given the opportunity to join in with help. In an excellent sensory group session, the pupils responded to being in a darkened room with an umbrella with flashing lights. The very well planned short-term activities ranged through visual, aural and physical stimuli, which encouraged participation, and the pupils remained engaged over a sustained period. In the following plenary, one pupil showed how he went "under" the umbrella and responded by looking up at the umbrella. More able pupils in Year 9 understand *opposite, next to, close and far, next, last and first*. In the plenary of

the previous excellent lesson, the teacher confirmed that all pupils knew these terms and could demonstrate them. The teacher assessed, identified and met needs on an ongoing basis.

- 117 In Key Stage 4, there is a good improvement since the last inspection and pupils continue to benefit from the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy. More able pupils use a calculator and can read the time using o'clock and half past. One pupil can do simple subtraction with a 100 number square and can identify all numbers up to 100. Another pupil could do subtraction with help and could also identify numbers up to 100 and supply the missing number on 100 square. Pupils learn 'forwards, backwards and sideways' by following the commands physically.
- 118 Post-16 there are good examples of mathematics applied to real-life situations in the ASDAN modules through which students have their achievements accredited. For example, pupils weigh in grams, measure their own height and learn about money. They use their knowledge of time by noting what time they wake up, what time class starts and other events of the day. Less able pupils show an awareness of cause and effect for familiar objects and activities such as using switches to activate equipment. Scrutiny of work shows very good on-going assessment.
- 119 Teaching is mostly good and in one lesson seen, excellent. There is an excellent relationship between adults and pupils, good explanations are given and very good use of questioning brings response from the pupils. Planning is very good with explicit differentiation and clear targets in line with the pupils' individual education plans. Clear planning sheets are used for each unit of study, detailing task, key stage and resources to be used. Each unit is evaluated on completion. The teachers have worked hard to improve the mathematics in the school and this is shown by the improvement in progress since the last inspection.
- 120 The good progress in mathematics applies equally to boys and girls and to pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. In Key Stage 1, good provision is made for pupils with autism. For example, in a good lesson, they were effectively engaged for short periods and responded positively, saying the names of 3D shapes correctly. Progress in Key Stages 3 and 4 is good, which shows good improvement since the previous inspection, when pupils in these years had work set that was not appropriate for their age and lessons were often slow.
- 121 Use of information and communication technology is well planned in mathematics. In a good group session, very good use was made of control technology when more able pupils could, with help, program a robot to move forwards and backwards and to turn left and right. One pupil, without help, programmed it to go backwards.
- 122 The previous headteacher was the mathematics co-ordinator, so the school has been without a co-ordinator for a term. The teaching staff have worked together very well to ensure that standards have been maintained and that the National Numeracy Strategy was successfully implemented. The school has identified a new, suitably qualified co-ordinator who will be taking over the post. There are very good procedures for the assessment of

progress using small, progressive steps of attainment. These are not yet applied consistently throughout the school but provide a sound basis for monitoring pupils' progress over time.

- 123 Pupils' numeracy skills, knowledge and understanding are regularly reinforced across the curriculum, in assemblies and during informal times during the day. For example in a very good design and technology lesson for Years 4 to 8, there was good use of practical numeracy skills when the teacher prompted the pupils to tell the time and to check when the baking would be ready. The pupils then reminded the teacher when it was time, showing good memory and initiative. During a good Year 5 art and design lesson when pupils collected leaves for their artwork, the pupil emphasised big and small leaves. In a good Year 4 music lesson, while pupils were listening to sounds, they were encouraged to count to three as they beat the drum. A particularly positive feature of the subject is the high level of involvement of non-verbal pupils and those with complex needs in all the mathematics activities through the appropriate use of signing, symbols and sensory experiences. The subject, and the manner, in which it is taught, makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

SCIENCE

- 124 Overall, the quality of provision in **science** is **very good**.
- 125 Pupils in all age groups both primary and secondary make very good progress in science. In lessons seen during the inspection, pupils in all classes responded well to the work they were given, and showed progress in building on what they had learned in previous lessons.
- 126 In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils are beginning to understand the basic properties and textures of different materials. They can recognise an increasing range of plants and animals and are beginning to know differences between living and non-living things. They know about the forces of pushing and pulling. Through a range of experiments they feel the force of the wind and identify the different effects wind can have.
- 127 In Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils with PMLD used switches purposefully in the sensory room to control light and colour. Pupils in Year 9 showed a good understanding of simple electrical circuits and knew that a complete circuit is needed for a bulb to light. Pupils in Year 10 and 11 show a good understanding of shadows and the effect of moving the light or the object on the size of the shadow as they experimented with a torch and a screen. More able pupils could predict what they would expect to see. However, there are no specialist facilities available for science. This reduces opportunities for pupils, particularly those of secondary age, to develop their skills in experimental and investigative work.
- 128 Overall, the quality of teaching is very good. During the inspection four lessons of science were seen of which two were judged to be outstanding, one very good and one good. Teachers have excellent subject knowledge and use this well to match the activities they plan to the needs of their pupils. Lessons are always practically based and pupils learn very well through being actively involved. They carry out their experiments with very good levels of concentration and perseverance. Teachers manage their pupils very well. Where pupils

exhibit challenging behaviour they are encouraged to properly take part in the lesson activities. Teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to work independently and to use their initiative, for example when some Year 9 pupils set up the equipment for other pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties to explore the effect of switches.

- 129 Support staff make a very good contribution to pupils' learning. They are very well briefed as to the activities to be done and where they can make a real difference to pupils' progress. In particular they are very good when working in the sensory room in enabling pupils to be actively involved and to make responses to the lights and music.
- 130 Science is very well managed. The curriculum is well planned and there are detailed records which identify the progress pupils are making. A key to the effectiveness of the curriculum is the way it has been planned to meet the needs of pupils of all ages, using appropriate practical activities to match their maturity. There are sufficient science resources although the loss of the special science room does limit the learning opportunities of the older and more able pupils.

ART AND DESIGN

- 131 Overall pupils of all ages make consistently good progress in art and design as a result of good teaching which ensures that pupils benefit from real and meaningful experiences, well matched to their individual needs.
- 132 In Key Stage 1 pupils use colour and shape with increasing purpose, for example to create recognisable paintings of different vehicles such as post vans, police cars or tractors, showing wheels and body after exploring toy vehicles. Teachers make good use of the school environment to provide pupils with real experiences related to examples of the work of known artists. For example, pupils in Key Stage 2 made good progress in cutting and fixing skills as they used scissors and glue to create a picture from the leaves of an oak tree. They contributed painted shapes of boats and buildings to an effective 'Canaletto' scene. In their work with fabrics they made effective safety tabards with luminous stripes on cloth and used paper, card and paint well to decorate bottles to make 'rockets' in three dimensional work. Good artwork is produced in Key Stage 3 where pupils used twigs, leaves and well-chosen coloured paints to make effective pictures in the style of Monet.
- 133 In Key Stage 4, pupils benefit from the specialist expertise of teachers at a local secondary school. They work well alongside mainstream students and achieve very good standards, for example using painting, printing and paint-blowing techniques with templates to create images of giant frogs and lizards as part of their work on Aboriginal art. They apply their ideas very well as when they decorate 'boomerangs and didgeridoos'.
- 134 Teachers provide very good learning experiences for pupils with PMLD through good multi-sensory approaches, which are linked to key concepts such as shape and colour. This enables them to sustain their concentration as they explore shapes and textures of different objects. For example, they created pictures of fruit by choosing and using appropriate colours to paint yellow, long banana shapes and round orange shapes.

- 135 Well-planned experiences within the ASDAN programme enable Post-16 students to extend their art skills to photography. Their skills improve as they photograph landscapes and buildings and take full-length or head-and-shoulder portrait pictures. They become competent in the use of a digital camera and incorporate their pictures into posters.
- 136 Provision for art and design has improved considerably since the last inspection. The quality of teaching and learning is now consistently good as a result of effective curriculum development and good support and guidance by the subject co-ordinator. The subject is well led and managed by the co-ordinator who provides good advice each term to colleagues as to how art and design should be taught within the current topic. The programmes of work are well planned and meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. Teachers' termly plans are being developed over the three-year cycle of topics to build into a suitable whole school scheme of work. Through these topics, pupils' artwork is well planned for pupils of different ages. They are taught to work with a range of media and materials as they move through the school. The work done is monitored effectively by the co-ordinator by reviewing teachers' planning and the artwork produced by the pupils. Good assessment procedures are being followed linking pupils' attainments to a suitable progression of attainments that are graded in small steps. Although the breadth of artwork done by pupils has been improved since the last inspection there are still insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop their skills in three-dimensional artwork.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 137 Provision for food technology is very good and pupils make consistently good progress, becoming increasingly independent in their work. However, the range of activities remains too narrow with insufficient opportunities for pupils to develop skills in designing and making that use resistant materials, such as wood or plastic.
- 138 Effective teaching includes very good planning, differentiation and teamwork with learning support assistants. For example, it ensures that all pupils in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 enjoyed using their senses of taste, smell and touch as they investigated ingredients before making their choices when designing and making their own sandwich. They made good progress in their use of a knife for cutting and spreading and enjoyed evaluating the outcomes of their work. Pupils have suitable experiences in using large-scale construction kits to make buildings and vehicles
- 139 In Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 good teaching with clear instruction, good support and prompts is effective in promoting pupils' independence in kitchen skills. Pupils enjoy their lessons and are well motivated, maintain interest and concentration, respond positively to instructions and guidance, and develop good manners. They achieve a good knowledge of basic food hygiene, such as the need to wash hands and wear aprons. They use kitchen utensils and equipment to measure and mix ingredients as they follow a recipe. They understand the dangers of working with a cooker and that food from the oven is too hot to eat. As a result of the work they do, many pupils become independent in making drinks and serving snacks.

- 140 Post-16 students make very good progress in food technology as they follow a well-planned programme of activity within the ASDAN scheme. They take turns to prepare their own lunch and are making very good progress towards independence in food preparation. Their attitudes to tasks are excellent; they appreciate the achievements of others and take pride in their work. More able students plan their sequence of activity, and some know how to set the oven timer. Students with PMLD are enabled to take a full part with sensitive support and encouragement. They increasingly attempt to use utensils for cutting, stirring and mixing; effectively reducing their dependency on physical guidance. Well considered mini-enterprise initiatives including the 'Coffee Shop' and the production of bird feeders and nesting boxes, peg-bags and small pots, involve the students in designing, making, and evaluating products for their effectiveness and quality. Consequently they gain a good range of making skills involving sewing, woodwork and pottery as well as food technology.
- 141 Since the last inspection, satisfactory progress has been made in the development of provision for design and technology. The subject co-ordinator has identified a good range of design and technology experiences from within the National Curriculum which are linked appropriately to the school's programme of topics. These are included in the schemes of work for each class and are progressively building into a whole school scheme of work. The co-ordinator has established useful assessment criteria which enables staff to monitor and record pupils' attainment in these activities, relevant to each class. There are good facilities for design and technology within the specialist rooms. The facilities for food technology are used to the full but those for design and technology are not used due to lack of qualified staff to use the equipment and machinery and this limits pupils' experiences in working with resistant materials.

GEOGRAPHY

- 142 Overall, the quality of provision in geography is good. Pupils make good progress in their learning of geographical knowledge and skills.
- 143 In Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils learn about their local area. For example, when pupils walk to the local bus station they identify the features they pass. By the end of Year 6, more able pupils have a good basic understanding of simple maps. This was seen as they walked round the local area following a map and identifying crossroads and the entrance to the park. Pupils in Key Stage 3 learn about the Netherlands and begin to understand about different countries. This is further developed through the focused days when they learn about the people, food, music and customs of other countries. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 begin to relate different countries to a world map and a large globe. They record the weather each day and through video they appreciate that some countries have hot weather and some have very cold weather. For example, they learn about the rainforest in Brazil. One group has worked on a project on a world-wide theme; the pupils have looked at the globe, discussed the sea and developed a seaside theme.
- 144 Overall the quality of teaching is good. In all, three lessons were observed during the inspection. Of these one was judged to be very good and two judged good. Teachers have a secure subject knowledge as well as detailed knowledge of their pupils, which enables

them to plan well to meet their needs. Lessons are carried through at a brisk pace with carefully chosen small learning steps.

- 145 Support staff provide very good support, particularly on visits out of school, by reinforcing the use of the appropriate language and vocabulary as well as making sure that all pupils experience things first hand. They are particularly skilled at including those with severe difficulties within the planned lesson activities.
- 146 Overall the management of the subject is good. The curriculum is generally well planned but the current programme where geography is taught in blocks of half a term means that pupils' learning is interrupted and this limits the progress some pupils make. The planning ensures that all pupils follow the appropriate elements of the National Curriculum. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Teachers assess pupils' needs well in lessons but more formal assessments to measure the progress pupils are making is less secure as they are not made and recorded in sufficient detail.

HISTORY

- 147 History was not timetabled during the inspection and consequently there was not enough evidence to judge pupils' progress. However, the planned programme for history suitably meets with curriculum requirements and available evidence from pupils' work indicates that achievements are at least satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

- 148 The provision for information and communication technology (ICT) throughout the school is satisfactory. However, the use of ICT to support pupils' learning in the non-core subjects of the curriculum is unsatisfactory.
- 149 The school has identified information and communication technology (ICT) in its vision statement for the school, stressing that it will continue to ensure that ICT is an integral feature of the whole curriculum and that it is used to support and enhance pupils' learning. This intention is evident in teachers' planning and in pupils' individual education plans, although its use is variable. A good example of a specific target is for a pupil in Year 5, who has "to practise use of QWERTY keyboard and write his name without prompting". The date when this was achieved was noted. The planning for work in Year 6 states "where appropriate pupils will take their turn to write their news on the computer". However, during the inspection, there were insufficient occasions when ICT was effectively used in this way.
- 150 During Key Stage 1, pupils develop an awareness of information and communication technology and use computer programs to practice and develop matching and early mathematical skills. The computers in the classrooms are always in use, although often the program used does not relate to the lesson. Some of the computers are old and often the software does not work adequately. Pupils learn to develop mouse control and move a cursor with increasing accuracy to select items.

- 151 In Key Stage 2, pupils continue to build well on previous experiences and by the end of Key Stage 3, more able pupils can type up script and choose pictures from a program and the digital camera. The pupils' attitude and interest in ICT are very good as the pupils respond to the very good teaching. One group have typed up script and made a picture of a beach by using graphics programs, 'clipart' and photos of themselves using the digital camera. They have also found pictures of picnic food from magazines and have mixed these with the digital pictures they have taken in a 'picnic' collage.
- 152 The achievement in Key Stage 4 is very good because the teaching is very good. Some pupils use computers to identify, match and move images on the screen, others use very simple painting programmes while more able pupils word-process either using symbols or simple sentences. In a very good lesson the teacher gave very good explanations of key words and carefully checked pupils' understanding. The pupils were aware of sources of information, such as the internet, post, e-mail, telephones and fax. The teacher used the words '*photocopies, digital camera, scanner, and camcorder*' and the pupils knew what these were. The pupils talked about the programs they had used and how they had used the 'tools' to make writing change colour, larger, and different style; a more able pupil knew the word "font". By the end of Year 11, pupils can copy text, choose the size, style and colour of the font and use a menu to select pictures. They know the parts of a computer, take care of it and know how a computer can be useful.
- 153 Post-16 students use the word processor to write up their ASDAN challenges. The school is using some of the ASDAN "*Using a computer*" challenge for Years 10 to 13, but this not yet fully functioning and there is insufficient attention in the work pupils do with simple spreadsheets or databases. Less able pupils and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties lack opportunities to use a range of devices and switch operated equipment.
- 154 The subject is well led by the co-ordinator who has a clear view about how the subject is to develop. She has ensured that all staff have received training based on the national New Opportunities Fund. This has contributed to the good teaching and has given the staff confidence to use information and communication technology in the classroom. The school uses some specific grant funding appropriately to support the development in provision. However, low levels of funding for resources have limited the development of the subject. There are too many old computers and software that are reaching the end of their shelf life, although an effort has been made to buy suitable programs for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. The co-ordinator monitors the subject by looking at pupils' individual education plans and teachers' planning for the use of ICT. There is detailed planning of work to be done around the particular themes for the term, specifying resources and software needed and detailed reference to suitable assessment opportunities within the planned programme. A good baseline of attainments has been set for initial assessment of pupils' skills but it is not yet fully in use.
- 155 Classes do not have timetabled lessons on the use of computers but groups of pupils do take it in turns to have one session per week for a half term. To improve pupils' access to computers, more equipment is needed so that all classes have working computers, touch

screens and an improved range of switching and control devices. The co-ordinator recognises this need, but the school is limited by financial constrictions.

- 156 Although overall use of ICT across the curriculum is unsatisfactory, there were some good examples seen. Good use was made of information and communication technology during a good Year 10 geography lesson, when more able pupils were looking at pictures of Brazil on a graphics program, which had been well selected by the teacher. The pupils were very enthusiastic about the pictures and enjoyed printing out their chosen one. However, during a mathematics lesson with Year 10, opportunities were missed for including ICT in the group work. In other cases, pupils could practise skills such as matching shapes but the program was not related to the lesson.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

- 157 Since the last inspection good provision has been made through the introduction of an appropriate programme in which most pupils by the age of 16 gain some useful basic conversational skills and vocabulary in French, German, Spanish and Italian as well as gaining significant knowledge of their cultures. Previously a modern foreign language was not taught.
- 158 A cycle of focus weeks is used very effectively to introduce pupils to, and develop some basic awareness of, the language and culture of the European countries of France, Italy, Spain and Germany. Workshops during these weeks give pupils a wide range of experiences which include a relevant vocabulary such as greetings, songs, counting, days-of-the-week, meals and familiar experiences related to school or home. Lessons are well planned and prepared with suitably different tasks for pupils with different learning needs. In a French lesson for pupils in Key Stage 4 a lively pace maintained pupils' interest, and pupils were effectively encouraged to use more French words as the lesson progressed. In Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 pupils learn to greet each other in French and more able pupils answer questions with the correct words for the names of familiar items such as fruit, sweets or ice cream, beginning 'C'est'---'. They can count up to 10 and enjoy singing a French song.
- 159 Overall, provision for modern foreign language is well planned to give pupils an appropriate, meaningful and realistic experience of European languages and cultures.

MUSIC

- 160 Overall, the quality of provision in music is good.
- 161 During the inspection, pupils clearly enjoyed and responded well to their music lessons. In Key Stages 1 and 2 they take part in music making as well as listening and showing personal responses to the music they hear. Pupils sing well and tunefully, with most pupils remembering the words and actions to simple songs. For example in a junior lesson pupils responded to the music by making shadow pictures with their hands which they moved in time to the music. There are good links with the nearby primary school and joint music

lessons take place during which junior pupils from both schools sing, make music and are beginning to learn about notation.

- 162 In Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils play a variety of un-tuned percussion instruments showing good rhythm. They follow the tune well and can remember the order in which they should play. They show very good concentration and enjoyment. They begin to appreciate the differences in music from different countries during the focus weeks. For example, they recognise music from the Caribbean, India and Italy.
- 163 During the inspection four music lessons were seen. Overall the teaching was judged to be very good. One lesson was judged to be outstanding, one very good, one good and one satisfactory. The lessons were well planned to provide a good range of interesting activities. Teachers used their own knowledge and skills well to support pupils' learning. In the very good and outstanding lessons the teacher's enthusiasm and knowledge enabled her to involve all pupils including those with severe difficulties. The lessons were delivered at a very brisk pace. The excellent relationships between pupils and teacher enabled her to challenge individual pupils to extend both their knowledge and experience.
- 164 In the best lessons teachers extend pupils' learning by extending the learning to other subjects of the curriculum for example when Year 9 pupils were able to identify on a globe the countries where the songs they were listening to came from.
- 165 The management of the subject is good and the programme of music experiences well planned. Teachers have a good understanding of what their pupils can do but more formal assessment to monitor the progress pupils are making is under-developed. There is a good range of musical resources including recorded music. However, there is limited use of information and communication technology to extend pupils learning, particularly for composing their own music.
- 166 There have been significant improvements in the standards pupils attain in music and the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. All classes have music identified on their timetable and curriculum planning is now better.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 167 Overall, provision for physical education is adequate and pupils make good progress in swimming, gymnastic activity, dance and leisure skills. Progress in games and athletic activities is unsatisfactory.
- 168 Pupils in Key Stage 1 and Key Stage 2 make good progress in gymnastic skills in lessons that are well structured and planned with suitable use of large and small apparatus. They learn to move in different ways and maintain good balances on the floor and on apparatus. They help to put out apparatus confidently and safely. Good use of praise encourages pupils' effort and good performances by pupils are used effectively as an example to others. They enjoy demonstrating their performance, for example, stretching, balancing and different ways of moving along the floor or bench. They gain confidence in climbing and respond well to the guidance given by staff to improve their skills. Occasionally younger pupils get over

excited during warm-up sessions but progressively they achieve self-control and respond more readily to commands and instruction. Significant time is taken with dressing and undressing in preparation for physical education lessons, but at these times effective strategies are used to promote pupils' self-help and independence skills.

- 169 In Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 pupils are more responsive to teachers' instructions. They respond well to challenges to link movements and balances when moving on the floor and on apparatus. They gain a good sense of team identity and show appreciation for the good performances of others, for example, the accurate throwing of bean-bags into a hoop. Pupils express enjoyment and excitement in active movement sessions, readily praise each-others' performance, and respond well to instruction and guidance to improve their own performance. They sustain effort in challenging activities such as skipping with a rope. However, the pace of some gymnastic activities is slow and does not effectively raise pupils' level of fitness or stamina.
- 170 Lessons are suitably planned and conducted to meet the different needs of pupils. Pupils with PMLD are well supported by learning support assistants who work with them following physiotherapy programmes to maintain and improve their posture, muscle tone and movement. They become more confident and learn to trust others during paired rocking and sideways rolling activities and physically supporting, or being supported by, another person as part of a special movement programme. During a games lesson pupils in wheelchairs were effectively enabled, with support, to take part as goalkeepers. The use of the hospital hydrotherapy pool makes a valuable contribution to these pupils' physical development.
- 171 Pupils with all levels of need make very good progress in swimming lessons. Teaching is very good as each pupil is set suitably challenging targets according to their individual needs. Group games such as '*Simon Says*' are used effectively to enable pupils to become confident in the water. They are attentive and keen to follow instructions. More able pupils achieve near-average standards in their use of front crawl, butterfly and breast-stroke whilst some pupils with PMLD learn to propel themselves using a floatation aid. During a 'carousel' of activities, groups of pupils in turn enjoy and benefit from horse-riding. They name the parts of a horse and riding equipment, as well as gaining confidence in riding as they achieve standards towards certificates in riding skills.
- 172 Well-planned and prepared lessons using well-chosen resources enable students Post-16 to learn about a range of different sports. They work in a purposeful and focused way in challenging tasks such as making a display or mime to capture the essence of different sports. During games lessons they respond well to rules of games. More able students have a good grasp of the basic rules and understand fair play, passing and scoring. Students benefit significantly as their experiences are extended through use of leisure facilities within the community and through challenging activities during an annual residential experience.
- 173 The leadership and management of physical education were not allocated to a teacher at the time of the inspection due to recent staff changes. A satisfactory range of activities including gymnastics, games, dance, swimming, riding and leisure are undertaken through a suitably progressive programme, well devised to meet the range of pupils' needs. Since the last

inspection, programmes of study have been appropriately linked to the Early Learning Goals for under-fives, the National Curriculum and the ASDAN programme for students Post-16. Equipment for physical education is suitably maintained. The teaching of physical education is used well to support pupils' learning of basic skills. There is very good inclusion of basic concepts of number, shape and position and key vocabulary such as colours, in the context of activities. There are very good links to physiotherapy for pupils with physical difficulties. There is a very well equipped soft-play room but it is underused, particularly for younger pupils and those with physical difficulties who would benefit most from the challenging but safe range of movement opportunities it provides.

- 174 The playground has appropriate markings for promoting suitable playground games such as hop-scotch and a 'cycle track'. However, the range of indoor and outdoor games and athletic activities is restricted by the small multi-purpose hall and by no playing field being available.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 175 Achievement across the age range to age 16 is good. It is satisfactory for students Post-16. This is indicated not only in the comparatively small number of lessons observed but also in records held by the school and its own self-evaluation data.
- 176 Pupils in Key Stage 1 are aware of who looks after them and the ways they could care for others. This knowledge is reinforced by individual investigation, for example of how people in school help pupils by going and seeing what they do. In Key Stage 2, pupils learn to develop a sense of responsibility to themselves and others by understanding the roles that other people play in their lives, such as those of church and religious figures. This is achieved by the use of effective drama and objects of reference, for example to illustrate the meaning of work undertaken recently on the Muslim New Year. Displays of religious topics are varied and include much work done by pupils, for example, that dealing with aspects of the work of the Salvation Army.
- 177 In Key Stage 3, pupils are deepening their understanding well, for example in practical charity activities which gives them insight into the work undertaken by organisations such as Oxfam and the NSPCA. Poster work on this topic was of good quality and reflected well on the interest created by staff. From Key Stage 4, many pupils appreciate more abstract issues involving, for example the reasons for a celebration and the feelings of different groups and individuals. This was evident in a range of activities observed during the inspection which were related to aspects of the Royal Jubilee. For example, as they acted out the roles of Queen, soldiers and servants.
- 178 The quality of teaching and learning is good. At the age of 11 and above pupils are enabled to extend their oral skills, for example in discussion about Rosh Hashanah and the Jewish Festival. There is a sound focus on planning for integrating work in other subjects to the schemes of work. For example, artwork and collage was used well for making a display of work on Catholicism in a lesson observed with 13 year old pupils.

- 179 A range of visitors to the school enable pupils to increase their awareness of other faiths, including Hinduism and Sikhism and there is a termly 'multi-faith day' which encompasses a wide range of experiences such as the dance, food and art of different religious traditions. These experiences benefit pupils of all abilities.
- 180 Leadership and management are good. There is a clear vision for the development of the subject and the further training of staff to strengthen the approaches in teaching. Assessment arrangements are good. They enable pupils' performance to be compared to their progress in other areas of the school curriculum though they have not been in place long enough to influence future planning. Cross-curricular links are good, particularly with geography and information and communication technology. Pupils are increasingly making use of such facilities as the Internet to research aspects of religion in the community and do so from a comparatively early age.
- 181 Since the last inspection, the provision for religious education has improved and is now good. It is an established part of the curriculum and taught to each class on a weekly basis, including to students in the Post-16 phase. Pupils learn about Christianity and the other major faiths. They draw upon a range of sensory and other experiences to learn moral and ethical lessons and to consolidate their understanding of right and wrong. There is good coverage of the local agreed syllabus in the schemes of work across the school. Further revisions to these schemes, drawing on the practical experience of delivering the religious education curriculum in similar special schools, are now being considered.