

INSPECTION REPORT

CASTLE SCHOOL

Leamore

LEA area: Walsall

Unique reference number: 104269

Headteacher: Mrs H J Whitehouse

Lead inspector: Alastair Younger

Dates of inspection: 8th – 11th December 2003

Inspection number: 258880

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Special
School category: Community special
Age range of pupils: 4-19
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 98

School address: Odell Road
Leamore
Walsall
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Telephone number: 01922 710129
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Appropriate authority: Governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mr D Champion

Date of previous inspection: 27/3/2000

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Castle School is for pupils aged 4 - 19 in the Walsall area who have moderate learning difficulties. In recent years, it has increasingly admitted pupils with a wider range of special educational needs, including emotional and behavioural, speech and communication and varying degrees of autism, but these pupils' overriding difficulty remains their degree of learning difficulty. All pupils have statements of special educational need. Ninety-eight pupils attend. It is very rare for pupils under the age of five to be admitted and there are currently no such pupils. Boys outnumber girls about four to one, a ratio commonly found in such schools. Most pupils are white but there are small populations of ethnic minority pupils, mainly Asian. No pupils have English as an additional language. The attainment of pupils on entry is low, and often very low for those admitted at the age of four or five. Most pupils come from the more deprived homes in the borough. The school is one of two, all age, schools in the area providing for pupils with moderate learning difficulties.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
23587	Alastair Younger	Lead inspector	
9052	Helen Barter	Lay inspector	
27429	Margaret Smith	Team inspector	Science, information and communication technology, design and technology, physical education, personal, social and health education and citizenship, modern foreign language
22178	Kate Robertson	Team inspector	English, history, geography, music
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a delightful and **very effective** school. It is very close to achieving the excellence its leaders, managers and staff seek. Pupils are privileged to attend such a school. Teaching and learning are very good. As a result, pupils achieve very well in the subjects of the curriculum and their personal development is excellent. There is an exceptional headteacher and management and governance of the school is of very high quality. Parents' confidence in the school is well placed. It is giving **very good value for money**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- The excellent leadership of the headteacher, which has transformed the school
- Pupils enjoy learning and achieve very well because teachers take every opportunity to make lessons exciting and memorable
- The dedication of all staff has generated an exceptionally strong ethos in which pupils thrive
- The curriculum is imaginative, innovative and exciting
- It is an outward looking school, seeking always to extend its influence in helping pupils in situations other than the school premises
- Assessment is excellent, procedures are immaculate and they are implemented with great consistency. As a result positive guidance is offered to pupils
- The care and support of pupils is excellent, as a result they feel secure and relaxed and this help them to achieve

There has been very good improvement since the previous inspection. The commitment and effectiveness of staff and governors has brought about year-on-year improvements over the last five years and pupils' achievement has soared. Issues for improvement identified by previous inspections have been very effectively addressed and the school's own, excellent improvement planning shows that systems are in place to ensure that this improvement can continue.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Pupils' achievement at the end of:	in relation to individual targets in:	
	Subjects of the curriculum	personal and social education
Year 2	Very good	Very good
Year 6	Very good	Very good
Year 9	Very good	Very good
Year 11	Very good	Very good
Year 14	Very good	Very good

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

Achievement is very good overall for all pupils, irrespective of age, special educational need, ethnicity or gender. The youngest pupils often arrive with very limited understanding of basic skills but in Years 1 and 2, achievement in reading, writing and mathematics is particularly strong and they make very good progress. In Years 3 to 6, this continues in all subjects. In Years 7 to 9, national strategies for raising standards have been particularly well implemented, helping pupils maintain their very good achievement in all subjects they have previously studied and also achieve well in French. In Years 10 and 11, achievement is very good. It is good in English, where the benefits of the national strategy for improving literacy have not fully impacted. By the end of Year 11, increasing numbers of pupils are achieving success in Entry Level (Certificate of Achievement) examinations in an increasing range of subjects. Beyond the end of Year 11, pupils build very well on their previous learning and achieve very well in a curriculum that is increasingly work and community based. They gain extra qualifications recognising their increasing independence and most are well prepared for going to college.

Pupils' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural education, develop **exceptionally well**. Their attitudes and behaviour are **very good**. Many pupils overcome significant previous problems and make excellent progress in improving them. Attendance is **good**. It is very good for Post 16 pupils. The school has a tremendous ethos; it is a happy and exciting place.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is very good.

Teaching is very good. The school has well exceeded its target to eliminate unsatisfactory teaching. Nearly all teaching is now good or better. Much of it is very good or excellent. Pupils enjoy learning because teachers make lessons fun and, often, memorable. Staff miss no opportunity to find teaching and learning opportunities in every activity in and out of the classroom. Teachers are exceptionally good at finding out what pupils already know and carefully checking the progress they are making. They use this information to ensure that each learning activity is as closely as possible matched to each individual pupil's interest and ability. Support staff provide invaluable help to teachers and pupils alike. They work very effectively in a wide range of roles, always with an eye to raising standards. The curriculum is excellent. Very few lessons cover just one subject because teachers are always looking for ways in which the lesson they are teaching can contribute to other subjects, particularly English and mathematics. There are extensive links between the different subjects of the curriculum. Visits and visitors are a natural part of school life and an amazing number of lessons are characterised by exciting activities not usually found in classrooms. The care and support of pupils is excellent, and goes well beyond ensuring that the school is a safe place. Staff are genuinely interested in pupils and, because assessment procedures are so good, staff are well placed to offer invaluable guidance to pupils, thus helping them to learn and develop. The school never looks at itself in isolation. It has forged extensive and excellent links with parents, the community and with other schools and agencies. Pupils benefit greatly from these links. Most have opportunities to join in with activities in mainstream schools and older pupils are able to gain experiences in the workplace and in helping other people and contributing to the locality.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher is an inspiration. In four years, she has transformed the school from a position where it was failing to provide a satisfactory standard of education to a position approaching excellence. She has not done this on her own but her leadership and management qualities have brought out the best in her staff. Management systems are very strong. There is close, frequent and accurate monitoring of all aspects of the school's work and a relentless drive to improve provision. Governance is very good. Governors are closely involved in the school, fiercely supportive of its work and keenly aware of what goes on and how well pupils are learning.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Nearly all parents express total confidence in the school and feel that it provides a great help to themselves and their children. Pupils love coming to the school. Their views on all manner of things are regularly sought and pupils appreciate the fact that they are listened to and taken seriously.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

Inspectors feel that this is a school that needs little guidance because it has such a firm grasp of where small improvements can be made to raise standards and how to make these improvements. There are no areas that give inspectors cause for concern. All statutory requirements are met.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils make rapid progress, often from a very unpromising start
- Achievement is sustained throughout the school, with very good extra support being given to those who need it most
- The successful implementation of national strategies has had a very good impact in raising standards
- Excellent assessment has facilitated the setting of individual targets against which pupils' achievements can be put in context

Commentary

1. The youngest pupils, whether in Year 1 or reception, often arrive with virtually no understanding of literacy and numeracy skills and very limited personal and social development. These pupils get off to a flying start because they are very well taught and supported to improve their personal and social skills. Their curriculum very effectively combines early learning goals, appropriate to the stage of their development, with National Curriculum subjects so that each pupil is presented with work that matches their age and ability. As a result, they achieve very well in everything they do.
2. Another group of pupils transfers to the school at the beginning of Year 7, occasionally later. These pupils have usually been identified as likely to experience difficulty in transferring from primary to secondary schools; a few have transferred unsuccessfully. These pupils have moderate learning difficulties but also, often, greater than average behavioural problems, usually borne out of their frustration of not making progress in their previous schools. The skill of staff at Castle and the extra support and attention they receive in the smaller classes usually has a very good impact upon these pupils and they too achieve very well in the subjects of the curriculum and their personal development.
3. The overall strength of teaching and learning for pupils of all ages and in all subjects ensures that pupils are able to build upon their previous learning so that throughout their stay they continue to achieve very well. All primary aged pupils are included in mainstream school activities at some point in the week and this helps in their social as well as academic development. Pupils with the greatest degree of difficulty receive very effective extra support to help them improve their reading and language skills through the use of symbols and individual and group speech and language sessions. This helps them to achieve very well in relation to the difficulties they face. Secondary aged pupils also receive very good extra support to help them to improve their reading.
4. The very effective adoption of national strategies to improve literacy and numeracy skills is evident in the very good overall progress pupils are making in English and mathematics. Nearly all pupils have benefited from this. The effectiveness of these initiatives is most evident when comparisons are made of achievement in English. The only group of pupils achieving slightly differently to other pupils in any subject is in Year 10 and 11 English. Here, pupils have had less exposure to the national strategy for improvement and their achievement is good rather than very good.

5. Expert and excellent assessment of pupils' needs and progress is enabling teachers to address individual needs very well. It results in teachers being able to set individual targets for pupils in every subject then plan and present work that is always very carefully matched to their needs. This means that, whilst pupils learn at different rates and at different levels, each pupil can be seen to be achieving at the same, very good, standard when all factors and barriers to learning and development are taken into account. There are no differences in the overall achievements of pupils of different gender, ethnicity or degree of learning difficulty. Nearly all parents appreciate the fact that their children are making the best possible progress and the pupils themselves are very proud of their achievements.

6. The end result of sustained, high achievement is that pupils gain a high degree of success in accredited courses in subjects including English, mathematics, science, information and communication technology, art and design and design and technology by the time they leave. Nearly all leavers transfer to training opportunities in further education colleges and last year four pupils achieved the high goal of finding jobs. The setting of whole-school targets is complicated by small and fluctuating numbers of pupils. This means that a single pupil's results in any year can have a huge impact on the overall statistics for achievement. As such, achievement against individual targets presents a much more accurate indicator of overall achievement.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

7. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good and their personal development is excellent. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is excellent. Attendance is good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school's awareness and ability to develop the 'whole child' is exceptional
- The school is a happy community where relationships are excellent
- Pupils work hard in lessons and are enthusiastic about the activities provided
- Pupils can learn in a calm environment without worrying about others' behaviour
- Exclusions have fallen rapidly
- Pupils' attendance is good

Commentary

8. Pupils' personal development is excellent because the school nurtures them all as individual young people. The excellent ethos of the school which values and respects every pupil has a very significant impact on their personal development and their achievement. Staff are excellent role models in their relationships with pupils. Through their example, pupils learn to respect each other's differences and to value their own and others' cultures. The school's anti racist policy is comprehensive and there is a very high degree of racial harmony. More able pupils are very willing to help others who may need support and encourage others to behave well. Pupils are given time to think and reflect about everything they do which gives them confidence to learn, to take on responsibility and to prepare for life after they leave school.

9. Pupils are very happy about coming to school and participate with great enthusiasm and enjoyment in lessons and in all the activities on offer. They say that teachers make learning fun and so they are eager to learn and try as hard as they can in everything they do. Their exuberance and delight when participating in the drum orchestra typify their response to the school's interesting and imaginative curriculum. Pupils co-operate as well as they can in lessons and develop confidence to discuss their work, talk to adults and participate in activities because they feel happy and safe in school. This has a very good impact on their learning and achievement.

10. Pupils' behaviour is very good both in and out of school. They respond very well to teachers' high expectations of them and develop increasing responsibility for their own behaviour as they mature. Pupils who have more challenging behaviour are very well managed and are helped to improve through sensitive and caring guidance. Incidents of unsatisfactory behaviour are

monitored carefully and exclusions are used prudently to emphasise the school's expectations for behaviour and to ensure that staff and pupils are safe. Pupils say that they make friends at school and enjoy playing together although some, particularly those in Years 7 to 14, say that there is some anti-social behaviour. Pupils are not worried, however, because they know that there is always an adult to go to if they have a problem and that any bad behaviour is dealt with well. As they grow older, pupils are increasingly able to take more responsibility for organising their own learning. Many have clear ambitions for what they would like to do when they leave school and are able to discuss and explain these. No racism is tolerated and racial harmony is very well promoted, for instance, by making use of the views of pupils from different ethnic origins in religious education lessons.

11. Almost a year ago the school found it increasingly necessary to exclude pupils for short periods because their behaviour was unacceptable. These pupils were usually older boys, with a long record of behaviour problems, who had been more recently admitted. Many of these pupils are now involved in the 'Success Centre' initiative where they receive significantly greater support, initially in a one-to-one situation but with carefully managed programmes to return them to classrooms as soon as possible. These pupils also receive enhanced support from many outside agencies including Social Services, Educational Psychology and Child and Mental Health Services. As a result of the great success of this initiative, exclusions have fallen and in the last term there have been no exclusions.

Ethnic background of pupils

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White – British
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean
Asian or Asian British – Indian
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi
Black or Black British – Caribbean
Chinese

Exclusions in the last school year

No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
88	35	0
1	0	0
3	0	0
3	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0
1	0	0

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

12. Pupils' attendance is good and is much improved as a result of the school's good monitoring and good support from the educational welfare officer. Attendance for post 16 pupils is very good. Punctuality is good because the transport usually brings pupils to school on time.

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
School data	6	School data	1
National data	N/A	National data	N/A

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

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

13. The quality of education is very good. The curriculum is excellent as is the care, welfare, health and safety of pupils. Teaching and learning are very good, as are links with parents. Links with the community and relationships with other schools and colleges are excellent.

Teaching and learning

14. Teaching and learning are very good in all parts of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers balance academic learning and pupils' personal development exceptionally well
- Assessment of pupils' progress is excellent
- Teachers make learning very enjoyable
- Support assistants play a major role in the classroom

Commentary

15. Significant improvements in teaching since the previous inspection are leading to pupils making very good academic progress. One of the main strengths of teaching is the way teachers relentlessly work to improve the personal development of pupils as well as helping them learn about the subjects of the curriculum. This is achieved through teachers recognising that there are teaching and learning opportunities at every moment in the school day and taking advantage of this. At Castle, teaching and learning are clearly not the sole preserve of the classroom. A good example of teachers promoting personal development was seen, when instead of telling a child not to butt-in during a lesson, the teacher sensitively pointed out that some pupils need more time than others to think about the answers. The child understood this explanation and waited, with the result that the other child had the chance to demonstrate his learning; as a result, both pupils benefited. Many more examples were seen during rehearsals for Christmas festivities. Even these were planned as lessons, with pupils putting to good use the skills they had learned in music, physical education and English whilst being taught the necessities of taking turns, listening carefully, being courteous and acknowledging the efforts of others.

16. Excellent assessment underpins much of the success of teaching. The marking of pupils' work is particularly good, usually completed in the presence of the pupil with supportive and constructive dialogue. Pupils' work is also very careful annotated to give them clear guidance on what they are getting right and where they could improve. This reinforces what has been discussed and also gives a permanent record that is invaluable when it comes to evaluating progress. Teachers also keep exceptionally detailed and informative records of what pupils have learned and they are using these records with considerable precision to adapt tasks and lessons to meet the needs of all individuals. In a Year 9 religious education lesson, for instance, pupils recorded what they had learned in slightly different ways and with different degrees of support to reflect their handwriting ability. Another strength of recording and assessment is the way in which teachers record how much support pupils need to complete tasks or how much independent work has been completed.

17. Teachers use a huge variety of stimulating methods to make learning exciting and enjoyable. It is not just on the huge range of visits that pupils get to dress up and handle artefacts; it is a frequent feature of lessons in school as well. A history lesson during the inspection, for instance, was outstanding for the way in which Year 7 pupils dressed as medieval serfs, lords and ladies and had a banquet. Excellent relationships between staff and pupils are also a strong feature of teaching. Pupils trust teachers to look after them and this gives the pupils the confidence to try their hardest even when they are unsure of themselves. Teachers trust pupils and this gives them the confidence to take risks in planning exciting lessons without fear of pupils getting over-excited and letting this spill over into misbehaviour.

18. Support assistants play a major role in the success of teaching. This extends beyond supporting teachers in the classroom to teaching pupils very well in one-to-one situations in initiatives such as precision teaching. Learning support assistants also demonstrate a very good understanding of information and communication technology (ICT) and the management of pupils' behaviour.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 41 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5(11%)	20(43%)	19(40%)	3(6%)	0	0	0

The table gives the number of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons; figures in brackets show percentages where 30 or more lessons are seen.

The curriculum

19. The curriculum is excellent. It includes excellent opportunities for enrichment. Staffing is very good and accommodation and resources are good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum for the youngest pupils very successfully combines elements of the National Curriculum with Early Learning Goals
- There are extensive links between the different subjects of the curriculum
- The Post 16 curriculum is particularly well suited to preparing pupils for leaving school but accommodation in the Post 16 block is too small for the numbers of pupils
- There are a huge variety of enrichment opportunities. An important feature of the curriculum is the wide variety of visits and visitors

Commentary

20. It is very rare for pupils under the age of five to be admitted. When they are, they join a class of Year 1 pupils. Planning for this class is very well thought out and takes full account of all areas of learning. This ensures that in the rare event of younger pupils being admitted they will be properly provided for. The curriculum for pupils in Years 2 to 11 is exceptionally well planned and includes all subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and personal, social and health education. There is a strong emphasis on personal development, which ensures that pupils grow in self-esteem and maturity. National strategies for improving literacy and numeracy have been successfully introduced. They are having a very good effect upon the improvement of pupils' basic skills and techniques. This contributes to the very good achievement found in most subjects. Opportunities for incorporating and combining learning experiences which span several subjects in a single lesson are rarely lost and this adds value to the curriculum by making the best possible use of time to promote learning.

21. Work in different subject areas is frequently linked, making activities exciting and learning memorable. During the inspection, younger pupils combined dance, music, mime and literacy, whilst rehearsing for their Christmas play. Skills development is very well addressed through thorough planning and rigorous monitoring of teaching. Work is always sensitively adapted to meet the needs of groups and individuals. Careful thought is given to individual learning styles and a variety of innovative approaches are used to make learning meaningful. For instance, whilst younger pupils were studying seaside holidays long ago, a 'virtual seaside' was staged in the hall. This included opportunities for pupils to practise English, mathematical, scientific, geographical and artistic skills in a simulated trip to the coast. For older pupils, this practical approach is maintained and Year 7 pupils enjoyed a medieval feast, bringing history to life by creating an unforgettable experience.

22. The Post 16 curriculum is particularly relevant, focusing on a wide range of opportunities to further the pupils' education and independence and prepares them exceptionally well for leaving school. It builds on the statutory curriculum and includes new areas of study, such as current affairs, a work related curriculum that helps develop key employability skills and a 'travel safe' programme designed to develop independent travel skills. Pupils' work is accredited through ASDAN and includes *Life Skills* and *Key Skills*. The school based work related curriculum is highly relevant. For instance, the *Construction Curriculum* has offered pupils a wide range of projects such as laying patio slabs and crazy paving. There is a range of opportunities to work in the community such as the *Links to Work* placements and at the local technology college. Although the Post 16 accommodation limits some activities, staff do everything possible to minimise the impact this could have on pupils' learning. In view of the Local Educational Authority's (LEA) reorganisation proposals, however, the school is rightly exercising prudence in not rushing to redevelop this part of the accommodation.

23. The curriculum is innovative, outward looking and draws extensively from the community. The range of visits and visitors is considerable, and adds a creative and practical dimension to teaching and learning within the school. For instance, the *Creative Partnership* initiative has involved artists, poets and musicians, from within and outside the school. These activities have a significant impact on the academic and personal development of all pupils. The overall provision for creative and arts education – including extra-curricular activities - is excellent and the school has gained the *Artsmark* gold award for its work. Similarly the very good provision for sports education has won the *Activemark* gold award. The curriculum is further enriched through a vast array of motivating and enjoyable activities such as the link with *Drum Love*, which has enabled the school to form its own highly successful drum orchestra. Pupils in Years 5 and 6 were studying the text of Aladdin in preparation for a visit to the pantomime ensuring that they could see a real purpose to their learning.

Care, guidance and support

24. The care, welfare, health and safety of pupils are excellent. Support and guidance are also excellent. Pupils are extensively consulted and their views are listened to closely.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Excellent procedures for pupils' welfare give them the security, confidence and self-esteem to encourage and enable them to learn
- Very strong assessment procedures for academic and personal progress provide staff with excellent information with which to support and guide pupils
- Pupils are consulted about a wide variety of matters and their views are treated with great respect

Commentary

25. This is an exceptionally caring school in which pupils are very happy and particularly well looked after. Staff offer pupils high quality educational and personal support and guidance because they have a genuine interest in understanding and providing for pupils' individual needs. Outstanding support for their personal development helps pupils to mature and behave very well, to gain confidence in their learning and to achieve very well. Parents are very pleased with the pastoral care provided for their children and say it is a happy school where they and their children are respected and always listened to. Pupils are very confident that they can go to any adult in the school who will help them if they are worried.

26. Excellent health, safety and child protection procedures and very careful monitoring of pupils in public care ensure that all pupils are cared for well and are helped to achieve their best. The high quality assessment of pupils' academic and personal progress enables staff to set clear targets for pupils to work towards at every lesson. As a result, pupils' success at achieving these can be easily

evaluated and pupils know that they have done well because their achievements are openly celebrated in class and in assemblies. This raises their self-esteem and encourages them to work and achieve as well as they can.

27. The outstanding relationships between staff and pupils result in pupils having every confidence to talk to adults about their work, their lives in and out of school and any concerns that they might have. Every pupil in the school has a voice because staff treat them with the utmost respect and patience and listen very carefully to what they have to say in lessons, at break and lunch times and in informal chats around school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

28. Links with parents are very good. Links with the community are excellent. Relationships with other schools and colleges are of the highest order.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school goes out of its way to give parents the confidence to join with it in helping to improve their children's education
- The school embraces every opportunity to forge links with other educational establishments
- The school has a clear understanding of how it can contribute to other educational settings through its outreach work
- Extensive links with the community make an exceptional contribution to pupils' achievement and personal development

Commentary

29. The school has a very good partnership with parents and encourages them wherever it can to support their children. It is an open and friendly place where parents are viewed as important partners in improving pupils' education. Parents are very happy with the school and say that they are always consulted on important issues and that their views are respected, listened to and acted upon. This gives them confidence that their children are provided with the best education for their needs and to support their learning both in and out of school. The development of *Learning At Home* boxes, for example, provides parents with a range of imaginative activities for them to share with their children at home. Parents are invited at every opportunity to see their children at work, to talk about their progress with teachers and to support activities such as the termly social evenings.

30. The school uses every opportunity it can to forge extensive and excellent links with the community and with other schools and colleges. These links make an outstanding contribution to pupils' achievement. They make pupils' learning exciting and interesting and help to promote their personal development through an understanding of the fact that they can contribute to the community as well as benefiting from it.

31. Most pupils have opportunities to join in with activities in mainstream schools, such as citizenship lessons for junior age pupils with Walsall Wood School. These are well planned and carefully monitored to ensure that they are appropriate for all pupils and are making a positive difference to their learning and social skills. The social skills and personal development of older pupils benefit very well from opportunities to work in the community and in local businesses and to help other people by, for example, improving the environment of the local park with new benches. The drum orchestra has won praise and recognition wherever it has performed, as, for example, at a home for the elderly and at a presentation at Walsall Football Club.

32. There are excellent links with the local further education colleges and pupils in their final year at school spend some time in school and some time at college. Pupils are ambitious about moving on to college and take-up rates are very high. In addition, many pupils have the opportunity to undertake a work placement during their time in the sixth form. The school has established effective partnerships with a number of schools supporting children with moderate learning

difficulties in the mainstream. In addition, the school is providing the opportunity for the majority of primary pupils to have a mainstream link. Teachers and support assistants are eager to share their skills and knowledge with mainstream colleagues.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

33. Leadership and management are very good overall. The leadership of the headteacher is excellent, management and governance are very good.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very strong leadership is based upon the headteacher's vision and the empowering of staff to play a full role in school improvement
- Precise monitoring and evaluation of the school's work is a hallmark of the very strong management
- The governing body provides invaluable support and fulfils its responsibilities to the full
- The very good management of inclusion opportunities contributes greatly to the school's standing in the community

Commentary

34. There has been a substantial improvement in the leadership, management and governance of the school. Barriers to improving standards are quickly overcome and aids to raise standards are eagerly pursued. Much of this has followed the permanent appointment of the current headteacher shortly after the last inspection. A strong foundation for effective leadership is generated through very strong and supportive links with governors which give the headteacher confidence to push for ever higher standards in the school. She has a crystal clear vision of likely future developments and is not for a moment sidetracked by probable future developments resulting from reorganisation within the LEA. At all times, her concern is to provide the best education possible for all pupils currently attending. A very strong staff team has been created, largely through the headteacher sharing responsibility for improvement with key staff and encouraging and empowering all staff to fulfil ambitions and celebrate their achievements. It is very clear that staff are proud of their achievements and keen to be a part of the school's success. The subjects of the curriculum are all very well managed and senior staff with additional responsibilities across the school perform their duties to a very high standard. The headteacher and senior staff's promotion of strong assessment procedures and careful monitoring of pupils' progress has given staff the reassurance that what they are doing is very effective and that they are making a difference to pupils' lives. By involving all staff in development and improvement planning, the head teacher ensures that a very high degree of agreement is reached amongst staff, one of the best ways to continue to raise pupils' achievement and improve provision.

35. Management is very good. Close, frequent and accurate monitoring of teaching has helped bring about steady improvement over recent years. Good practice is built upon and weaknesses gradually eliminated. Managers are quick to identify small changes in the effectiveness of provision and act quickly to remedy any situation that seems to be worsening. This means that there is no need for radical or unsettling changes but a steady and fulfilling challenge for staff. When new initiatives are introduced, their effectiveness is closely monitored. Subject leaders play a full and very effective role in the monitoring of standards.

36. A very strong training programme is embraced by staff and managers because they see how it is helping their professional development and making them more effective in their work. The programme is particularly well targeted, paying close attention to the very detailed school improvement plan and performance management procedures. It is helped by the exceptionally thorough and systematic monitoring and evaluation of every aspect of the school's work to ensure the best possible outcomes for pupils. As a result, there is a strong consistency of high achievement in subjects of the curriculum.

37. Governance is very good. Many governors have stuck with the school through difficult times in the past and have shown great determination, in support of the headteacher, to improve the school. This is done through close involvement in the formation of policy and being keenly aware of what goes on in the school. They recognise they have a gem of a head teacher and work very closely with her, supporting well by carefully managing finance and balancing the needs of staff and pupils, always with a view to the importance of giving pupils a better education and preparing them for life after school. They regularly talk to staff and pupils and make frequent visits, recognising that is “their school” and they have a lot to be proud of. Instead of providing obstacles to admission of pupils with difficulties out of the moderate learning difficulty sphere, governors and management work closely to find ways of accommodating and providing for them, recognising that it is not enough just to provide but that they have to provide well if they are not to do these pupils a disservice. At the same time they are doing what they can to preserve Castle as a MLD school for the benefit of existing pupils.

38. There is a tremendous openness in the school’s operation. At every opportunity, links with the community and local schools and colleges are encouraged and extended. This has led to many, very good opportunities for pupils to be included in mainstream education and considerable sharing of expertise between Castle and mainstream schools and colleges. Careful management of this inclusion helps to ensure that very few problems are encountered and that pupils are benefiting greatly. The school enjoys a high status in the community because managers ensure that it is seen to be contributing to the community as well as using it. Governors benefit from accurate, regular and useful information about what is going on in the school and the progress pupils are making. Information they request is invariably ready to hand because administration procedures are efficient and effective.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1097282
Total expenditure	1023420
Expenditure per pupil	

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	50000
Balance carried forward to the next	73861

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

39. There are currently no pupils under the age of five and it is very rare for such pupils to be admitted. Nevertheless, the school is designated to accept such pupils if the need arises. The curriculum for such pupils is very good, as is the teaching of pupils in the class that they would be a part of.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 1,2,3,4 and POST 16

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

English

40. Provision for English is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Achievement overall is very good
- There is very good promotion of communication skills in all subjects
- There is very good leadership and management of the subject
- The assessment and checking of pupils' progress is excellent.
- Planning to meet the needs of individual pupils is very good
- The support given to pupils by teachers and support assistants is very good

Commentary

41. Very good achievement in English represents good improvement since the previous inspection. The achievement of pupils in Years 1 to 9 is very good. The successful introduction of the National Literacy Strategy for these pupils has had a significant impact on achievement and has strengthened the English curriculum. Where pupils have not had the benefit of the strategy throughout their time in school, in Years 10 and 11, achievement is good. Last year, four pupils achieved success in Entry Level accreditation. At Post 16, the very good planned curriculum means that pupils make very good progress towards independence and the next stage of education. Very good leadership and management are driving the improvements and contributes significantly to ensuring that all the different groups of pupils represented in the school, including relatively higher attainers, pupils of different ethnicity and children in care, achieve to their potential

42. Subject leaders have a clear vision for the development of English based on a very good understanding of the pupils' needs and difficulties. Planning both for groups and individuals is very much improved. The imaginative use of activities supporting the development of communication skills is a strong feature of all lessons.

43. Teachers' subject knowledge is very good. It has been considerably enhanced by literacy training. Teachers are very skilled and secure in all that they do and pupils learn well as a result. Behaviour management is very good; teachers and support assistants rarely raise their voices and use praise wisely. This encourages pupils very effectively as they know it is well deserved. Pupils are always very well supported. Whole-school assessment in English is excellent. Test results are analysed to check the progress of every pupil, and planning is very effectively based on this information. A strong feature of all lessons is the way in which teachers use assessment to adjust their teaching as they go along. Very good use is made of skilful questioning to encourage pupils to use their developing speaking skills and to check their understanding. Pupils make very good progress in speaking and listening because of the creative approach to the use of language in all

subjects. Performance skills are enhanced by the many opportunities for drama and music, such as writing play scripts for *Harry Potter* and linking this with producing music to enhance the play. Additionally pupils with language difficulties are given very well planned opportunities to improve their skills through the use of symbols and individual and group speech and language sessions.

44. Very good links are made between reading and writing and pupils work hard in lessons to meet their individual targets. Writing and its various purposes are linked, and letter names and sounds are taught together well in adult-directed group activities. Well-chosen and motivating practical activities make learning to read fun. Pupils recognise rhymes and a growing number of high frequency words and are proud of their achievements. The use of *talking books* enables pupils to read independently and the reading buddy system promotes shared experience and cooperation for younger pupils.

45. For older pupils well-chosen texts enhance learning. Year 7 pupils showed great enthusiasm for *Goodnight, Mr Tom* after watching a video and reading the text. Very good opportunities for individual and group discussion were generated enabling pupils to identify the characters in the story. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 demonstrate a good understanding of persuasive features in advertising whilst working towards their *Entry Level* English certificate and are well prepared for the tasks they have to do. Post 16 pupils are given a wide range of opportunities in which to practise their skills in a variety of practical settings. In *ASDAN* modules they use their skills well, putting learning into practice for a wide variety of purposes.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

46. Pupils are given excellent opportunities to use and develop their literacy skills across the curriculum. Communication skills are a very strong feature in all lessons. The emphasis on creativity means that the curriculum is exciting and purposeful. Opportunities to perform are motivating and imaginatively enrich pupils' experience of speech and language in a variety of settings.

Modern Foreign Languages/French

47. Only one French lesson was observed during the inspection and there is insufficient evidence to make secure judgements on provision. Analysis of previous work shows that pupils achieve well and make good progress over time. Pupils enjoyed the lesson observed, singing "Bonne Anniversaire" with great enthusiasm to a member of staff celebrating her birthday.

48. The teacher is not a French specialist, and the lack of fluency means that insufficient French is spoken during the lesson. However, very good preparation ensures that the necessary vocabulary is learned and pupils make progress. No judgement was made on provision for MFL in the previous inspection.

MATHEMATICS

49. Provision for mathematics is **very good** across the school

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching, supported by a detailed scheme of work which covers all areas of the mathematics curriculum ensures that all groups of pupils achieve very well
- Very effective assessment procedures are in place to ensure that the achievement of all pupils is recorded and that this information is used to set new targets
- There is very effective development and use of mathematical skills in other areas of the curriculum

Commentary

50. Very good teaching and management of mathematics is typified by lively and stimulating teaching supported by detailed planning that recognises the different needs of individual pupils. As a result, pupils enjoy learning about mathematics and achieve very well. All pupils are encouraged to use specific mathematical language such as *tally chart* and *pictogram*. They are also encouraged to explain and reason and this approach makes a significant contribution to the development of language skills. The very good teaching is strongly supported classroom assistants whose contribution to the learning for individual pupils and small groups is significant. Resources are carefully chosen to interest pupils and to support teaching; for example, real coins are used by younger and older pupils as they develop understanding of currency, shopping and the value of combinations of coins. The National Numeracy Strategy has been successfully implemented.

51. Pupils take pride in their work and their efforts are valued. Pupils' work is dated and nearly always accompanied comments to encourage them or to point out where work could be improved. As well as providing an excellent record of pupils' achievements this shares with pupils the teacher's views of their achievement. Because teachers are clear about what each pupil knows and understands they are able to build successfully on their existing knowledge in subsequent lessons. For older pupils this carefully collected record of work contributes to portfolios put together for accreditation. A wide range of accredited courses is available, catering for the diverse needs of all pupils in the school. For pupils in Year 11 and the post-16 department, mathematical skills continue to be developed through working towards externally accredited awards. Last year, three of the four pupils entered gained distinctions in Entry Level accreditation.

52. Many opportunities are made for pupils to use and practise their mathematical skills in real situations to solve real problems and to promote the skills of independence. Year 11 and Post 16 pupils have successfully used their knowledge of counting, angles and shapes as they have achieved success in constructing a paved garden area. This work has also involved working out the ratio of sand and water to mix concrete.

Numeracy across the curriculum

54. Strategies for teaching numeracy skills are very good and teachers actively promote numeracy skills throughout the day. Younger pupils use symbolic timetables to help them anticipate the next lesson and in science, geography and food technology pupils practise using units of measure. Older pupils calculate the number of tiles needed to cover the area of wall they are redecorating or practise using money to buy a meal in a restaurant. All pupils had the opportunity to use their number recognition skills playing bingo at a very exciting end of term celebration event, which they all thoroughly enjoyed.

SCIENCE

55. Provision in science is **very good**.

Main strengths

- Pupils achieve very well
- The quality of teaching is very good in all years
- Excellent assessment is used imaginatively and very well to ensure that individual needs are met
- Leadership and management are very good, providing a comprehensive curriculum, which is enhanced by special events

Commentary

56. Pupils' files show that they are achieving very well. Work is well presented and constructively marked. In Year 6, pupils are learning to use specialist vocabulary, and understand the importance of a "fair test". Pupils aged fourteen, show, by experimenting on eggshells, the effects of sugar on teeth. By the age of 16, pupils investigate, experiment, observe, and record accurately. They use systematic observations to improve their care of pets and plants.

57. Teachers, who have very good knowledge of the subject, plan and teach exciting and challenging lessons. Pupils are inspired and as a result work hard and behave very well, this is helping them to achieve to the best of their potential. They learn, through practical work, to plan, observe, analyse and evaluate. Support assistants, who are very well briefed, make a significant contribution to pupils' learning and achievement. The promotion of personal development is extremely good in science lessons, as pupils are encouraged to be independent, show initiative, and take responsibility for their work and equipment.

58. Work is carefully assessed and annotated with information about the amount of support given, so that teachers are secure about the levels at which pupils are working. Assessment and recording are consistent throughout the school and the level of pupils' involvement in the evaluation of their work increases well with age. Very good use is made of assessment information to ensure that every pupil is working at the right level. This applies to both higher and lower attaining pupils, as well as those with additional special needs. As a result, learning objectives are well targeted, and pupils gain the most appropriate accreditation. Last year three pupils gained passes in Entry Level accreditation.

59. Under the very effective leadership of the co-ordinator, a very appropriate and varied curriculum has been researched and developed. Internet research, and links with the Association of Science Education, and Creative Partnerships, have been beneficial. The introduction of an annual Science Day, with whole school involvement, creates interest and enthusiasm for the subject. The most recent 'Science Day' gave opportunities for collaborative working on investigative science, evidence gathering and checking, analysis, prediction and deduction. Results were recorded in words, pictorial story-boards and digital photographs. There has been very good improvement in science since the previous inspection, when it was judged to be satisfactory.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

60. Provision in information and communication technology is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well and gain appropriate accreditation
- Lessons are well-planned and challenging, and promote independent learning
- The curriculum is broad, balanced, and very relevant
- Resources could be improved.

Commentary

61. All pupils irrespective of gender or ethnicity achieve very well. Teachers carefully explain the wide range of technology used in the home and in school and this adds relevance to pupils' learning. By the age of fourteen, pupils have demonstrated their achievements, producing posters using a range of fonts, effects, and graphics. The quality of work produced by pupils up to the age of sixteen and those in Post-16 is outstanding. Strong leadership of the subject, and high expectations are evident in the high standards of pupils files produced for accreditation. Last year, three out of the four pupils entered gained distinction in Entry Level accreditation.

62. It was not possible to observe any discrete teaching of information technology in the primary classes during the inspection. However, in other lessons, good use of computer programmes was seen, and information technology files indicate that pupils have been taught very well. The teachers and the support assistants have very good knowledge of the subject and this inspires pupils with the confidence to try new things, confident that they will receive help if they need it. Independent working is promoted very well and makes a strong contribution to pupils' personal development. Relationships between staff and pupils are excellent, and one-to-one work with pupils is very effective in helping those with most difficulty to achieve as well as more able pupils. Planning is very good and provides well for pupils of varying abilities, or at different stages of examination work.

63. Resources are good in the ICT suite. However, the use of technology to enhance teaching and learning, across the curriculum, suffers from a limited range of subject specific software, and a shortage of hardware such as data projectors or interactive whiteboards. The high standard acknowledged in the last inspection has been maintained and there has been significant improvement in the number of pupils achieving accreditation.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

64. Computers, digital cameras and many other forms of technology are frequently very well used in other subjects. Computers are used for research and for word processing, pupils particularly enjoying and benefiting from the way they can be used to help them present their work neatly. Pupils' art work provides particularly good evidence of how technology can be used to create exciting new opportunities for pupils to express themselves.

HUMANITIES

HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY

65. *Only a small amount of history and geography was seen but from a scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' planning and records, it is clear that the leadership in both subjects has led to the development of a rich curriculum to which pupils respond with interest and achieve well.*

Commentary

66. The strength the curriculum in both history and geography lies in the creative use of resources and themes that support understanding. These elements make learning a memorable and enjoyable experience, enhanced by a wide range of activities include art, photography and drama. The subjects make a strong contribution to literacy through factual writing, speaking and listening and the extensive use of computers for word processing and research. Pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 have produced a beautifully presented historical detective trail through Walsall. They recognise how the town has evolved, comparing clothes, transport and buildings from then and now.

67. An impressive range of visits and visitors supports learning. Geography field trips in the locality support the understanding of water-courses, whilst the study of an Indian village links well with both literacy and religious education through the study of traditional tales and a visit to a Hindu Temple. A 'virtual' seaside trip provided a wide variety of exhilarating activities for younger pupils. They pretended they were on a train, dressed up for the beach, put on sun-cream and played with sand and water in addition to having a seaside picnic. These first hand experiences bring the subjects to life and have a significant impact on pupils' achievements.

68. Topic work produced by pupils based on history and geography is of very good quality. It shows clearly how other subjects such as art and design, ICT, mathematics and music are used to enhance and develop the work, and make it individual to each pupil. All work is marked constructively with very helpful comments to pupils. Younger pupils' work is exceptionally well annotated and indicates how much help pupils need to complete it.

69. The weaknesses found in the previous inspection in history have been addressed: planning is now good and pupils are clear about what they are learning and why. Subject leadership is very good in both areas of the curriculum with a clear vision for development.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

70. Provision for religious education is **very good** for pupils of all ages.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good teaching and learning are based on careful planning and expert knowledge of the needs of the pupils and as a result, pupils achieve very well
- The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and to the improvement of their speaking and listening skills.

Commentary

71. Very good teaching is characterised by carefully thought out lessons, with attention to detail that captures and holds the pupils' interest and builds on pupils' memories of previous lessons and experiences. This approach helps pupils understand some quite complex ideas such as, for example, that the orange in the Christingle is a symbol for the world. The teaching draws on the well-resourced and detailed scheme of work that is regularly reviewed and updated. Good use is made of artefacts, such as an advent candle, pictures, photographs and visits to places of worship, this helps to add interest to lessons and contributes greatly to pupils remembering what they have learned. Support assistants make a significant contribution, unobtrusively helping pupils acquire new skills and develop their understanding. Pupils' work is carefully kept, dated and provides an excellent record of the progress that individual children make.

72. There is a great emphasis on encouraging pupils to express their views and ideas. Teachers encourage pupils to examine their own beliefs and to understand and tolerate the beliefs of other people. When younger children were asked who they would buy a present for, one pupil explained he would chose a very poor man because he might be hungry and not able to buy his own food. Older pupils are helped to explore ideas on racism and prejudice. In a lesson about Martin Luther King the teacher very effectively promoted discussion and the exploration of ideas, taking care to involve all the pupils, reassuring the most hesitant that they had a valuable contribution to make. Several ethnic minority pupils found this topic particularly interesting and their views about racial issues were given particular emphasis. This approach makes a strong contribution to the development of speaking, listening and personal skills and in this instance helped promote racial harmony.

CREATIVE, AESTHETIC, PRACTICAL AND PHYSICAL SUBJECTS

73. *No judgement is made on provision in design and technology or physical education because not enough lessons were seen.*

74. *In design and technology, evidence from pupils' work shows that they achieve very well and older pupils gain appropriate accreditation at the end of their courses lessons were observed to make a secure judgement on teaching but analysis of pupils' work and discussion with pupils and staff allows for a judgement to be made on achievement.*

75. *Insufficient lessons were observed to make a secure judgement on teaching in physical education but on the evidence of photographs, discussions with pupils and teachers and analysis of records it is clear that pupils achieve very well.*

Art

76. Provision for art is **very good** across the school

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is excellent leadership and management of the subject
- Very good teaching based on a well developed scheme of work includes an innovative link with a local art gallery

Commentary

77. Expert knowledge and enthusiasm shines through in the leadership, management and teaching of art. This enables pupils to become absorbed, work with considerable effort and achieve highly. Although no lessons for younger pupils were observed, the evidence from pupils' work in their sketchbooks and from invigorating displays of their work around the school support the overall view that provision for art is a strength of the school. Each child keeps a personal sketchbook which is a record of the progress made through early stages of drawing and sketching. An older pupil was delighted to share this book and to point out the progress he had made and where his skills had improved. Last year, of nine pupils entered for Entry Level accreditation, eight achieved a distinction.

78. Teaching for older pupils is exciting and supported by detailed planning and a scheme of work that includes a wide range of experiences that include, for example, the use of multi-media techniques, printing, drawing and painting as well as opportunities to work with and display work at art galleries. The focus on the needs of individual pupils means that pupils enjoy art and are highly motivated to succeed; consequently, for example, eight out of the nine pupils entered for an externally accredited examination last year achieved a pass with distinction. The range of choice in the curriculum means that the teacher can find something to motivate and interest every pupil. When pupils took a camera home to photograph the oldest thing in their house, some stunning results were produced and displayed in an exhibition with the title, 'It doesn't have to be wrinkly to be old'. The use of ICT to make animations clearly stimulates older pupils and they are exceptionally proud of their work.

Design and Technology

Commentary

79. Pupils achieve well in all age groups, and develop relevant skills. Primary pupils have made toys operated by air pressure and by the age of fourteen, pupils are planning, designing, evaluating, and using flow charts as they work in wood, metal and plastic. Working with textiles, gives pupils the opportunity to use sewing machines, work with felt, and extend their skills in cross-stitch and embroidery. In food technology, pupils develop skills which prepare them well for independent living, such as planning meals, shopping, and cooking. However, there is little design element in this area of the curriculum.

80. Lessons are planned well, and assessment is outstanding, ensuring not only that skills are learned, but that pupils gain the accreditation they richly deserve. Accommodation and resources for all the elements of design and technology are exceptionally good and enable pupils to benefit fully from the very good subject knowledge and expertise of teachers and support staff.

81. Older pupils learn valuable skills in the Construction Curriculum. They understand the qualities which make a good employee and gain valuable practical experience in a wide range of construction tasks. Installing and painting benches in a local park has made a valuable contribution to the community as well as giving pupils very good experience of the sort of work opportunities they may wish to follow when they leave school. Very good improvement continues in this area of the curriculum, because of the enthusiasm and commitment of the staff. Last year, four pupils

successfully completed Entry Level accreditation in design and technology, two with merits and one with distinction

MUSIC

82. Provision for music is **very good**

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The involvement and achievement of all pupils in music is very good
- There is excellent use of community projects and visits and visitors
- Links with other subjects are very good

Commentary

83. Subject leadership is very good. The subject has not been developed in isolation and permeates the life of the school. The enthusiastic and jubilant response of pupils to music indicates the good improvement made since the previous inspection. The achievement of all pupils is very good because teaching is strong and the curriculum is exciting. Pupils are all given similar opportunities to play instruments so they learn how to make music as well as how music is made. They learn to appreciate and enjoy the sound and rhythm of a variety of instruments and sing and sign joyfully in groups and as a school. Music promotes a sense of community throughout the school.

84. All pupils are attentive and the input from *Drum Love* was greeted with enthusiasm and high levels of interest. Pupils of all ages have the opportunity to play a variety of African percussion instruments and do so with zeal, thus learning to appreciate the music of another culture. Many have a good sense of rhythm and follow the lead drummer very well. Additional links with *New Horizons* have resulted in Post 16 pupils composing their own electronic music and creating atmosphere as part of the secondary schools' Christmas production. In one rehearsal every opportunity was used to promote learning: pupils were asked to appraise the music and choose words such as *spooky* and *scary* to describe the feelings evoked.

85. Music makes an excellent contribution to pupils' personal development. Through the performance aspect they learn about dance, language and drama. They learn to cooperate with each other and it raises their self-esteem. Multicultural opportunities are significant. Through the *New Horizons* link pupils have the opportunity to experience more instruments from other cultures such as the *Gamelan* used in Javanese and Balinese music. They were amazed and delighted by the array of Gamelan instruments with which they were presented.

Physical education

Commentary

86. Primary classes have achieved the Gold 'Activemark', through dance, games, swimming, out of hours activities, and community links. Pupils work hard and take pride in their achievements. During a Christmas concert rehearsal, they demonstrated the results of their efforts in a dance which they performed with confidence and grace. Short movement sessions each morning, when pupils move through a series of relaxing and stretching exercises, prepare them well for the day's activities. Pupils up to the age of sixteen work towards the Certificate of Achievement. All pupils are achieving very well in swimming, athletics, dance and games. Post 16 pupils achieve success in ASDAN water skills and sports studies.

87. Every skill pupils need to acquire is skilfully broken down by teachers into small steps. These are incorporated into planning, taught, and achievement is carefully assessed. Pupils' self-

assessment increases substantially as the pupil matures. Examination assessment is made more accurate with the use of video recording. Individual progress is very well monitored and recorded.

88. Pupils from fourteen to nineteen enjoy and achieve well in sailing, orienteering and outdoor pursuits. There is a camping trip in the summer break and photographs show pupils participating enthusiastically in the Black Country Olympics, Duke of Edinburgh Awards, and exploring the canal. They use trampolines in a local college, and compete hard in cross country, athletics and football fixtures with local schools. There has been good improvement in physical education since the last inspection.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

89. Excellent relationships and mutual trust enable the promotion of personal development to permeate the school, in and out of lessons. Pupils in this school know that they are valued. Their opinions are sought and their efforts are appreciated. The trust teachers have in their pupils allows them to be imaginative and innovative in their teaching. Pupils rise to meet the presented challenges because they have complete faith in their teachers. The breakfast club is a valuable part of the school day, where pupils learn to be independent and to help others, take turns and listen to each other. It sets the tone for the school day. The informal setting has a family atmosphere which makes criticism more positive and less threatening, as in the Year 6 class where pupils had not lived up to the teacher's high expectations during her absence the previous day.

90. The comprehensive curriculum leads to good accreditation. In addition to the excellent example set by staff, pupils learn to be good citizens by following the ASDAN explain schemes of work. Pupils of fourteen work on Key Steps, up to age of sixteen it is *Towards Independence*, and at Post 16, *Independent Living*. Examination of files of pupils' work shows that teaching and learning are very good throughout the school and individual progress is monitored very well. Pupils develop into mature members of society. The promotion of independence and the high expectations of teachers, added to the well presented information in lessons, means that pupils leave the school very well prepared to take their place in college or the workplace.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

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

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