

# INSPECTION REPORT

**DEE BANKS SCHOOL**

CHESTER

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111494

Acting Headteacher: Jenny Vernon

Reporting inspector: Graham Pirt  
No 14563

Dates of inspection: 29 January – 2 February 2001

Inspection number: 194501

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

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**INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school:	LEA Maintained
School category:	Community Special
Age range of pupils:	2 –19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Sandy Lane Chester Cheshire
Postcode:	CH3 5UX
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr D O'Hora
Date of previous inspection:	12 May 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
14563	Graham Pirt	Registered inspector	Art & Design Music	What sort of school is it?  How high are standards?  How well is the school led and managed?
13786	Susan Walsh	Lay inspector		How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20466	Alan Tattersall	Team inspector	Mathematics Design and Technology Equal Opportunities	How well are pupils or students taught?
30071	John Pearson	Team inspector	English Information and Communication Technology Special Educational Needs	How well does the school care for its pupils or students?
18461	Vanessa Wilkinson	Team inspector	Science French Physical Education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
1987	George Davies	Team inspector	Geography History Religious Education Post 16 provision Under 5's provision	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

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Inspection Quality Division  
The Office for Standards in Education  
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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Dee Banks is a special school for pupils with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties as well as pupils with challenging behaviour, autistic spectrum disorder and additional sensory impairments. There are 70 pupils on roll who at the time of the inspection were aged from 3 to 19 years. All pupils have statements of special educational needs and come from a mixture of rural and industrial areas in and around Chester, as well as some pupils from out of county. The pupils' attainment is below national expectations on entry and throughout the school.

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

Dee Banks School is a good school. Standards of achievement are good in most National Curriculum subjects and in personal, social and health education. The teaching is good, and often very good, leading to good and very good progress towards pupils' learning targets. The school is well led and managed and this has brought about good improvement in many areas. The school prepares pupils well for future learning through the development of their personal and social skills and the care of pupils is excellent. The school provides good value for money.

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

- The acting headteacher and senior staff provide strong leadership.
- Teaching is good with a high proportion that is very good and some excellent. This leads to pupils making good and often very good progress.
- Pupils' attitudes to the school are very good.
- The school fosters very good personal development and relationships.
- The curriculum is good overall and residential opportunities are excellent. There is very good provision for cultural development.
- The community and partner institutions are used very effectively to enhance pupils' learning opportunities.
- There are very good procedures for ensuring pupils' safety and well-being and the care of pupils is a strength of the school.
- There are very effective links with parents.

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

- The monitoring of attendance and the development and implementation of strategies to make improvements when necessary.
- The procedures for monitoring teaching and learning,
- The use of assessment data to raise standards achieved, particularly for lower attaining pupils and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties.

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

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

The school was previously inspected in May 1997 and has made good improvement since that time. Good progress has been made against all of the key issues identified apart from that relating to the improvement of accommodation. There is now a process to monitor teaching and the curriculum which is good for the curriculum but which is not sufficiently rigorous in examining all areas when monitoring teaching. The roles of the senior management team have now been made clear and the role of the subject co-ordinator has been clarified leading to good subject planning including that at Key Stages 3 and 4 and Post-16. The arrival and departure of pupils is now well supervised and safe. Appraisal of teachers is being addressed well within the Performance Management process. There have been insufficient improvements to classroom accommodation but the school now has plans in place to improve this aspect.

## STANDARDS

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

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

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

Overall the achievement of pupils is good over time and in lessons. However, there is some excellent achievement in drama and a significant number of examples of very good achievement in most subjects of the curriculum. Some groups of lower attaining pupils and those with complex needs do not always achieve as well as other pupils in the school because their individual targets do not always describe what they need to learn next.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Attitudes to the school are very good. Pupils are enthusiastic, interested in the work and are well involved in activities. They enjoy coming to school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good in the school, on visits in the community and during integration opportunities. Examples of inappropriate behaviour related to the pupils' learning needs are managed well so that they do not impact on other pupils' learning.
Personal development and relationships	These are very good. Pupils show care and understanding of each others' needs. The very good relationships between both pupils and adults support the way in which pupils approach their work and enable effective learning.
Attendance	Attendance is satisfactory. Most pupils attend on a regular basis and this helps them to make progress.

Pupils' attitudes to school are very good and pupils are very happy to come to school. They are excited and keen as they arrive in the morning and they maintain their interest in, and enjoyment of, school throughout the day. Pupils with more complex and severe learning difficulties equally demonstrate their enjoyment in lessons. The pupils' very positive attitudes are reflected in the very good behaviour in lessons, at break-times and when moving around the school as well as when they are outside of school. Pupils' and students' personal development is very good. They enjoy taking responsibility, such as being involved with the register system, the rota for setting tables for lunch and fetching dinners for their tables. They treat such activities with seriousness.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 5-11	aged 11-16	aged over 16
Lessons seen overall	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.

The quality of teaching is good or better in 76% of lessons, with nearly 40% being very good and a small proportion that is excellent. 20% of lessons are satisfactory and only 3% unsatisfactory. Teaching is very good for pupils over the age of eleven and up to sixteen. This represents a good improvement since the previous inspection. Well-planned and organised lessons are strengths of much of the teaching throughout the school. This is nearly always the case when teachers plan lessons of literacy and numeracy, following the structure of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. Teachers establish clear routines and provide a good structure. In the very small number of lessons that are unsatisfactory the planning is not sufficiently matched to pupils' targets.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	This is good overall, including that for pupils under 5 and those over 16. There are excellent residential opportunities. The community is used very well to enhance pupils' learning opportunities. There are very positive links with partner schools.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	This is good. Spiritual development is helped by the assemblies, prayers and religious education. There is a sense of morality. Social development is fostered during many of the class activities. Cultural development is very good and is addressed well across the curriculum.
How well the school cares for its pupils	This is good overall with very good procedures for pupils' safety and well-being. The care of pupils is a strength of the school. The school manages behaviour well and there is good support for pupils' personal development. The use of assessment information to plan for individual learning opportunities is satisfactory. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are unsatisfactory

The curriculum for children under five is good. The Foundation Curriculum is suitably reflected in teachers' planning and provides children with good opportunities across the recommended areas of learning. For pupils aged 5 to 16 the school has effectively implemented the National Curriculum programmes of study for all subjects. The curriculum for religious education follows the Local Education Authority's Agreed Syllabus and a modern language (French) is offered to younger secondary age pupils. Learning opportunities are very effectively enhanced for a small number of primary age pupils by well-planned and supported opportunities for them to learn alongside their peers in mainstream schools. This provision is also available for a small number of secondary age pupils. Provision for Post-16 pupils is good with a balanced and relevant curriculum. The school's strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are good and pupils have opportunities to reinforce their skills across a variety of other subjects. Curriculum planning ensures that the development of basic skills is well considered when teachers plan topics and work. The provision of extra curricular activities is very good with excellent residential opportunities. The pupils receive very high quality care and this is strength of the school. Senior staff, teachers and support staff have very high levels of commitment and dedication. They ensure that pupils feel loved and special.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	This is good overall. The acting headteacher and key staff provide strong leadership and good management and demonstrate a very good capacity to make improvements. They are beginning to establish a clear vision for development.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its	The Governing Body fulfils its statutory responsibilities well. Their role in shaping the direction of the school is satisfactory. They demonstrate a very

responsibilities	good capacity to develop appropriate procedures to increase their knowledge of the performance of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school monitors the curriculum well. The monitoring of teaching and learning is satisfactory but does not examine all areas of teaching sufficiently. The school has taken effective action to monitor the targets in the school development plan.
The strategic use of resources	The use of resources is good. The curriculum areas use resources well and very good use is made of classroom assistants to support teaching and learning. Accommodation is satisfactory but restricts opportunities in some practical subjects.

The acting headteacher and senior staff provide strong leadership and have developed a clear vision, in the short time they have been in post. They are able to see how the school should develop and what they need to do to achieve this. The senior management team is therefore beginning to ensure a clear educational direction for the school through these changes, although the current under-developed monitoring and evaluation systems prevent the full achievement of this at present. The leadership and management of the school is good and this is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection when it was considered to be sound. Resources are well used in the school, particularly the classroom assistants who contribute significantly to the success of the school. Accommodation continues to restrict some learning opportunities in the practical areas of the curriculum but is being addressed at present. The principles of best value are satisfactorily considered.

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

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
The quality of the teaching The leadership and management of the school Feeling able to approach the school with any concerns The progress that their children are making Children enjoy coming to school	Increased work being sent home Providing more information about how pupils are getting on Working more closely with parents Providing a greater range of out of school activities

The inspection team agrees with the views of what pleases the parents. The quality of the teaching and of leadership and management is good. Pupils make good progress and enjoy coming to school. Many parents reported to the inspection team that they felt able to approach the school, and a number were seen helping in school during the inspection. Pupils clearly demonstrated that they enjoyed coming to school. It may be possible to send more work home but the quality of use of the home – school book is very high. A small number of parents felt that the school could work more closely with parents and provide more information. The inspection team felt that the school worked very well with parents and that communications were very good although were aware of some individual instances that the school tried to resolve. The inspection team agreed with parents that despite some excellent opportunities more out of school activities, such as organised games, could be provided, particularly at lunchtime.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. All of the pupils have significant learning difficulties and overall they make good progress and achieve well against the targets in their individual education plans. In most of the subjects this represents an improvement since the previous inspection and reflects the improvement in the quality of teaching that was seen during the inspection.
2. In English most pupils achieve well and make good progress. This is because the teaching is mostly good and often very good, and because the school places a strong emphasis on the development of pupils' language and communication. This ensures that all pupils have regular literacy lessons and that opportunities are taken to develop literacy, language and communication in all other lessons. There have been improvements in pupils' achievements and progress in speaking and listening, reading and writing since the previous inspection. This reflects a similar overall improvement in teaching. The programme of work in English has also improved since the previous inspection so that it now describes what children should learn as they move through the school. Pupils benefit from the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy.
3. In mathematics good progress has been made since the previous inspection and most pupils make good and often very good progress in numeracy lessons. The mostly good and very good teaching helps most pupils achieve well in relation to their targets for learning. Pupils are organised into groups for numeracy according to attainment and this assists planning and teaching to meet pupils' additional needs. A small number of pupils requiring additional support in lessons do not make as much progress as they should because the planning is not sufficiently linked to individual education plan targets. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has helped pupils make progress in mathematical processes, particularly in relation to mental arithmetic.
4. In the majority of other subjects pupils now make better progress than in the previous inspection. For example in science pupils' progress is now helped by a more coherent curriculum plan which clearly outlines learning, particularly for secondary age pupils, a weakness in the last inspection. Pupils are making good progress in design technology despite the limitations placed on teaching by the accommodation. Progress is slightly lower in information and communication technology although it is still satisfactory. This is related to staff expertise in the subject, although they regularly utilise equipment in many of the lessons and in some lessons their competence is very good.
5. The youngest children (in the Foundation Stage) have only been in school for short periods. However they make good progress and prepare effectively for the transition to the next stage of their learning. Pupils between the ages of 5 and 11 make good progress in most subjects including English and mathematics. For pupils between 11 and 16 the progress they make is good overall but a large number make very good progress particularly in mathematics but also in English where excellent progress is achieved in drama. Pupils over the age of 16 make good progress in achieving realistic targets that contribute to how they feel about themselves. They show clear gains in their knowledge and understanding for instance in the use of items for personal hygiene and in making choices.

6. Throughout the school pupils make good progress in personal, social and health education but often very good progress in their personal development. For example the very good relationships between staff and pupils, and pupils themselves, enables pupils to feel confident about their learning.

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

7. Pupils' attitudes to school are very good and pupils are very happy to come to school. They come in each morning cheerful and eager to say hello to their friends. They show excitement and keenness as they arrive in the morning and maintain their interest in, and enjoyment of, school throughout the day. Even pupils with very limited communication smile when they arrive in the classroom. Pupils' and students' enthusiasm for school is reflected in how they join in a wide range of lessons and out of class activities. Such was the interest shown by younger pupils in the "Train Ride" story in English that they asked for it to be repeated while older pupils in an art lesson spontaneously cheered and clapped with delight when a pot successfully came out of a mould. Pupils with more complex and severe learning difficulties equally demonstrate their enjoyment in lessons. Their very obvious pleasure for the rapid beat of the "Big Panty Woman" song during a wheel chair dancing lesson matched the high level of interest and concentration shown by students with challenging behaviour as they investigated the different scents of a range of personal hygiene products. Pupils and students also demonstrate very positive attitudes when taking part in the very good range of residential experiences provided by the school. The look of quiet confidence and obvious pleasure on the face of a pupil photographed crossing a river on a rope provides a very good example of how the pupils' and students' very positive attitudes extend to out of school activities.
8. These very positive attitudes are reflected in their good behaviour in lessons, at break times, including lunchtime and when moving around the school. They relate very well with each other and will spontaneously help their peers if necessary. One young pupil moved her friend's arms and gently blew on his face in order that he also fully participated in the weather action song while another, when riding, said sorry to the horse when she realised that she was pulling too hard on the reins. Their good behaviour contributes directly to the quality of their learning. Pupils concentrate well when working alone and, as they progress through the school, they work effectively in pairs and when involved in large group activities. Older students' learning is enhanced by their capacity to sustain unsupervised concentration for lengthy periods of time. The pleasant and civilised atmosphere that is present during lunch is as much the product of the pupils' good behaviour as it is a consequence of the staff's low key and sensitive supervision. Pupils and students know what is appropriate behaviour.
9. Pupils' and students' personal development is very good. They enjoy taking responsibility, such as being involved with the register system, the rota for setting tables for lunch and fetching dinners for their tables. They treat such activities with seriousness; show pride when praised for their efforts and, as they progress through the school, are able to explain the importance of the responsibilities that they undertake. Such activities also provide them with opportunities to show initiative such as when a pupil hosted a visitor at her table. As they study the timetable at the start of each day they show pleasure when they make the correct predictions about what activities are going to take place and react with particular delight when they identify favourite lessons or activities. The very good quality of the pupils' and students relationships with all staff contributes significantly to their personal and social development. Pupils respond very well to the formal guidance provided during personal and social education activities and to informal guidance in all lessons and out of class activities. They respond particularly well to the opportunities to acquire and practise personal social skills as they play in the yard, move about the school in groups or as individuals.

10. Since the previous inspection the children's, pupils' and students' attitudes and personal development have improved. Attitudes to school are now very good as is their personal development. The good behaviour identified during the previous inspection has been sustained.
11. Attendance rates are satisfactory. Most pupils attend school on a regular basis and this helps them to make progress. Considering the distance that pupils are transported to school most buses and taxis arrive on time.

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

12. The quality of teaching is good or better in 76% of lessons, with nearly 40% being very good or excellent. 20% of lessons were satisfactory and only 3% unsatisfactory. Teaching is very good for pupils over the age of eleven and up to sixteen. This represents a good improvement since the previous inspection.
13. Lessons are well-planned and organised and this is a strength of much of the teaching throughout the school, particularly when teachers plan lessons of literacy and numeracy, following the structure of the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. For example, pupils aged eight, learn significant facts about books in literacy. They become increasingly familiar with the front and back of the book knowing the author and illustrator, because lessons follow a similar structure, emphasising important points. Lessons are fun, for instance where pupils enjoy the class reading of 'The Train Ride' and ask for it again. The teacher proceeds to build upon their interest to do it again to focus on more details such as examining words containing specific letters. Teachers have clearly established the lesson routines well so that pupils quickly settle to their tasks, since they know that they 'do work' after they have looked at the big book element of the literacy hour. Teachers plan to use resources well. This is particularly effective in French, where pupils immediately realise that the lesson about to start is French, because of what they see. They participate well at the start of the lesson, greeting each other, saying 'bonjour' as they bounce a ball to each other. They become excited and keen to take part in role-play of the café because of the effective preparation of the set and music for a French café. Consequently they achieve well, increase their vocabulary and try to say French phrases correctly.
14. In lessons where teaching is very good, the teacher provides a good structure to revise, consolidate and extend learning. For instance, the introduction to a science lesson for the oldest pupils, reminded pupils of what they had learnt about electricity in previous lessons. This set a good pace for pupils to learn for the remainder of the lesson. Staff follow the detailed planning, working effectively as a team, reinforcing vocabulary such as battery and circuit, when the opportunities arise. The quality of teaching was excellent in the drama lesson for the oldest pupils when creating a musical about 'The Wizard of Oz'. The teacher has high expectations for pupils to participate and this is reflected in the high standard of performance. The planning is effective to revise the story so that pupils can remember how their part fits in their work in the lessons. Through a structured range of tasks pupils become increasingly confident with their part. The teacher's very secure knowledge enables pupils to receive effective support. Pupils feel well supported and happy and this creates a secure atmosphere for them to develop excellent relationships with each other as they work towards the common purpose of the class.
15. In lessons where teaching is satisfactory certain factors reduce pupils' opportunity to make better than satisfactory progress. For instance, two classes joined for an interesting lesson in religious education about the Chinese New Year. However, the large number of pupils present prevented some pupils from receiving sufficient support to enable them to make better progress.

16. In the small number of lessons where the quality of teaching is unsatisfactory, there is not a close enough match between the tasks set and pupils' needs. This is because the teacher omitted to specify what pupils should learn in sufficient detail in order to monitor progress effectively. During an English lesson for lower attaining pupils up to the age of fourteen, pupils did not have sufficient opportunity to make their own responses to the story as the class teacher acted from the big book of the 'Bear Hunt'. It was therefore difficult for pupils to make progress.
17. All teachers develop very good relationships with pupils, treating them appropriately according to their age and attainment. The early morning sessions exemplify this, where teachers set the tone and plan the events of the day, promoting basic skills effectively. Teachers effectively nurture a wide range of skills as pupils 'sign in' for the lesson, count, and match symbols with lessons on the timetable. The lessons promote personal development in addition to numeracy, literacy and other subjects such as geography. The teacher provides a familiar routine where pupils begin to anticipate tasks. Higher attaining pupils become alert to questions, such as giving the number of pupils present. Lower attaining pupils receive equal consideration by being supported through symbols and signs to make progress against their own targets. For instance, higher attaining pupils greet each other by name and lower attaining pupils choose whom they will greet as a welcome to the day. Teachers provide good information for parents through home-school books to inform them of pupils' work in school and these are used very well.
18. A significant strength of teaching is the way that teachers plan to work effectively with support staff. Most lessons are characterised by good quality teamwork between staff, where classroom assistants rarely require direction during lessons. They follow tasks well, taking responsibility for some parts of lessons, responding quickly and with minimum fuss to provide pupils with support. Teachers and support staff are confident in managing pupils' behaviour and do this well. Staff share the agreed measures for behaviour management, reinforcing the class strategies well to enable pupils have a clear and consistent view of how they should behave.

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

19. The quality and range of learning opportunities provided for pupils are good. The school has successfully addressed the key issues from the inspection in 1997. There have been good improvements to curricular planning for secondary age pupils and students over 16. The roles of subject co-ordinators have also been improved and in English and mathematics curriculum development is appropriately supported by information about the quality of subject teaching. The procedures used to gather this information need to be extended to other subjects of the curriculum.
20. The curriculum for children under five is good. The Foundation Curriculum is suitably reflected in teachers' planning and provides children with good opportunities across the recommended areas of learning. Teachers take good account of the Early Learning Goals and this enables them to plan a wide range of experiences through which children acquire appropriate knowledge and skill. Children are provided with experiences and activities which contribute directly to their personal, social and emotional development; their language, literacy and communication development; their mathematical, physical and creative development as well as their knowledge and understanding of the world. The learning planned for children prepares them well for the National Curriculum.

21. For pupils aged 5 to 16 the school has effectively implemented the National Curriculum programmes of study for all subjects. The curriculum for religious education follows the Local Education Authority's Agreed Syllabus and a modern language (French) is offered to younger secondary age pupils. Learning opportunities are very effectively enhanced for a small number of primary age pupils by well-planned and supported opportunities for them to learn alongside their peers in mainstream schools. This provision is also available for a small number of secondary age pupils.
22. The school's strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are good and pupils have opportunities to reinforce their skills across a variety of other subjects. Curriculum planning ensures that the development of basic skills is well considered when teachers plan topics and work.
23. Since the last inspection the curriculum for older pupils and students has been improved. The National Curriculum programmes of study for secondary age pupils are now suitably reflected in the school's long-term planning. A good curriculum has been developed for students over 16, which provides opportunities for them to gain national recognition of their achievements. The provision for careers education and guidance and vocational education is good. Work experience is well developed and higher attaining students take part in good quality work placements in the community. Lower attaining students experience the world of work by undertaking purposeful jobs around the school. There have been good opportunities for these students to assist the school caretaker and to work in the office. The school has good links with the careers service. The careers officer contributes to reviews and provides good support for students and their families when they are considering future placements.
24. Provision for personal, social and health education is good. It effectively supports pupils' personal development because it is taught in a way that is relevant to them and the realities of their lives. The programme contains all the necessary formal elements including appropriate modules about drugs and sex education. The school has also introduced, for secondary age pupils, suitable modules, which reflect citizenship such as rights and responsibilities. Teachers effectively reinforce pupils' social development and their understanding of health issues, often through other subjects of the curriculum. Pupils' personal development is well supported by the high expectations staff have of them to be responsible and independent.
25. A suitable amount of teaching time has been allocated to the subjects of the curriculum and there is an appropriate emphasis on English and mathematics. However, the timetables for each class do not always ensure that there is a suitable balance to the opportunities pupils have on a daily basis. For example, breakfast club, which involves cooking toast and the development of independence and social skills such as spreading butter and laying the table is followed by food technology where pupils are also involved in developing similar skills. Pupils who go horse riding then spend time in the schools soft play area on their return, thereby reducing curricular opportunities.
26. The school has established appropriate long-term curriculum plans for all subjects clearly identifying what pupils in each year group will learn and appropriate coverage of the National Curriculum programmes of study. Long-term plans are well supported by good medium-term topic plans, which guide teachers' preparation for lessons and ensure that pupils have a wide range of experiences and good opportunities to build on past learning. This is an improvement since the last inspection.
27. There is satisfactory equality of access and opportunity for pupils to the subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education and to accredited modules of work when they reach the age of 16. Students over 16 have learning experiences that are sufficiently discrete and age appropriate. Curriculum opportunities for pupils with additional special needs such as

visual impairment and autism are good. Access to the curriculum is well supported by specialist advice and, for autistic pupils, by the development of staff expertise and clear guidance on practice. In order to ensure equality of access and opportunity the school has developed an appropriate small step curriculum to meet the needs of those pupils who have more complex difficulties. It reflects the requirements of the Foundation Curriculum and the National Curriculum and acknowledges the age appropriate needs of students over 16.

28. In order to address the learning needs of all pupils the school groups pupils by ability. Primary age pupils learn alongside others of similar ability in English and mathematics and secondary age pupils are similarly grouped but for a wider range of subjects. Teachers effectively use the learning outcomes identified in curriculum planning to prepare work, which meets the needs of the majority of pupils and this enables them to make good progress.
29. The provision of extra curricular opportunities is very good. The residential and outdoor pursuit experiences arranged by the school are excellent and make a significant contribution to pupils learning particularly in their personal development and in the development of their skills in physical education. Pupils have very well planned opportunities to experience activities such as rock climbing, orienteering and pony trekking when they visit centres such as Red Ridge and Fairbourne. Activities after school are restricted by transport arrangements but pupils have very good opportunities to take part in a range of sporting activities such as football coaching, sporting events and competitions, where they join with a number of other special schools. Lunchtime is very long and there are currently few opportunities for pupils to extend their learning further through clubs and other organised activities.
30. The curriculum is very effectively enhanced by project weeks when pupils have well planned opportunities to take part in art, dance and drama activities, which reflect a specific theme. The Comenius Project in 1999 provided good opportunities to develop an understanding of European culture through stories, art workshops and by developing links with similar schools in Germany and Spain. There is a wide range of visitors to the school such, as musicians, storytellers and theatre groups who effectively broaden the pupils' experiences.
31. Overall there are very effective links with other institutions including very good opportunities for a number of primary and a small number of secondary age pupils to learn alongside their peers in mainstream schools. Communication between schools is very good and the school carefully monitors the quality of the placements. In the integration lesson observed, pupils from Dee Banks School had a whale of a time joining in the PE activities with great gusto and quickly making friends with other children and developing their social skills. Teachers are actively involved in curriculum specialist meetings, such as literacy and numeracy co-ordinator meetings where they meet with colleagues from other special schools. This has had a positive effect on curriculum development. There are also good opportunities for further education students on childcare courses and nursery nurse students to undertake well planned work placements at the school
32. The school has very good links with the local community. Very good use is made of the many exciting facilities in the area such as the Roman city of Chester, and the zoo. They also venture further afield to the North Wales coast and as far as Manchester. Visits are well linked to topics for example pupils in class 5 were looking at water in their geography lessons and they were able to experience for themselves the power of water when they saw the enormous water wheel at Manchester Museum of Science and Industry. The school values the support and generosity of local groups and businesses. There have been several very substantial donations, which have allowed the school to complete major projects such as the sensory garden and the senior light room. Volunteers from the local community also help with activities such as horse riding.

33. Provision for the pupils' and students' spiritual and moral development continues to be good. Carefully planned assemblies ensure that pupils celebrate the main Christian religious festivals as well as having the opportunity to appreciate the richness and diversity of other religions. Religious education lessons, assemblies and the end of day prayers in classrooms provides the pupils and students with opportunities to consider spiritual and moral issues that are directly linked to events or activities that took place during the school day. Younger pupils are aware of the difference between appropriate and inappropriate behaviour and develop this awareness into a clearer understanding of right and wrong. Older pupils fully appreciated the "wrong" involved in starvation when considering issues associated with the phrase "do they know its Christmas over there?". The school consistently promotes acceptable moral behaviour as it fosters fair play through stressing the need to share, waiting ones turn, caring and having respect for others.
34. Provision for the pupils' and students social development is good and has improved since the previous inspection. The personal, social and health education programme, the expectations that teachers have of pupils and students and the role models that they provide effectively promote social development. Lunch tasks, undertaken on a rota basis, involving the setting out of the class table and fetching the dinners for the rest of the table are effective in providing the majority of pupils with the opportunity to acquire social and personal skills. Evidence of activities undertaken during residential experiences confirms that pupils and students have very good opportunities to develop social and personal skills in a variety of demanding settings. Parents particularly value the opportunities afforded by the school for residential experiences.
35. The school's provision for cultural development is very good; a significant improvement since the previous inspection. An extensive programme of visits provides pupils and students with very good opportunities to develop an awareness of the richness and variety of their own and others' culture. Visits to the Manchester Museum of Science and Industry and to Manchester's "China Town" provide insights into the understanding of the history of their different cultures. Visitors to the school such as the "Oily Carte" theatre group and a Scottish piper contribute to this understanding. Displays around the school exemplify the relevant and exciting range of cultural opportunities that the school provides. These include the prayer mats of Islam, photographs of pupils spending a Victorian Christmas at Norton Priory, prints of famous works of art as well as the use of Egyptian masks as part of a project on faces.

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

36. The pupils receive very high quality care and this is strength of the school. Senior staff, teachers and support staff have very high levels of commitment and dedication. They ensure that pupils feel loved and special. Pupils are very well known to the staff and they feel safe and secure within a calm friendly environment. The school has good procedures in place for child protection. The designated person for child protection has had appropriate training however the school recognises the need to train a second person. Arrangements are also in hand to deliver more general child protection training to all the staff. The school follows locally agreed procedures and has good support from the Local Education Authority.
37. The school has made substantial improvements to promote health and safety since the last inspection. There are now very effective procedures to ensure that risks are identified and minimised. These well established routines and procedures are implemented by very conscientious staff and make a substantial contribution to the very high quality of care. Arrangements for the arrival and departure of school buses and taxis have also been greatly improved. The parking area has been marked out to provide walkway for pupils and staff.

Senior members of staff now supervise this busy time and try to ensure that it is as safe as possible.

38. There are only very informal procedures to monitor attendance and no consistent system of ensuring that absences are genuine. Teachers have the sole responsibility for following up reasons for absence and for alerting senior members of staff if pupils have attendance problems. While they notice if pupils are way often they do not always have the time to ensure they have a valid reason for every absence. Consequently there are unauthorised absences recorded in registers which may be due to illness.
39. There are good, whole-school strategies for monitoring and managing challenging behaviour. Very clear behaviour plans are provided in discussion with parents, and all staff are briefed. Expert advice is sought when necessary, for example in relation to the challenges presented by pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. Staff receive training, and by applying the school's strategies, pupils' behaviour is managed effectively. This approach to behaviour management effectively reduces the possibility of bullying, though staff are provided with further good guidance about identifying and resolving bullying should it occur.
40. Assessment on entry is well based on information provided by child development centres, questionnaires completed by both parents and the school and an adaptation of the Local Education Authority's "Achievement on Entry in the Early Years" guidelines. Additional information is provided by speech therapists and physiotherapist and, once the children are in school, regular discussions with parents serve as a valued source of information.
41. Teachers have a good knowledge of each pupil. A good range of assessment methods is available, including a variety of developmental checklists built up over time, but the use of these to plan, prepare and teach lessons that are matched to pupils' individual needs, though satisfactory, is variable. Information from assessment is used to prepare individual educational plans each term, but do not always result in suitably precise learning targets for each pupil reducing the effectiveness of the individual education plans as an aid to the planning of lessons. In many lessons assessment data is used well. Teachers use their good knowledge of pupils' attainment to provide tasks suited to the ability of each pupil. This good ongoing assessment enables staff to respond, for example, to pupils' attempts to communicate or make social contacts, at their individual level.
42. The school has established good procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' academic progress and personal development. Individual education plans are reviewed, with parents, each term and pupils' progress is examined thoroughly at annual reviews. The information provided by the school for these reviews is detailed and of good quality. The quality of these procedures is reduced by the lack of precision of some individual education plans. Good use of assessment information is made to organise the pupils into ability groups for some subjects, so that teaching can be focused at a particular level.
43. The school successfully identifies individuals or groups of pupils who have particular difficulties, for example those who have a visual or hearing impairment or an autistic spectrum disorder, and provides them with additional support. Although it does not currently monitor the progress that these pupils make in comparison with those in other similar schools, the extent of their individual progress is adequately monitored at their annual reviews.
44. The school has a very clear commitment to recognising and celebrating achievement, which increases the confidence of pupils and encourages them to succeed further. Pupils are given immediate praise and encouragement for their efforts and special achievement is recorded on a board outside the head teacher's office. Pupils are made aware of and keep track of their

many successes through their record of achievement files, which provide a very good record of their school lives.

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

45. The school works very effectively in partnership with parents. The vast majority of parents are very appreciative of the good quality education offered by the school. They feel that teaching is good and that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. They are especially appreciative of the very high quality of care given to their children and are pleased to report that their children like coming to school. The school has worked very hard to ensure that it offers good support to parents. Parents find the school welcoming and staff very approachable. Wherever possible the school takes parents' wishes into account. Parents support the school by being involved in fund raising and by helping with activities such as swimming and horse riding.
46. Parents receive a very good range of high quality information. Many parents report that they are fully informed about what their children do in school and of the progress they have made. They feel that many teachers take as much pride in the children's improvements and achievements as their families. A very small number of parents were less pleased with the information that they receive. Annual reviews and the reports associated with the annual reviews meet statutory requirements and are of a good standard. There are termly parent's evenings where parents can meet their child's teacher and regular coffee mornings where they can meet school staff in a less formal situation. Communication between home and school is very effective. Parents receive copies of individual education plans and plans for the topics their children will be studying. Home-school diaries are used very well. They almost always contain very detailed information about what children have done in school throughout the day. The majority of the children with very profound learning disabilities have a well-designed information sheet that allows parents and teachers to report quickly about the children's health and well being. There is regular phone contact between many parents and school staff. The school produces an excellent termly newsletter that gives a really interesting account of all the exciting activities that have been going on in school.
47. Parents are concerned that there is not enough homework. The school has responded by producing a homework policy. There is, however, more homework set at Dee Banks School than in many schools for pupils with similar difficulties. Many class teachers set small tasks via the homework diary and parents have considerable information about what is being taught. Reading books are sent home and in some classes the higher attaining pupils are given work sheets to complete at home. With initiative it is relatively easy for parents to reinforce work done at school at home. The school has recognised that some parents need more formal guidelines to helping their children at home. It has started to develop a list of activities to encourage parents to reinforce literacy and numeracy.

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

48. The acting headteacher and senior staff provide strong leadership and have developed a clear vision, in the short time they have been in post. They are able to see how the school should develop and what they need to do to achieve this. They have recognised that the nature of the intake of the pupils is likely change over time as the role of the school changes to meet national and local expectations. The senior management team is therefore beginning to ensure a clear educational direction for the school through these changes, although the current under-developed monitoring and evaluation systems prevent the full achievement of this at present. Although they are satisfactory they do not fully examine all of the issues related to quality of teaching or the effect that spending has on raising pupils' achievement.

The leadership and management of the school is good and this is an improvement on the findings of the previous inspection when it was considered to be sound.

49. The school's aims are clear and feature within the documents that the school uses and distributes. The aims satisfactorily influence the ethos and expectations within most of the school, largely in relation to teaching and learning and particularly in the care of the pupils and the relationships in the school.
50. Since the last inspection the school has moved into a position where most of the key issues have been achieved and the school has made good improvement. The school has implemented monitoring, evaluation and support procedures for teaching in the school. Senior management personnel have clear roles relating to curriculum co-ordination and the roles of subject co-ordinators have been clarified leading to improvements in subject planning across the school and curricular planning for pupils between the ages of 11 and 16. There has been good improvement in achieving these targets. There has been very good improvement in the supervision of the arrival and departure of pupils. Appraisal is now in place following the introduction of the Performance Management scheme. There has not been sufficient progress in improving the accommodation in some practical areas so that older pupils have equality of opportunity in accessing some subjects. The school did not take opportunities to improve this provision when it did have opportunities to do so. However, the acting headteacher, senior staff and governors have recently taken steps to move forward with this development and overall this target is now being addressed satisfactorily.
51. The co-ordinators understand their roles and the part they play in auditing their subject and producing an action plan which contributes to the management of their subjects and to the school development plan. However, as yet these roles are still developing. Monitoring of subjects by co-ordinators is not yet fully introduced, although the introduction of this aspect is well planned for in the school development plan. This is a thorough document that includes clear targets, tasks and success criteria with responsibilities, time scales and monitoring arrangements well described.
52. The day-to-day management is good and leads to the smooth running of the school. Financial administration, including that for the school fund, is good and all processes are secure and work well. The bursar is knowledgeable about the management of financial aspects of the school for which she is responsible and all ordering and invoicing and payment systems are secure and efficient. The school purchases financial advice from the Local Education Authority and this provides appropriate reports and information for the governors and the headteacher. The use of modern technology in administrative and reception areas is well developed and staff have attended relevant training courses. There are insufficient staff with knowledge of particular areas of the computer based ordering system to cover in the event of illness. The school accounts have not been audited by the Local Education Authority for a number of years. There is an appropriate reserve carried forward in the school budget which has been reduced over the last year through enhancements in staffing. There are plans to use other parts of the reserves to improve accommodation through building modifications to provide better facilities for technology. Financial processes are sound and well managed. Financial management is good, well accounted for in the school development plan and understood by the members of the finance committee of the governing body.
53. The Governing Body fulfils its statutory responsibilities well in that all necessary policies are in place and it has introduced effective committee structures for main areas of the management of the school although the rationale for membership is not clear to all governors. The governing body has not, as yet, developed strategies for monitoring aspects of school management and performance in order to make informed and effective judgements about areas of expenditure, such as the decision to increase staffing to allow monitoring and

evaluation to commence. However there are plans for the commencement of these responsibilities. Governors have a satisfactory understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and have played a satisfactory role in shaping the direction of the school. Governors are made aware of the educational standards that the school achieves through reports from co-ordinators and senior staff. Some of the governors visit classes in the school and planning is in place to develop this aspect further. The current governing body show a very strong commitment to making progress and demonstrate a very good capacity to succeed, shared with the current management team.

54. The monitoring of teaching and learning, undertaken by the acting headteacher and senior staff is satisfactory but lacks some rigour due to insufficient knowledge about what aspects need to be examined in order to set targets to raise standards and to identify development needs for staff. The school has not started to monitor its effectiveness, in order to compare results obtained from their assessments, through a self-evaluation process in partnership with other schools.
55. The school has a very good number of teachers and classroom assistants in relation to the pupils on roll, though the provision of classroom assistants depends too heavily on the additional staffing for individual pupils, which is not funded by the school. All staff have satisfactory job descriptions, though these do not always closely match the detailed requirements of their responsibilities. There are good arrangements for making sure that the staff have skills appropriate to their responsibilities. A Performance Management system for appraising and developing the work of teachers has recently been introduced and training opportunities are provided in areas where a need is identified, for example in the teaching of pupils with autistic pupils and the introduction of picture-exchange communications systems. There are good procedures for enabling new members of staff to become familiar with the school, through written information and the close support of colleagues.
56. A significant number of teachers have joined the school within the last three years. Any possible disruption to the pupils' education as a result has been successfully offset by the relative stability of the classroom assistants, who make a very full, professional contribution to the pupils' education. Arrangements to continue senior management responsibilities during the period while a new headteacher is appointed have been managed very successfully.
57. Many of the limitations of the accommodation reported at the previous inspection remain. The efforts made by the school to overcome these shortcomings by making the best use of its premises and providing pupils with opportunities to use facilities outside of the school, make the accommodation satisfactory. For example, pupils use a good range of local sports and leisure facilities, engage in a wide variety of educational visits, take their pottery to a kiln in a local school and make good use of the local library. The facilities for teaching food technology are being improved by the conversion of an existing classroom. The building is well maintained and kept clean and tidy by the committed team of caretaking staff.
58. The school takes satisfactory steps to make the best use of the space available. For example, moving the Post-16 class to a separate outside classroom improved their facilities while also enabling more space to be provided for a class of pupils who have difficulties with mobility. The classrooms are small but generally satisfactory for the numbers of pupils, though the room used for withdrawing groups of lower attaining pupils is too small. Pupils in one classroom are often distracted from their lessons by noise coming through the partition wall between their classroom and the soft play area.
59. The curriculum is enriched by the provision of well-equipped light rooms, a stimulating, well thought out soft play area and a sensory garden. The large swimming pool provides an excellent resource for the school and the local community. The facilities for managing the

arrival and departure of the pupils' home to school transport vehicles have been improved considerably by the marking of clear parking bays and pedestrian walkways.

60. The school has effectively used specific grants for a number of areas through the Standards Fund. These relate particularly to enhancement of administration and school improvement. Resources are well used in the school and contribute to the quality of the teaching. The school has a good level of resources for most areas of the curriculum, though these are satisfactory in science, design technology and physical education, where resources are limited by the lack of specialist facilities. Resources are mostly of good quality and those for music are very good. Computers are now beginning to be used well to support the pupils' learning in most subjects. The accommodation is successfully used to stimulate and reinforce the pupils' learning through the provision of attractive displays of examples of their work and activities in which they have taken part.
61. The application of the principles of best value is satisfactory. Governors assure themselves that they achieve good value for money on purchases made by the school but have not yet implemented systems in order to evaluate the effect of how spending has improved pupils' learning or raised standards. Governors show a very good understanding of areas for development, what they need to do to improve their role and are in a position to take the school forward. The school provides good value for money and this is an improvement on the previous inspection findings.

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

**62. The governors, headteacher and staff should:**

**1) Improve processes for monitoring pupils' attendance and develop and implement procedures to improve attendance where necessary by;**

improving communication systems between the classes and the office, ensuring that all absences are recorded accurately, ensuring that there are formal systems for following up absences where necessary and that these are consistently applied. (Paragraph 38)

**2) Improve the procedures for monitoring teaching and learning by;**

monitoring curriculum balance, (Paragraph 25)  
monitoring the match between what is being taught and the pupils' needs, (Paragraph 16),  
further develop the co-ordinators' role to include monitoring of teaching, (Paragraphs 51, 76, 85)

develop the governors' role in monitoring of teaching and learning, (Paragraph 53)  
 increase the knowledge of senior staff in relation to the criteria used to monitor teaching and learning, (Paragraph 54)

**3) Improve the use of assessment data to raise standards achieved, particularly for lower attaining pupils and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties by;**

ensuring a closer match between assessment data and the targets set for pupils in Individual Education Plans and lesson planning.(Paragraphs 41, 64, 80)

In addition the following issue should also be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

Improve accommodation to allow greater curriculum access, particularly for design technology.

**PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS**

***Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection***

Number of lessons observed

78
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Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

66
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***Summary of teaching observed during the inspection***

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	35	39	21	3		

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

**Information about the school's pupils**

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	70
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	23

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

**Attendance**

**Authorised absence**

	%
School data	8.7

**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	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	1
Indian	
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	

**Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		

Chinese	
White	68
Any other minority ethnic group	

Chinese		
White	1	
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

### **Teachers and classes**

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	10.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6.6
Average class size	8.75

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	487.5

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### **Financial information**

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	741736
Total expenditure	794115
Expenditure per pupil	11344
Balance brought forward from previous year	99016
Balance carried forward to next year	46637

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

#### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	70
Number of questionnaires returned	44

#### **Percentage of responses in each category**

Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
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My child likes school.	75	23	2	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	52	39	7	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	60	40	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	36	24	18	13	9
The teaching is good.	79	19	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	66	20	9	5	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	80	18	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	70	23	7	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	66	23	7	5	0
The school is well led and managed.	70	26	2	0	2
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	69	28	0	1	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	63	18	12	3	5

### Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Parents are very appreciative of the good quality education offered by the school. They feel that teaching is good and that the school helps their children to become mature and responsible. They are especially appreciative of the very high quality of care given to their children and are pleased to report that their children like coming to school. Parents find the school welcoming and staff very approachable. Many parents report that they are fully informed about what their children do in school and of the progress they have made. A very small number of parents were less pleased with the information that they receive. Some parents are concerned that there is not enough homework.

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

### ENGLISH

63. Most pupils achieve well and make good progress in English. This is because the teaching is mostly good and often very good, and because the school places a strong emphasis on the development of pupils' language and communication. This ensures that all pupils have regular literacy lessons and that opportunities are taken to develop literacy, language and communication in all other lessons. There have been improvements in pupils' achievements

and progress in speaking and listening, reading and writing since the previous inspection. This reflects a similar overall improvement in teaching. The programme of work in English has also improved so that it now provides better continuity of learning as children move through the school.

64. Teachers have good knowledge of the pupils' attainments and plan very detailed lessons that help pupils to build upon their existing language and literacy skills at their own pace. This detailed knowledge helps teachers to set challenging tasks for the pupils and to have high expectations that they will succeed. The pupils appreciate this individual approach, which gives them confidence to work hard. The teachers help pupils to learn by making lessons interesting and enjoyable, by providing encouragement and support to overcome obstacles and by immediately rewarding each success.
65. In each class pupils have a wide range of attainment, so some classes are re-organised in literacy lessons to form groups based on attainment, so that lesson planning can be more closely focused. This is more successful for the older pupils, whose classes are completely re-grouped at these times, but less so for lower attaining younger pupils, withdrawn from their classes to have separate lessons, where there is not a sufficiently detailed emphasis on pupils' individual learning needs.
66. Pupils up to the age of eleven are making early steps towards developing spoken language, by using signs, gestures, facial expressions, movement of their bodies, making appropriate sounds or switching a communications aid in response to the teacher's questions. Teachers encourage these pupils to listen and make a suitable response by providing very interesting and stimulating activities, pitching their own language at a level that pupils can understand and supporting their instructions and questions with a range of signs, symbols and other communication aids. They give clear examples of what is required. Pupils are particularly motivated to succeed when instructions are built into songs or rhymes.
67. Higher attaining pupils are able to use simple sentences, for example in answer to the teacher's questions about a picture. All pupils respond very well to their teachers' efforts to get them to listen and they show good, sustained interest in their lessons. Teachers and classroom assistants help them to focus their attention and practice their skills by signing and saying the words at the same time as showing cards or an image on a computer screen with a matching picture, symbol or word. Some pupils have been taught to indicate their wishes or choices by using picture cards that they select themselves. Some pupils are able to recognise and carry out a particular activity when a well-known object, such as a toy, represents it.
68. At all ages pupils display a range of reading abilities. The school places a good emphasis on reading and has greatly increased its stock of books with the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy. Pupils up to the age of eleven concentrate on and share the experience of reading big books. For example, the youngest pupils greatly enjoy reading "The Train Ride", which their teacher brings to life with an impressive range of props. They follow the story, can anticipate some of the events, and relate them to their playtime later when they play with a model rail track. Older pupils share similar experiences and develop reading skills according to their own abilities, using their Big Books as a starting point for learning more about letter sounds and names, and then beginning to recognise words and match them to pictures. Higher attaining pupils are able to read a range of common words and start to understand how different sounds blend together to make words. Some pupils are able to read books at their own level of ability, with support.
69. A strong emphasis is placed on developing writing skills, despite these being particularly difficult for pupils to achieve. Teachers encourage pupils to work hard at their writing by

making their lessons very enjoyable and introducing tasks in small, attainable steps. Younger pupils make patterns with their fingers in paint and foam to the accompaniment of a well-liked song, progress to holding chalk then pens, making increasingly accurate marks until they are able to write over then copy letters and words. Higher attaining pupils up to the age of sixteen are able to progress from copying over letters and words to make good attempts at writing familiar words such as the days of the week, or short sentences about their topic. Some pupils can form sentences by re-arranging the order of words written on cards.

70. The school makes a good effort to ensure that all of its pupils benefit from English lessons. Pupils who have particular difficulties, such as visual or hearing impairments or autistic spectrum disorders, are identified successfully and provided with additional support. Sometimes teachers are provided with extra training, to help them cater for the needs of these pupils.
71. Pupils benefit from the provision of the National Literacy Strategy, which is well resourced. The subject co-ordinator has worked within the framework of the National Strategy to plan a range of word, sentence and text level activities that are appropriate to the needs and ages of the pupils. Alongside the other activities the school provides to promote the development of pupils' language and communication skills, the time allocated to literacy is suitable. The subject co-ordinator provides strong leadership. There is a clear policy with detailed programmes of work that enable pupils to progress through a series of topics as they go from class to class through the school. There are good resources, especially a good supply of books, including some made by pupils and staff, and some appropriate computer software. Although the library is small and inconveniently situated in a through passage, it has a good range of fiction and non-fiction books that are appropriate to the pupil's ages and abilities and is used well by the pupils. Good use is made of a local resource library to supplement the school's stock of books and pupils visit the local lending library.
72. A good range of dramatic activities, including both school productions for various events and festivals as well as those provided by visiting professional actors, enriches English lessons.

## **MATHEMATICS**

73. Most pupils make good and often very good progress in numeracy lessons. The quality of teaching is mostly good for pupils up to the age of eleven and very good for older pupils. Consequently, most pupils achieve well in relation to their targets for learning. The school divides pupils into groups for numeracy according to attainment to assist planning to meet pupils' additional needs. A small number of pupils who require additional support in lessons do not always make as much progress as they should. The school has worked effectively to raise standards since the previous inspection and the quality of teaching is now much better. Planning is now effective in providing pupils with a rich range of work in numeracy. This is evident in the impressive display of pupils' work throughout the school. For instance, there are displays of what pupils have learnt about shapes and money. The school has introduced the National Numeracy Strategy well, implementing this in numeracy lessons, with an effective emphasis upon improving pupils' skills in mental arithmetic.
74. Pupils up to the age of eleven make good progress, concentrating well as the teacher engages them in number games and tells them number stories. Pupils are highly engaged by the resources such as the monkeys being eaten by a crocodile. They begin to understand that the numbers go down when there are fewer monkeys, gleefully saying "all gone" at the end. Lesson planning is imaginative and very effective in promoting language. Pupils learn words such as "up" and "down" by joining in the class effort to move a parachute. Staff provide very effective support and ensure that pupils attend well, helping them to make good progress in lessons. Pupils who have more complex learning needs receive activities geared to their

particular needs in a special room. Staff provide a very high standard of care and plan suitable opportunities for them to make early steps in learning numeracy. The resources provided are chosen well to provide good visual and sound stimulation. This was shown when they selected toys from a 'feely bag', with staff support, and explored them with help. Pupils respond by looking and making movements to explore the shapes to learn more about them. Staff are vigilant when noting responses and looking for new learning.

75. Most pupils up to the age of fourteen continue to make good progress overall. They all make good progress in learning numeracy in the morning lessons to promote personal and social development. Teachers provide pupils with challenging tasks such as counting the pupils present, asking higher attaining pupils how many there would be if they counted themselves in the total. Pupils learn the order of days of the week through regular practice, with lower attaining pupils becoming increasingly familiar with the symbols for the lessons in the day. They attend numeracy lessons that are organised according to attainment. The highest attaining pupils achieve well. Teachers' plan well structured lessons with plenty of resources to engage pupils' attention. For instance, pupils have become familiar with two-dimensional shapes. When pupils look at the new shapes of cylinders and sphere, they try to name them, using 'circle', drawing upon previous learning. Pupils deepen their understanding of number, contributing to making an impressive number of charts to show the characteristics of pupils in the class. They receive very good support to count the incidence of hair and eye colour. Pupils begin to use their number skills practically to make a chart of their weights and heights. The teacher provides very good opportunities to encourage pupils to remember numbers. Each pupil responds well to the task to remember or read their height in centimetres to tell the classroom assistant so that she can create a chart on the computer.
76. The oldest pupils in the school make good progress as they build upon what they have learnt in previous lessons. The highest attaining pupils handle money and like to show what they know by discussing costs. Relationships between pupils are very good, where pupils take an interest in each other's work. This enables them to consider each other's tasks. One pupil says, "She has three pence, she can buy three penny sweets with them". The teacher provides additional information to help pupils to remember such as pointing out the small differences in coins such as the edges. This makes pupils attentive and they improve their discrimination of coins of different values. Pupils respond well to the high level of challenge and the way that all the resources are organised efficiently for them to use. This helps them to concentrate well and remain on task for the whole period. Staff provide effective praise and encouragement for pupils and this helps them to understand how well they are learning, raising their self-esteem. Pupils in the class for the oldest lower attaining pupils make similarly very good progress, completing challenging tasks through effective support and encouragement and the teacher's high expectations and determination that pupils will succeed. The teacher and support staff know the pupils extremely well and tailor every task to meet each pupils' needs. Lessons provide a high level of encouragement and motivation, where pupils receive clear instructions on how to proceed. This makes a very significant contribution to encouraging pupils to behave well during lessons. Through effective planning and strong staff support, pupils begin to respond to number language, counting as they climb up and down stairs and using language such as up and down.
77. The subject co-ordinator leads the subject well. This is facilitated by a shared commitment by staff to promote numeracy well. A strength of the provision for numeracy is the way that teachers provide good opportunities to promote numeracy within other lessons. They use number songs particularly well to teach counting, adding and subtracting. There have been some opportunities for the subject leader to monitor teaching and learning across the school to plan more improvements.

## **SCIENCE**

78. The provision for science is good. The standards achieved by pupils have improved since the last inspection because teaching is better and the school has developed and implemented a coherent curriculum plan. This clearly outlines learning for secondary age pupils, an area, which was criticised at the time of the last inspection, and it provides a good framework to guide teachers when they plan lessons. What pupils will learn during their time at school is now identified for each year group and this enables teachers to plan so that pupils are able to build successfully on what they have learned in the past. At the time of the last inspection pupils' achievement was judged to be satisfactory, it is now good across all age groups in the school. The last inspection report identified that curriculum provision for secondary age pupils was restricted by a lack of suitable science accommodation and this situation continues. The range of learning experiences planned for older pupils is therefore restricted. However, the school makes good attempts to ensure that a wide range of suitable learning opportunities are provided within the limitations of the accommodation. Pupils' achievements and their progress are good in relation to the curriculum they are offered.
79. Teachers and classroom assistants effectively support the youngest primary age pupils to develop early investigation skills by using their senses. The teacher provides a good selection of resources, which pupils are encouraged to use properly. They carefully watch different moving toys and are given the opportunity to smell and taste different fruit. Pupils clearly enjoy the sounds they make with the percussion instruments, smiling and laughing and they focus well on the moving toys showing their attention by reaching out to handle them. Pupils demonstrate, by facial expression and by pushing things away, their preferences for some smells and the taste of some fruits. Older primary age pupils know that changes occur when you mix and cook foods. The teacher uses questions well to help pupils describe what they see and they identify the differences between uncooked dough and bread, using the word "changed" appropriately. They are very keen to have a go at shaking the milk so that it turns into butter. Activities such as these capture pupils' attention and they make good progress because they are interested in what is happening. By the time they are 11 pupils demonstrate an understanding of growth and put photographs in the correct order to show 'growing up'. They also recall what they have learned about plants and know that flowers sometimes develop from a bulb. Secondary age pupils pay good attention and concentrate well carefully following a circuit diagram to make a bulb light. They make good progress and by the end of the lesson they are beginning to demonstrate an understanding of how the circuit carries power to the light, and know that the bulb will not work if the circuit is incomplete.
80. Teaching and learning range from satisfactory to very good but are good overall. This broadly reflects the findings of the last inspection although no examples of very good teaching and learning were seen at that time. During this inspection very good teaching and learning were seen for secondary age pupils during a lesson about electric circuits. A very good introduction, interesting activities and high expectations result in pupils achieving very well and concentrating for the whole lesson. Teachers' subject knowledge is good and they use it effectively to prepare activities through which pupils can achieve the learning outcomes identified. Work is well planned to meet pupils needs and provides them with sufficient challenge as well as good opportunities to practice what they have already learned. Simple board games help to reinforce new learning, for example, that foods, which contain sugar, are bad for teeth. Teachers use questions well to test pupils' understanding and to extend their learning and participation. Teachers provide clear explanations and demonstrate techniques well. This enables pupils to carry out simple experiments with a good degree of independence. Pupils confidently prepare their resources as they investigate what happens when they drip water onto the candy coating of 'smarties' and the ink from the felt tip pens. They are clearly excited about the outcomes and demonstrate a good level of self-control, resisting the temptation to eat part of the experiment.

81. Lessons include a good range of practical teaching methods and pupils have the opportunity to work as part of a group and as individuals. Teachers achieve an appropriate balance between providing information and allowing pupils to investigate. There is always plenty to do in lessons and as a result pupils maintain their interest and participate fully. Classroom assistants play a significant role in successful lessons particularly when they support individual pupils or small groups who need sensitive encouragement to help them participate effectively. Teachers constantly refer to pupils' previous experiences and this helps them to make connections between things they already know and new learning. Teachers have a good understanding of what pupils know and can do. This enables them to prepare activities and work that effectively support pupils' learning. However, teachers do not always develop curriculum planning into sufficiently precise targets for each individual.
82. Teachers ensure that there are good opportunities for pupils to use their literacy skills. Speaking and listening are developed through the effective use of questions and there is a good emphasis placed on the development of appropriate vocabulary. The subject is well led by two co-ordinators who share responsibility for science development across the school. They have not been responsible for the subject long but have already established a suitable development plan. This clearly identifies how they will establish priorities for future improvement. The subject is monitored through curriculum planning and by examination of pupils' work displayed around the school. The quality and range of learning resources available to support the curriculum is good overall. However, there would be insufficient suitable resources to support a wider range of activities for secondary age pupils if the school had the accommodation to develop this area of the curriculum further.

## **ART**

83. Standards of achievement have risen since the last inspection and pupils of all ages make good progress. This demonstrates a good improvement in the subject. The quality of teaching is mainly good and this contributes to the learning that pupils demonstrate. Lessons are well planned with a range of good activities that help pupils to remain involved and enjoy their work.
84. By the time pupils are seven some of them are producing work using a range of media and tools such as rollers when painting or sticking shapes onto collage. They produce shapes using salt dough and respond well to colours and the texture of paints and other media. Lower attaining pupils who often have problems manipulating tools respond well and make marks with adult support. Pupils are producing a wider range of work by the age of eleven and they have produced self portraits inspired by the work of artists such as Picasso, Hockney, Léger, Rembrandt and Giacometti. They have produced 3-dimensional work such as the examples provided of decorated spectacles. In one lesson some pupils were able to draw a basket shape independently when producing an observational representation of a basket of fruit in which they stenciled fruit shapes. Some lower attaining pupils were able to make monoprints from a mix of paint and shaving foam on plastic sheets. Pupils are showing progression in the types of work they produce by the age of fourteen. Here they are using colour to create different effects and there is an increase in drawing from experience. They are able to produce various types of pots, coil, rolled slab and thumb and imprint them with Islamic inspired patterns. Older pupils develop these types of activities further producing tiles with a greater degree of planning. The range of experiences that pupils partake of through the school extends their skills and knowledge. There is good multi-cultural experience in the subject, for instance when pupils produced scarecrows from around the world.
85. The good teaching seen in the last inspection has been sustained. Lessons continue to be well planned with a good range of activities that meet the pupils' needs. The classroom

assistants are well used and support the pupils well through both their knowledge of the pupils and what is expected of them. They continue to function as part of a very effective team as identified in the last inspection. Teachers reinforce communication skills well within their teaching through effective questioning and discussion of the work that is being produced by the pupils. Teachers use effective teaching methods that help the lessons to remain interesting and challenge the pupils with the tasks that are being asked of them. This keeps the pupils fully occupied and consequently they behave well in the lessons. The good teaching results in good learning by the pupils.

86. The subject is well led by the co-ordinator with a good scheme of work that provides for an interesting range of work. The school makes a good effort at providing 3-dimensional experiences despite the difficulties with accommodation. The subject is well resourced with good quality materials that suit the work being done. Displays are very well presented and make a significant contribution to the atmosphere in the school. There is some monitoring of the subject but as yet this is not fully developed. However the co-ordinator produces an action plan for the subject and this contributes to the overall management of the school.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

87. Pupils make good progress in design and technology. This is a good achievement since there is limited accommodation to teach the practical aspects of the subject. The quality of teaching is good and often very good. Teachers plan well to ensure that pupils make good progress in all the required aspects of the subject. Design plays an important part in lessons and this ensures pupils add their own ideas to develop their finished products.
88. The youngest pupils make good progress, developing early skills to manipulate tools during food technology. Staff have extremely good knowledge of pupils and this enables them to support activities well. They ensure that pupils attend well to learn more about circles and the colour red as they make jam tarts. Pupils are very keen to handle the pastry and kitchen utensils. Through very effective support, all pupils show good progress, for instance the lowest attaining pupils reach out in anticipation to rest their hands on the rolling pin to press out their pastry with a circular cutter.
89. Pupils up to the age of fourteen make good progress. They learn how to use kitchen equipment, such as potato peelers independently, through systematic support from staff. Pupils know the sequence of tasks and this helps them to plan for the finished product, such as a pizza. The teacher discusses what happens to food as it is cooked, drawing out pupils' ideas well. Through the teacher's effective questions, pupils arrive at the plan and sequence to boil potatoes. The series of lessons prepares pupils well for planning their time when cooking. Pupils use their design skills when they contribute to making masks for the Chinese New Year, as part of an art lesson.
90. The oldest pupils make very good progress through lessons planned effectively to link with other subjects. Pupils have worked well together designing models of characters for the set of their drama production of the Wizard of Oz. The teacher revises past work very effectively to ensure pupils understand the qualities of different materials, discussing the waste materials they use to make the tin man and scarecrow. Pupils build on their skills, learning how to apply a paint finish to the tin man to emphasise the shiny quality of metal. Through effective discussion pupils understand how they can recycle waste items. The teacher has planned very effectively so that all pupils have the opportunity to use the machinery to crush cans, ready for recycling. Although teachers plan well to provide a good range of tasks the limited accommodation for older pupils means that they use a more limited range of tools and facilities.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

91. Only one discrete lesson of geography was observed during the inspection. Judgements about the pupils' progress and achievements are therefore based upon discussions with teachers and the co-ordinator for humanities; a detailed scrutiny of work, pupils' records and displays around the school and the study of photographic records of visits and activities that have taken place. Geography is taught to pupils up to the age of 14 years.
92. The youngest pupils make a positive start to their understanding of the world as they create a simple school plan and appreciate different types of weather through the making a mobile representing clouds, sun and rain. Visits to the immediate locality to look at a farm and its animals and to the Dee and the Mersey to experience the difference between small and big rivers and small and big boats support their learning and understanding in real life situations. They improve in their abilities to understand maps, such as through creating and "reading" a map of Little Red Riding Hood's route through the wood while their daily discussions about the weather and its effects, such as on the need for suitable clothing, builds successfully on previous work.
93. Older primary age pupils continue to make progress in their map work as they create a more complicated map linked to the story about The Three Little Pigs. They are developing an understanding of different types of work and work places such as shops, factories and school. Different types of holiday transport are considered as they improve in their understanding of a world that is "far away" from school and their understanding of the physical world is developing as they study water – source, rivers and lakes.
94. Secondary age pupils benefit from the school's strong link to the Comenius project which is effective in providing pupils with opportunities to be aware of other countries such as Spain, Germany and France. This awareness is being further extended through more detailed work on the map, animals and sport of Australia as well as the customs, dress, homes and religions of Japan.
95. The subject is managed effectively by the co-ordinator for humanities. A well considered policy reflects the aims of the school and takes due regard of both the National Curriculum's guidelines for the subject and the children's and pupils learning styles. Long and medium term plans are carefully linked together in order to promote learning and are translated into practice through the use of resources that are sufficient in quantity and quality. The "big books" that have been produced by staff not only significantly enhance the pupils' learning in geography but are also effectively used in literacy lessons.
96. The satisfactory progress and achievement identified in geography during the last inspection has been maintained. Long and medium term plans now reflect National Curriculum guidelines and as such there has been an improvement in curricular planning.

## **HISTORY**

97. Only one discrete lesson of history was observed during the week of the inspection. Scrutiny of evidence of pupils' work, including photographic evidence and analysis of planning documents indicates that the provision made for pupils of all ages is satisfactory. No history is timetabled for pupils in Years 10 and 11 and for students over the age of 16 years.
98. The youngest pupils make a good start in their understanding of chronology as they identify the sequence of activities on the timetable for the day and begin to appreciate the rhythm of the year through celebrating birthdays and major religious events. Their involvement with

others in burying the school's millennium time capsule provided them with a more complex but exciting example of the passage of time. Higher attaining pupils demonstrate the ability not only to identify what has happened but also predict what activities will take place during the day or during the week.

99. Older primary age pupils continue to develop their sense of sequence and the passage of time through daily use of class timetables. Additionally, through visits and class work to look at and handle artefacts they gain a better understanding of how changes take place over time. Visits to museums such as the local heritage centre complements their study of Roman Chester. Dressing up on their visit to Norton Priory, to participate in a Victorian Christmas, provides very relevant experience of life in times past. Their work on transport in geography is directly linked to history when they visit the Manchester Museum of Science and industry and see a wide range of earlier methods of transport.
100. The pleasure and wonder demonstrated in photographic evidence of older pupils wearing an air raid precaution helmet, gas masks and carrying bells and rattles confirm the impact that the experiences of life during World War 2 had on their learning. The use of the "Big Book" produced by staff about this period provided opportunities for looking at and interpreting photographic evidence. As part of their study of another civilisation pupils responded very positively when role-playing, to have a better understanding of an Islamic wedding, they demonstrated that they had listened to the previous lesson with interest and had thoroughly enjoyed the topic.
101. History is well managed by the humanities co-ordinator. There are sufficient resources to support teaching and promote learning with the school effectively supplementing these resources with a wide and relevant range of visits. Planning for the subject reflects the requirements of the National Curriculum and the need for activities to build on previous experiences.
102. Since the last inspection the planning for history shows good improvements. Long and medium term plans now reflect the requirements of the National Curriculum for pupils between the ages of five and fourteen years.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

103. Pupils are learning to use information and communication technology (ICT) with interest and enthusiasm. At present their general progress is satisfactory, though for some individual pupils it is good. This is an improvement since the previous inspection, which reflects the school's strong commitment to developing this subject and the skills of its pupils further. There has also been an improvement in the management of the subject, and in the quality of resources provided.
104. The school has a clear policy that sees Information and Communication Technology as a tool that pupils can use to help them learn in all subjects. While it is appropriate at the present time for the younger pupils to learn to use computers, switches and other aids within their usual lessons, it is difficult to ensure that they all spend a reasonable proportion of their curriculum time on this subject. Older pupils on the other hand have special lessons on their timetables in which they develop their Information and Communication Technology skills.
105. A small number of Information and Communication Technology lessons were seen during the inspection, though computers and other aids were observed in general use in many lessons. The teaching seen was always satisfactory and often very good with teachers and classroom assistants confidently guiding pupils to achieve the desired results.

106. In Information and Communication Technology lessons, older, higher attaining pupils make good progress in their computer skills using a programme that enables them to draw and colour a range of patterns and shapes. By using this programme they also develop their skills at using a mouse to select and move objects on the screen and learn how to open and save files and print their work. They are helped to do this by very clear instructions from their teacher and classroom assistants, who demonstrate good subject knowledge. Lower attaining older pupils have the opportunity to use a touch-screen if they find using a mouse too difficult. Most pupils are able to manipulate images on the screen, but occasionally their difficulties with fine hand movements causes problems.
107. Pupils make satisfactory use of computers to help them with their work in other lessons. In a mathematics lesson a pupil records the heights of class members in a table on the computer and with help creates a chart. Another pupil matches groups of numbers that add up to the same total. In an English lesson, a pupil matches words, symbols and pictures from her reading book by moving them around the computer screen. Pupils also learn satisfactorily how to use a range of switches to help them develop their communication skills, either in their classrooms or in one of the school's light rooms, where pupils are stimulated by the light and sound displays to explore, respond to and change their environments. Pupils are interested in and attracted to using Information and Communication Technology, so they enjoy using the equipment, which they see clearly as a tool to help them learn. When using the painting programme, for example, all pupils focus their attention on their designs rather than the computer itself, and value the printed result.
108. The leadership of the subject is strong. There is a clear policy, a well planned scheme of work and a firm commitment to improve, Government grants have been spent wisely to develop good provision and further developments have been planned. The school places a strong emphasis on training staff to use the technology, though the current level of skill is variable with some staff being very competent while the majority need to improve. As the pupils' abilities improve and the staff become fully aware of the potential uses of the technology, the absence of a dedicated computer room will limit the subject's development.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE**

### **FRENCH**

109. The provision made for pupils to learn a modern foreign language is good. This is an improvement since the last inspection when the provision was judged to be broadly satisfactory with some good teaching. Only one lesson was observed during this inspection. Teaching was very good and pupils achieved well. Teacher's planning indicates that pupils have good opportunities to develop an awareness of the French language and culture.
110. Pupils recognise and name the Union flag and the French tricolour and classroom displays provide appropriate opportunities for them to see the French language in its written form. Well planned lessons ensure that pupils develop functional vocabulary and learn a range of simple phrases, which they use confidently during drama activities. The teacher plans interesting activities, such as a visit to the café and opportunities to taste French foods such as different breads and brioche. Pupils are keen to participate and they remember to use the vocabulary they have learned.
111. Resources are used well to create a French café in the classroom and the use of French music helps to set the scene. Pupils are keen to volunteer when the teacher asks them to play different roles and they enthusiastically become waiters and customers at the café. Pupils correctly order drinks such as lemonade and orange in French and are effectively reminded to use vocabulary such as please and thank you, which they have learned in the

past. During lessons there are also opportunities for pupils to take part in lively games, which they clearly enjoy such as “I am called...” and for them to sing French counting songs. These provide good opportunities for pupils to practice replying to familiar phrases and enable them to develop their accent. Indications are that pupils make steady progress and achieve well in speaking and listening. There is an appropriate emphasis on teaching pupils to read and write and their progress is at least satisfactory in this area.

## **MUSIC**

112. Pupils make good progress in music. This represents an improvement from the previous inspection when it was considered that pupils made satisfactory progress. Younger higher attaining pupils are able to maintain good rhythm when accompanying music and songs with untuned percussive instruments. Those pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties who have difficulty in handling instruments are supported so that they are able to join with the activity and some show distinct enjoyment as they demonstrate pleasure on their faces and make vocal responses. Older pupils can clap and beat time on their knees with good accuracy. Some are able to name a bongo drum. They join in enthusiastically when singing “Bravo Bravissimo” using signs to participate.
113. Only three lesson observations, were able to be undertaken during the inspection but the teaching was good. Teachers plan very well and there is a very good range of activities involving singing and accompaniment. These are well planned for the range of pupils’ attainment in the groups. Those with profound and complex learning difficulties participate fully in the lessons. There was a very good example of inclusive work when pupils pushed those in wheelchairs around the hall participating in a march tune whilst classroom assistants helped them play instruments. Teachers have a good subject knowledge and are particularly aware of the pupils’ needs. This means that appropriate content of the music curriculum is being addressed. Work covers, pitch, dynamics, rhythm and tempo and teachers are confident in addressing these areas. The effective teaching leads to the good learning. Pupils listen, follow instructions well and try hard. They show clear enjoyment as they vocalise, clap their hands and participate with enthusiasm.
114. The co-ordinator provides good leadership in the subject. There is an appropriate curriculum for the subject and opportunities are taken to assess pupils’ performance in the lessons. The resources for the subject are good and have been enhanced by a recent grant allowing teachers to purchase instruments for their classes. These are of good quality and also extend the multi-cultural aspect of the subject.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

115. The provision for physical education is good. Pupils of all ages achieve well and make good progress. Their achievement in swimming is very good because of the excellent swimming pool facility and very good teaching. The quality of teaching and the standards achieved by pupils remains broadly similar to the findings of the last inspection, although the achievement of secondary age pupils is now judged to be good. It was identified as satisfactory at the time of the last inspection because activities were limited by the unsuitability of the accommodation.
116. The school compensates well for the lack of a suitable hall and outdoor sports area by providing all pupils with a wide range of alternative learning experiences. For example, pupils have excellent opportunities to take part in outdoor pursuit activities, such as canoeing and rock climbing during the residential trips and the school makes good use of community facilities, such as the local sports centre where pupils have opportunities to play team games such as basketball. Very good opportunities have been developed for pupils to be coached by

professionals, for example in the development of football skills and this enhances their ability to achieve and make progress. The school also participates with other special schools in sporting events such as swimming galas, where last year they won seven gold medals. In addition there are athletics competitions as well as 'sportsability days' when pupils play games such as Boccia, soundball and sound skittles. The school also joins with other special schools for a day of orienteering activities and older primary age pupils take part in RDA (Riding for the Disabled) activities including an annual gymkhana. This very wide range of activities makes a significant contribution to pupils' personal development as well as to their progress in physical education.

117. Only three lessons were able to be observed during the inspection. Teaching and learning are good overall. The school has implemented a good curriculum plan, which teachers use effectively to prepare learning opportunities for pupils. Pupils in Year 1 are effectively supported by adults and by higher attaining students from the school. The activity is well planned and pupils and students are given good opportunities to experience working with a partner. The activity focuses on using different parts of the body to resist and copy movements. The teacher provides clear explanations and good demonstrations, which result in successful participation. The smiles and laughter of younger pupils during familiar activities such as 'row the boat' clearly demonstrates that they enjoy working with their partner. Students take responsibility well and they show a good understanding of how to care for someone else. They are gentle and considerate and listen carefully to the teachers' guidance about the activities and how to encourage their young partners to participate.
118. Effective teaching and well-prepared lessons ensure that older primary age pupils with more profound and multiple needs are very confident in the water. They enjoy the pool sessions, vocalising and smiling in response to familiar routines. Adults are very confident with their roles and responsibilities in the pool and this ensures that pupils feel secure. Secondary age pupils work hard during a warm up session before circuit training. By the end of the session they are out of breath, an indication of the good effort they have put into the exercises. The teacher uses this outcome very well to reinforce pupils' understanding of the effect of exercise on the body. The teacher achieves a good balance to the activities during the session. There are appropriate opportunities for pupils to work on improving their individual skills as they try to beat the scores they got last week. Classroom assistants are very effective in supporting the teacher by organising activities and in encouraging pupils to try harder. Very good use of praise helps pupils to identify when they have achieved and they are pleased with their results. These individual activities are balanced by good opportunities for team games and pupils clearly understand 'competition'. They listen very carefully to the teachers' instructions and this means that activities start quickly and the good pace of the lesson is maintained throughout.
119. The subject is well led and managed by the co-ordinator who has established a good subject development plan. This clearly identifies priorities for improvement. The quality and range of learning resources is good particularly to support the curriculum for primary age pupils. Accommodation does restrict the activities that can be offered to secondary age pupils but the provision of such a wide range of alternative experiences adequately compensates for any shortfall.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

120. Overall, pupils' and students achievements and progress in religious education are good. These standards are the product of lessons which are well planned, incorporate a variety of strategies and activities to promote learning and make good use of time and resources, including the very effective deployment of support staff. Since the last inspection the

children's, pupils' and students' progress has improved. Progress is now good and is in line with the good teaching that was identified previously.

121. The youngest pupils are developing an awareness of the role of religious festivals, particularly Christian festivals. They listen to stories that support the understanding of what is right, wrong and good and through the stress laid on helping others are establishing the link between simple religious concepts and every day life. Pupils build upon previous learning and experiences and by the time they have reached the age of seven they have a clearer idea of right and wrong and begin to understand what is meant by fair play. The manner whereby a pupil physically helped a friend with complex learning difficulties to perform the actions of a song during a registration period demonstrated the spontaneous care and respect that they show for others. Pupils' awareness of the diversity and richness of other religions and festivals is developed as they explore the meaning of Chinese New Year
122. By the time pupils are eleven they have deepened and extended their knowledge of a wider range of religions and in particular have increased their understanding of the Christian faith. The story of The Good Samaritan supports their understanding of good behaviour and when linked to their work on Florence Nightingale and Grace Darling provides them with an example of how the concept of good in the Bible is realised in practice by "good" people.
123. By the age of sixteen pupils are more consistent in their ability to recognise the distinctiveness of non-Christian religions. The staff's consistent use of correct terminology such as mosque, church, synagogue and temple is mirrored by pupils and they show pleasure when they recall what was learnt in previous lessons such as that the Koran, as well as the Bible, is also a holy book. Higher attaining pupils understand the rules of Ramadan and remember some of the 5 Pillars of Wisdom. The use of appropriate artefacts and different activities in lessons contribute significantly to the pupils learning and enjoyment.
124. Religious education at Post-16 involves students in continuing to build on and consolidate previous learning. Students re-visit previous work about Christian festivals, as well as those associated with other religions, and show that they are able to discuss issues in greater depth. The lesson about Bob Geldof and his initiative for responding to people who were starving instigated very good discussion as well as expressions of concern and wonder by the students when they looked at before and after photographs.
125. Religious education makes a significant contribution to the pupils' and students' spiritual development. The subject is well led and managed with a well considered policy for the subject reflecting both the aims of the school and the guidance provided in the locally agreed syllabus. Medium term plans and lesson plans consistently confirm that pupils' progress is carefully built on past learning. Resources for religious education are good, particularly the stock of artefacts, with staff also making very good use of the supplementary materials that they acquire from a Local Education Authority centre and other sources.

## **POST 16 PROVISION**

126. Provision for students over the age of 16 is good. The policy for Post-16 students reflects the aims of the school and is translated into practice through a balanced and relevant curriculum that is effective in developing the students' personal and social skills. It prepares them for a post school life that may include work, leisure and further education. A great deal of thought has gone into creating a timetable that ensures that each student has optimum access to the curriculum.
127. The curriculum is based upon providing students with a range of relevant experiences in the key areas of practical skills; PSHE, mini-enterprise, the world of work, citizenship, leisure,

religious education and work experience. Practical skills, including the application of number, literacy and information technology, as well as physical education, swimming, music and religious education are time-tabled. Activities related to the world of work, independence in the community, citizenship and food technology are also included. Additionally, the world of work programme provides students with well-structured opportunities to have "on site" work experiences with the caretaker, in the kitchen and in the school office. Accreditation is currently provided through the AQA scheme.

128. The careers education and guidance programme is well supported by the careers service. The recent audit carried out jointly by this service and the school's co-ordinator for careers identified the need for the school careers library to be re-established; the purchase of the "Where Next" disc and the stocking of the library with a good range of relevant leaflets.
129. Links have been established with a local college of further education and the local high school and it is anticipated that current negotiations will be completed by the end of term with the view to placements during the next term.
130. The quality of the teaching of Post-16 students is consistently good and sometimes very good. Lessons are consistently well planned and pose demanding but realistic targets which, when achieved, result in the students demonstrating that satisfaction which contributes much to their self-esteem. Additionally, carefully organised group work, the use of different types of activities and the targeted use of support staff ensure that students demonstrate interest in what is taught and concentrate for long periods of time. The world of work lesson for the group with complex learning difficulties had all responding with understanding and enjoyment to the taped interviews with the school cook and caretaker. Higher attaining students sustained a high work rate as they worked conscientiously at word processing, manipulating images to make the weather map for the day and practised their drawing and painting skills using a painting programme. The same degree of application was present when they used the scripts that they had prepared to interview the school cook. Students with more complex learning difficulties demonstrated clear gains in their knowledge and understanding as, in the lesson about the use of personal hygiene products, they linked a variety of brushes to the correct product – hair brush to hair spray and toothbrush to toothpaste. They all enjoyed making choices as applied to perfume or aftershave. Teaching and support staff share lesson planning; they work very well together and have the same high expectations of the students.
131. Provision for Post-16 students is effectively co-ordinated and is well resourced. The curriculum long term plan provides a clear overview of what students are to learn and is reflected in a medium term plan that supports the students developing what they know and understand in the key areas. The re-siting of Post-16 provision in its own well designed separate block presents as a significant improvement since the previous inspection. This discrete accommodation is very well organised; it reflects the learning, social and personal needs of the students and has had a positive impact upon the students achievements and the progress that they make. Overall, their achievements and progress are now good.