

INSPECTION REPORT

PITCHEROAK SCHOOL

Redditch

LEA area: Worcestershire

Unique reference number: 117056

Headteacher: Katey Earle

Lead inspector: Hilary Gannaway

Dates of inspection: 1st – 4th December 2003

Inspection number: 258975

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:	3 – 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
Number on roll:	123
School address:	Willow Way Batchley Redditch
Postcode:	B97 6PQ
Telephone number:	01527 65576
Fax number:	01527 67845
Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs L Brunt
Date of previous inspection:	9 th March 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

The school caters for up to 134 pupils and students. At present, there are 123 on roll, of whom the majority are in Years 7 to 11 and six are children in Reception. There are over twice as many boys as girls, which is usual for this type of school. While the majority have a Statement of Special Educational Need for moderate or severe learning difficulties, there are increasingly numbers of pupils with autism throughout the school. Most pupils are of white background with a very small number of pupils of Asian and black Caribbean heritage. One pupil is at an early stage of English acquisition. The school is involved in initiatives aimed at ensuring a large number of pupils and students have access to activities in mainstream schools and colleges. There is also outreach support for a small group of pupils who were on the roll of the school. The school has achieved a number of awards such as Sports Mark, a leading aspect award and a careers quality mark. It has just been re-accredited for Investors in People. Most pupils come from the local area and a significant number are from disadvantaged backgrounds. The school population is more complex than at the last inspection. The school has falling rolls. This is partly the result of pupils, who used to be taught off-site by Pitcheroak staff, now being on the roll of mainstream schools. Children and pupils increasingly enter the school with attainment well below that expected for their age. The school is presently subject to a local education authority review.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
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22466	Diane Pearson	Team inspector	Science Physical education Religious education
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

This is a good school. Good quality teaching ensures that pupils and students achieve well over time. Their personal development is very good, assisting their independence skills and improving behaviour. The leadership of the headteacher, supported by an effective management team and an enthusiastic and committed staff, has ensured that the school has continued to make improvements. The school provides good value for money.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- High expectations by staff result in teaching and learning being good overall and very good for pupils and students from Year 10 onwards.
- Positive attitudes and good behaviour are very well supported by staff commitment to continuous personal and social development.
- Effective self-evaluation has assisted the headteacher in having a very clear vision of the way forward for the school.
- Strong provision for the 14 to 19 age range, including accreditation, ensures pupils and students are ready for the next stage of education and life after school.
- Good, and sometimes very good, links with the community and local schools and colleges effectively enhance the curriculum.
- The management of pupils with autism is not always consistent.
- There is inconsistent use of methods of communication such as signs and symbols for those who need them in order to extend their learning.

Improvement since the last inspection has been good. For example, behaviour has improved through a more structured approach to lunchtimes where pupils enjoy a variety of activities. All subjects have appropriate schemes of work and these result in well-planned lessons. Provision for, and use of, information and communication technology (ICT) now meet statutory requirements and are good. Assessment has improved and is satisfactory but still requires further development.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

Children's achievement in the Foundation Stage varies but is satisfactory overall. For those children who are autistic it is satisfactory and for other children it is good. In personal and social, physical and mathematical development it is good and satisfactory in all other areas.

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

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

Pupils' and students' achievement is good overall. It is very good for pupils in Year 10 and 11 and for Post 16 students in Years 12 and 13. This is because of the very good curriculum that motivates them to complete work and equips them for life after school. For pupils in Years 1 and 2, achievement in reading and writing is good. Pupils' achievement in English, mathematics, science and ICT is good overall due to improvements in the schemes of work and teachers' skills. It is very good in personal, social and health education (PSHE) where good relationships give pupils the

confidence to develop their social and independence skills. Pupils' achievement is very good in art and French where they enjoy the practical nature of the lessons. However, achievement for a small number of pupils with autism, particularly those between Years 4 and 7, is satisfactory only.

Pupils' and students' personal qualities, including their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are very well provided for and this has a positive effect on attitudes and behaviour. This reflects the very good ethos in the school. Throughout the school pupils work hard, are enthusiastic and are quick to applaud each other. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The quality of education provided by the school is good. This is because **teaching is good overall.** It is satisfactory for children with autism in the Foundation Stage because work is not always structured well enough to keep them on task. It is good for other children. Teaching is very good for pupils and students in Year 10 to 13 due to carefully planned relevant experiences. They learn effectively because all staff know them well. Throughout the school, teachers plan well for most needs and knowledgeable teaching assistants work successfully with them to ensure pupils' individual needs are met. However, not all staff, particularly those who are new, are skilled in teaching the increasing numbers of pupils with autism. Learning for these pupils is not always as effective as it could be. This is because their learning and communication is not always managed consistently. However, the school is aware of this and recent training is giving staff more confidence, and practice is improving. There is now a consistent approach to assessment with some development still needed in a few subjects.

Opportunities offered through the curriculum are good and relevant to pupils' and students' needs, particularly between the ages of 14 and 19. There is effective individual support and guidance and pupils are well cared for and listened to. There is a wide range of out-of-school activities that effectively support learning. All benefit well from the increasing reciprocal links with mainstream schools. Two-way communication with parents is good and they are encouraged to come to school at any time.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The leadership and management of the school are good. Governors have a good overview of the school. Statutory requirements are met. The headteacher and other staff with responsibilities work well together to ensure pupils have a good education and the school is run and managed effectively. The headteacher has maintained high staff morale during the local education authority review of provision for pupils with special educational needs.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The views of parents and their children are positive. Parents particularly find the staff approachable and appreciate the opportunities that are provided for their children. Pupils and students state they enjoy coming to school.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Devise consistent ways to extend pupils' communication skills and ensure these are matched to their individual special needs.
- Improve the management and organisation of work for pupils with autism.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Standards, particularly for the youngest pupils, are well below average. For all pupils and students, including the minority of girls and the few pupils who are from minority ethnic backgrounds, achievement is good overall. The achievement of reception age children is satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve consistently well in English, mathematics, science and ICT and very well in PSHE, art and French, due to confident teaching.
- Some of the children and younger pupils with autism do not always achieve as well as they could.
- A range of improved accreditation has resulted in very good achievement for older pupils and students.

Commentary

1. There has been improvement in pupil and student achievement since the last inspection. This is because teachers now plan effectively as they are more confident in their subject knowledge. For older pupils and students the school has a range of awards and certificates that are appropriate and relevant to their age and needs. Well-planned programmes lead to very good achievement and good results for all pupils and students between the ages of 14 to 19. Pupils are effectively motivated from Year 7 onwards where they begin ASDAN (Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network) Key Steps in PSHE. In 2003 most pupils with moderate learning difficulties in Year 11 gained a gold ASDAN Youth Award and achieved Entry Level mathematics while all pupils gained science. This, along with college courses and work with a local secondary school, ensured they achieved well enough to confidently leave school and go on to college. In the same year pupils with severe learning difficulties gained between three and five ASDAN Transitional Challenges. This gave them the self-esteem and motivation to continue into the school's Post 16 provision where they began to complete further awards, participated in a range of appropriate college courses and continued to achieve very well.
2. Progress against performance targets set for groups of pupils is satisfactory overall and better for older pupils. Until recently, the means used to set these targets has not always ensured that all targets are appropriate or realistic. However, this is improving as the school collects more specific data on pupils' progress. This is compared nationally through the Durham project and more recently against another similar local special school. Results over time, from the Durham project, have shown that pupils with moderate and severe learning difficulties make good progress overall, while for pupils with autism progress is satisfactory.
3. Pupils' good achievement in English and mathematics is reinforced successfully across the school by the good use of literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects. Achievement in listening and speaking is particularly good. This is because pupils and students spend time taking turns and discussing in subjects such as PSHE and citizenship as well as circle time. However, progress slows for some pupils during Years 3 to 6 because signs and symbols are not always used appropriately to aid communication in English. In mathematics, achievement in number is strong because this is reinforced in lessons such as music, during number songs, and in history through chronology. For older pupils, graphs and other data are used effectively in science and ICT, while calculators are used in careers.

4. The appointment of a subject specialist, along with a practical approach, contributes well to pupils' achievement in science. In art, good subject knowledge means pupils and students use a wide variety of materials and skills. This motivates them to achieve very well. The very good use of oral work and very practical well-resourced activities in French, along with signing, means that pupils quickly make progress. The emphasis on personal development, independence and equipping pupils and students for life in the community is evident in the very good achievement pupils make in PSHE. Pupils' achievement in ICT lessons is good due to staff being more confident in their use of new technology and improved provision. Pupils' achievement in ICT in other subjects is satisfactory but improving as pupils practise their skills regularly.
5. There are some variations between groups of pupils with additional needs. Recently more pupils with autism have entered the school and not all staff are experienced enough in working with them. For example, achievement for children in the Foundation Stage, although satisfactory overall, is better for those who are not autistic. This is because they have a more structured environment and they are challenged more. Although achievement for pupils and students with autism is good from Year 8, some junior and early secondary age pupils do not always achieve as well as they could. This is because their learning and communication is not always managed consistently. Where this is done successfully they progress as well as others. Overall, parents consider their children make recognisable progress when communicating and become more confident.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Pupils' and students' behaviour and attitudes are good. The school provides very good opportunities for moral, social, spiritual and cultural development and pupils and students respond well to them. Attendance and punctuality are satisfactory.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The very strong emphasis on social and moral development helps most pupils to achieve greater independence, confidence and self-esteem.
- Individual education plans and support programmes help most pupils to behave well and take a full and enthusiastic part in their lessons and activities.
- Whilst behaviour has markedly improved, the behaviour of some pupils with autism it is not as good as it could be.
- The school works successfully with parents to ensure their children attend school regularly and on time.

Commentary

Attendance in the latest complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data	7.1
National data	9.1

Unauthorised absence	
School data	2.0
National data	2.3

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

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	117	11	
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	3		
Asian or Asian British – Pakistani	1		
Chinese	1		
Any other ethnic group	1		

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

6. Pupils and students talk enthusiastically about school life and say they like coming to school. The oldest pupils say they enjoy their day at the college; one pupil comments, "It's been a long day, but it's worth it!" Photographs of pupils taking part in the many activities organised by the school such as sailing, residential visits and the Redditch dance festival, clearly show that everyone who attends gets a great deal of enjoyment from these events. Wherever possible, pupils are given responsibilities. Nearly every class has a rota of duties so that everyone gets a chance to take part. They take their duties very seriously. Pupils carefully stacked the chairs away after assembly. On another occasion one of the oldest pupils carefully made drinks for the return of the pupils from college. Other pupils help run the school bank, obviously enjoying the responsibility. There is a very clear emphasis on developing pupils' independence from their earliest days at school.

7. Pupils' and students' personal development, particularly their social and moral development, is given a high priority. A range of activities such as lunchtime clubs, circle time, PSHE and citizenship supports this. All are helped to think about the feelings of themselves and others, along with rights and responsibilities. They are valued and treated with respect. As they move through the school, pupils become confident about both themselves and life outside school. As they get older this emphasis increases. Post 16 students are encouraged to make short presentations to their peers as part of their coursework. Most manage to do this with confidence. All adults in school regularly engage pupils, where possible, in conversations. In this way they encourage them to express their thoughts and views. Pupils and students are polite and friendly. They are genuinely inquisitive about why visitors are at the school and are usually not afraid to ask questions. One of the oldest students welcomed an inspector with confidence to the Post 16 common room with a friendly handshake, asking how are you, how has your day been, would you like a drink? The oldest pupils and students are a credit to the school and are well prepared for life when they leave.

8. Behaviour at lunchtime has improved since the previous inspection because the school now provides a range of activities which most pupils enthusiastically take part in. Behaviour is good around school, walking to the swimming baths and on visits. This is because the school recognises the need to help pupils to behave well. Behaviour is supported by effective social targets in their individual education plans. Where there is a need, clear behaviour programmes are agreed and regularly reviewed. They contain clear rewards and consequences that are explained to pupils so that they understand what they need to do to improve. In the main, these pupils try hard to achieve their targets. Where behaviour is not improving, the school is quick to seek advice and support from external agencies. Those pupils who might be at risk of exclusion have very personalised plans in an effort to help support them; for the most part these are proving to be effective. The number of fixed period exclusions last year was high. However, the school has managed to provide effective regular support for several pupils who previously had been permanently excluded from other schools. This has assisted them in remaining in school.

9. Most pupils and students enjoy learning; this has a positive impact on how much they achieve in lessons. However, for some pupils with autism, their behaviour gets in the way of their learning. As yet, effective strategies to manage their behaviour are inconsistently used. This is particularly so for some primary aged pupils where there is an increasing intake of pupils with more complex needs. Where strategies are good and consistently used, they have a positive effect on behaviour.
10. Attendance has improved since the previous inspection. This is because of the school's increased effort to explain to individual parents why it is necessary for their children to attend regularly. Most parents ensure their children do so. The school is quick to follow up any unexplained absence and involve the education welfare officer if there is a need.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

11. The quality of education is good. Teaching and learning are effective because in the main teachers are skilled, work constructively with teaching assistants, and know pupils and students well. There is a good range of activities appropriate to the age and interests of pupils and students that helps keep them motivated. They have many opportunities to state their opinions. Time is given to provide effective personal and academic support and pupils and students experience a range of beneficial links. Contact with parents has helped raise attendance.

Teaching and learning

Pupils and students are effectively taught with a good emphasis on their personal development. Consequently, pupils learn well and are interested in their work. Assessment procedures are satisfactory

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good relationships underpin teachers' high expectations of pupils' attitudes to work.
- Teaching is most effective when taught by those with good subject expertise.
- Most lessons are well planned so pupils know what is expected and work hard.
- Teaching and learning are very good for pupils and students in Years 10 to 13.
- Teaching strategies, including signs and symbols, are not always used consistently with younger pupils who need them.
- There is a systematic approach to assessment in subjects such as English and mathematics; however, formal assessment in some subjects is limited.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 68 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (1%)	21 (31%)	31 (46%)	14 (21%)	1 (1%)	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.

12. Although teaching and learning are good overall for school age pupils, it is often very effective for pupils in Year 10 and 11 and for Post 16 students. This is because these teachers are skilled in planning and providing work that is appropriate to their ages and needs as young adults. Teachers ensure pupils and students enjoy a full curriculum that leads to accredited work. They make certain those with more complex needs are involved as fully as possible in order to meet their individual needs, ably assisted by teaching assistants. This is appreciated and pupils and students respond by showing maturity and some independence when working. This was evident

in a Year 11 class, where a very good quality debate on capital punishment teased out issues, thereby broadening pupils' perceptions and resulting in greater participation.

13. Overall, pupils learn effectively because staff know them well. There are good relations between pupils and adults, and pupils appreciate this and try hard to behave. There is currently some effective practice in meeting the needs of pupils with autism. This consists of good structured teaching, effective use of appropriate communication methods, including Picture Exchange Communication Systems (PECS) and signing, and successful behaviour management. This enables these pupils to fully engage with their learning, and from Year 7, be fully included in classes with their peers. For most of these pupils teaching is good and they make good progress.
14. However, these strategies are not consistently and systematically implemented throughout school. As a consequence, there are some occasions when the learning of younger pupils, and children in the Foundation Stage with autism, is not as successful. Learning is not always supported by appropriate additional communication aids so they can relay their needs. It is not always structured well enough to keep them on task or interested. This is because staff, particularly those new to the school, are not yet fully confident in the relevant skills they have recently acquired. Practice is improving, however. There are now more experienced and skilled staff and good use is made of well-trained teaching assistants. These assistants, such as the signing co-ordinator, are increasingly working alongside teachers, making certain that pupils participate fully in lessons. They also take groups. For example, a very appropriate signing and listening lesson for pupils in Year 1 and 2 was observed which pupils enjoyed and met their needs very well. While learning is good for younger pupils with severe learning difficulties, they would also benefit from more confident and consistent use of signing and symbols by staff.
15. Most lessons are well organised and managed. This is because generally activities are successfully planned beforehand to be interesting. As a result, pupils want to learn. This is an improvement since the previous inspection as it ensures teachers are confident in what they teach and give pupils clear explanations so they know what is expected. This is particularly helpful for older pupils and students in English and mathematics. Clear instructions, such as those given in science and food technology lessons, result in pupils being confident to follow a sequence of activities during practical work.
16. Teaching is often very good when taught by the subject specialists. For example, very good teaching for older pupils and students in science ensures that they carry out a range of experiments safely in the science room. Pupils enjoy French and are eager to use the language due to the use of very good teacher-made resources and games that are also enjoyable. In music and art, teaching is organised so that pupils participate in as wide a range of activities as possible. In art this includes a wide range of materials and media, and in music instruments such as percussion and singing. This ensures there is plenty of work and all are kept busy.
17. High expectations mean pupils remain on task and often have a sense of work being fun. Staff work hard to make subjects such as history practical, using artefacts and dressing up so pupils remain enthusiastic and eager to learn. Questioning is used well to check whether pupils have remembered activities and to inform future work. Resources are varied and appropriate to the age and needs of pupils. Because teachers are committed to developing personal as well as subject skills, activities often require pupils to listen, take turns, work independently or collaboratively and celebrate each other's success. Homework is used widely to extend and reinforce learning. There is a good school policy giving clear guidance to parents and carers as well as to teaching staff. This is appreciated by parents who help their children with tasks such as reading.
18. Assessment has improved since the last inspection when it was unsatisfactory. It has improved in subjects such as English and mathematics where pupils' attainment is measured against P Scales, which are small steps performance criteria for those below level 1 of the National Curriculum, as well as National Curriculum levels for those above. This information is used

appropriately to set pupils' targets, to match their work to individual needs and to question them at a suitable level. Although there has been improvement in reporting what pupils know, understand and can do in subjects such as geography, French, art and design and music, at times too much reference is made to curriculum coverage. From Year 10, assessment is good, with pupils undertaking a range of ASDAN accredited courses and achieving Entry Level qualifications. Teachers regularly give constructive feedback to pupils in lessons while teaching assistants are closely involved in discussing targets with pupils and in recording their achievements.

The curriculum

Curricular provision is effective in meeting the needs of most pupils and students but is only satisfactory for children in the Foundation Stage. It is well supported by extra-curricular activities aimed at enriching the curriculum. Accommodation and resources are satisfactory overall and very good for students in the Post 16 provision.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good curriculum provision for pupils and students aged 14 to 19 years.
- The careers education programme and college links are a strength and support the curriculum very well.
- Accredited courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11 are very good.
- Some of the classrooms for younger pupils are small and cramped, limiting some activities.
- A good variety of activities supplement the curriculum well.
- Provision for PSHE is very good.

Commentary

19. There has been good improvement in the curriculum since the last inspection due to a better focus on schemes of work and more detailed planning. This has ensured all subjects which the school has to provide are fully taught. This is particularly so in ICT where there has been very good improvement in provision and use throughout the school. All pupils benefit from the full range of the curriculum. There is also a commitment to include pupils together in classes, with pupils with autism moving into mixed ability classes from Year 7.
20. Whilst in most subjects work is appropriate to the age and interests of pupils, this is not always so in English for pupils in Years 3 to 6, particularly in the way work is presented. The provision for PSHE is very good, includes sex and drugs education and supports pupils' and students' personal development very well. It is appropriate to pupils' and students' ages, being particularly strong on reinforcing important issues such as looking after personal health, keeping safe and helping others. There is a strong emphasis on independence. In addition to the teaching of PSHE as a subject, there are many planned opportunities built into the day to reinforce these skills.
21. The curriculum provides an extensive range of opportunities for pupils and students to link with other mainstream schools and colleges. This is particularly strong in Years 10, 11, and at Post 16, where it supports the very good school curriculum and prepares pupils and students very well for other stages of education. The opportunities offered at college assist in helping both pupils and students to identify their strengths, capabilities, knowledge and understanding of adult and working life. They appreciate this and talk about their work enthusiastically and with confidence. Guidance provided by a Connexions personal advisor, with supported work experience, where required, is a strength in preparing for life beyond school. Courses, such as those provided by ASDAN for pupils in Years 10 and 11, are taught by teachers skilled in the management of pupils with special educational needs. These staff provide imaginative approaches to provoke thinking and fuller understanding of more complex issues.

22. Since the last inspection Post 16 provision has improved well. The students now have separate very good quality accommodation while still being part of the school. Accreditation, work experience and college links are imaginative and appropriate to the age and abilities of students in order to prepare them for the next stage of education.
23. There is a wide range of opportunities for enriching the curriculum, including a variety of lunchtime clubs and good chances for pupils to participate in sports and arts activities. During the inspection, drummers and guitarists from a local mainstream high school came to accompany a group of school choristers preparing to sing at Worcester Cathedral. It was clear that pupils and students enjoyed working together and performed well. There are two residential experiences each year which pupils enjoy. Very good use is made of the Worcestershire Outdoor Pursuits facilities. For those pupils who are unable to participate in these activities, the school-based activity week offers a good range of interesting visits and experiences to enable all pupils and students to be included. Pupils have travelled to Arundel in Sussex for cricket coaching and exploring the nearby coast. There is professional coaching available in football, cricket and golf. Boys and girls enjoy playing football and hockey at a local sports centre where they make very good progress in developing their skills.
24. Most teaching staff have a good, and improving, range of skills and expertise for working with the pupils. They work very well with the teaching assistants, making very effective teams, and include all pupils in the learning. While resources are good, accommodation is satisfactory in the main part of the school. Some of the classrooms are small and make activities difficult to manage, although teachers do their best to overcome this. For the children in the Foundation Stage with autism, the classroom and resources are only adequate and the children do not always have access to a wide range of creative experiences. The school recognises these issues and is part way through a programme to extend these classrooms. The accommodation is enhanced by the very high quality display in corridors and individual classrooms.

Care, guidance and support

The arrangements for care, welfare, health and safety are good. Support, guidance and advice given to pupils and students are good. They are effectively involved in their own learning and have opportunities to influence the work of the school.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All adults who work in the school know the pupils very well.
- Good liaison with external agencies helps to ensure all pupils are well cared for.
- Health, safety and welfare have improved since the previous inspection but written records are not sufficiently detailed.
- Arrangements to help pupils settle into the routines of new school life and those to help them prepare for leaving are very good.
- Pupils have a good understanding of their personal targets and are confident they can share any worries they have with school staff.

Commentary

25. All adults have good relationships with pupils, know them as individuals and act quickly if they are seen to be unhappy. Those pupils who are most vulnerable, and sometimes their families, are supported well. The school provides a caring and happy atmosphere in which pupils say there is an adult in the school they can turn to if they are unhappy or worried.
26. Staff follow the agreed policies and practices for child protection well, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. They notice when pupils are having difficulties and take action to put matters right. The school is quick to seek advice and guidance from specialist agencies. They do this in order to support individuals, for instance in trying to overcome behaviour

problems or where there are concerns about their health and welfare. This means that these pupils are able to attend school and make progress. Speech and language therapy gives appropriate support to ensure pupils make the best use of their communication skills. However, presently the school does not have enough support to assist it in making sure all staff have a good understanding of the range of communication methods to use with pupils. Health, safety and welfare arrangements are much improved since the previous inspection. There is frequently monitoring of this aspect of the school by governors so that any problems are dealt with quickly. The school has the services of a nurse who monitors medical needs effectively. However, written records, especially in relation to recording minor accidents, do not always state what follow-up action has been taken, nor are they always signed.

27. Good standards of support have been maintained since the previous inspection. Individual education plans predominantly relate to pupils' personal and social development, particularly behaviour, and are distinct from the curricular targets set for English and mathematics. Individual targets are shared with the pupils as part of the annual review process and discussed frequently with classroom staff. Discussions with several higher attaining pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 showed that they understand their academic targets and that they all know their behavioural targets very well. They understand how achieving their targets will help them do better.
28. The school has very good procedures to support pupils and their families when they start school and as they move through the school. Because pupils often come from a variety of schools and sometimes from some distance away, the school is keen to help them adjust to new school life. They are equally keen to reassure parents that their children will be well cared for. Each new entrant has sensitive and individual support arrangements. This helps pupils to quickly feel at home and adjust to the routines of school life. Very good advice and guidance are provided by school staff and external agencies in the Post 16 department. Students are made very aware of the opportunities available to them after school.
29. Pupils are confident that they can discuss any worries or problems they have with the staff and name teachers, teaching assistants and the headteacher as people they trust. There is an effective pupil school council, which meets regularly with the headteacher and the pupils' requests are discussed by senior staff. Pupils who are not on the school council have a good understanding of its function and how to use it to express their views of what could be better in the school.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has developed a good partnership with parents. Links and liaison with the community, mainstream schools and other education providers are very good for Post 16 students and good in the remainder of the school. Extended school services are satisfactory overall but improving.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is good communication with the majority of parents.
- Parents find the school approachable and appreciate the opportunities that are provided for their children.
- The oldest pupils and students take part in a very good range of activities that contributes very well to their independence and life beyond the school.
- Pupils' and students' personal development is enhanced because of the school's successful involvement with the community.
- The mutual links with schools and colleges ensure effective education benefits for all involved.

Commentary

30. Although the school does not formally seek the views of parents, it encourages them to come in, at any time, if there are concerns or issues to discuss about their children. Home/school diaries are used well to communicate with parents, and the school will always telephone if there is a matter that needs to be urgently talked through; parents appreciate this communication. There is a clear philosophy that the education and support of all pupils and students are a two-way partnership between the school and their families. This has been maintained since the last inspection. Most parents support this and are fully involved in setting and reviewing their children's future learning and behaviour targets. Many help their children with the work they do at home.
31. Both formal and informal opportunities are available for parents to talk to teachers about the progress their children are making and this is supplemented by good quality written information. Coffee mornings are regularly held. This gives parents the chance to informally meet and talk and as a result to support each other. Parents appreciate that the school is helping their children to overcome their problems and several comment positively about the changes they have seen in their children.
32. Pupils and students are able to take part in high quality activities within the community. They regularly visit the nearby senior citizens home to sing and entertain the residents. Some older pupils also have work experience placements there. During the inspection a group of pupils sang carols at Worcester Cathedral supported by pupils from a local secondary school. In addition, there are opportunities to take part in residential visits, which pupils say they enjoy very much. The nearby area is used very well for visits linked to the curriculum and there is a good range of visitors to the school; this enriches the experiences pupils receive. All these events help pupils to gain in confidence and self-esteem.
33. The school is increasing its links with mainstream schools. While it is not yet involved in sharing expertise and resources on a regular basis with other schools, it has set up some mutually beneficial links. Pupils from other schools visit to take part in lessons or to use facilities such as the ball pool. The increasing link with a local first school is developing well, with pupils from both schools benefiting. For example, during a physical education lesson for younger pupils at Pitcheroak, it was impossible to distinguish between the groups because they integrated so well. Observations of pupils at the first school showed the pupils from Pitcheroak joining in, socialising well and able to complete work set in a geography lesson. The range of links with other schools and colleges is very good for Years 10 and 11 and for Post 16 students. There is a very positive link with a local secondary school. Every week the oldest pupils and students with severe learning difficulties go to socialise with its Post 16 students; this makes a very good contribution to social development. They take part in joint performing arts projects and attend the local college to take vocational courses. Two teachers from Pitcheroak teach basic skills to pupils from Year 9 to 11 at this school once a week. This has led to the sharing of expertise and successful training links for literacy and numeracy. As a result, the links effectively meet the needs of all the pupils and students involved from both schools.
34. Work experience placements, wherever possible, are 'real' experiences, for instance at the local supermarket. Older pupils visit the local shops, some independently, to buy items for the common room or to sell in the school tuck shop, whilst a member of a local bank supports older pupils each week running the school bank. Pupils are well prepared for their next steps when they do leave school. This is because the school provides them with a very varied range of experiences that helps them become more confident, independent and sociable youngsters. The oldest pupils and students who are preparing to leave are able to visit and get to know the staff as well as the school, college or other placement they are moving to.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

Leadership and management of the school are good. The governors have a good overview of the school through their frequent visits. The effective leadership of the headteacher and other key staff, including key stage co-ordinators, has ensured that the school has continued to improve. Management is effective.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The headteacher has a very clear vision of the direction the school needs to take to ensure pupils achieve to the best of their ability.
- Although the local education authority is presently reviewing all special school provision this school has continued to be managed positively and in the best interests of pupils and students.
- All staff are committed to providing a wide range of opportunities for pupils and students in other schools and colleges.
- Data is collected and evaluated on the achievement of different groups of pupils but has not yet fully been acted upon with regard to raising the achievement of some pupils with autism.
- Governors support the school well.
- There are good arrangements for staff training but some recent training has not yet had a significant effect on day-to-day practice.

Commentary

35. There has been good improvement in the governance of the school since the last inspection. All statutory requirements are now met and governors have a good understanding of improvements that have been made, such as those in ICT and for Post 16 students, as well as their effect on pupils' learning. They know how the school functions through their regular monitoring visits, comprehensive reports from the headteacher and talks given by staff on subjects. Governors are now successfully involved in school improvement planning. They are closely involved in liaising with the local education authority about the longer-term view and proposed changes to the school. They monitor the budget well to make sure it is spent on the right priorities. Financial planning and administration are good and spending is closely monitored. As a result, the school has built up an appropriate amount of money to support it through the proposed changes.
36. The headteacher has worked hard to ensure that falling rolls, and proposals for the future of the school, have had minimal effect on pupils and on staff morale. She is very clear on the best way of working in the future, including extending outreach work. This she has done very well through self-review. As a result, all involved continue to initiate improvements. The school has achieved an impressive array of awards such as a leading aspect award for, among other things, lunchtime clubs, the latter being part of a positive response to behaviour concerns at the last inspection.
37. The senior management team, which includes the key stage co-ordinators, is effective. This shows improvement since the last inspection where roles were not clear. Subject management has also improved. Leadership and management of most subjects are good with co-ordinators constructing their own plans and monitoring subjects well. There is a comprehensive range of meetings, regularly held to ensure staff work effectively in teams to provide pupils with the best possible education. Minutes of senior management team meetings often reflect issues from departments. This makes staff feel valued and listened to. Senior staff are good role models for the positive management initiative to improve behaviour by showing respect for pupils and being non-confrontational.
38. There is a strong policy of inclusion within the school. Pupils and students are provided with a range of opportunities at all ages to experience education in other establishments. These links also benefit some pupils in a local first and secondary school. All staff work hard to make these links successful and they are suitably monitored to ensure pupils and students benefit both

socially and academically. When the school began to take in more pupils with autism they took the decision to integrate them with pupils with different needs from at least Year 7. However, the school has not yet been able to manage some of these younger pupils so that they are fully participating and achieving their best. The school had recognised this through its data collection on the performance of different groups and begun to act on this information. As a result, there has been some significant training in autism, signing, symbols, PECS and challenging behaviours this year. However, it is still too soon to see the full effect of this training.

39. Overall, the school has good procedures and arrangements for the induction of new staff and the continuing professional development of all staff. In recognition of this, the school has just successfully been re-assessed for Investor in People status. All teachers have targets, which are carefully linked to their own professional development and the priorities of the school improvement plan, set through the performance management process. Teaching assistants are subject to the school's own appraisal system and have good opportunities for training. Support staff are particularly encouraged to organise other activities like lunchtime clubs. .
40. School monitoring and evaluation have improved and are used to prioritise school improvement. There is a useful comprehensive school improvement plan which is constantly developed to reflect self-evaluation and the results of the data collection. Priorities come from a range of school issues and subject plans and are discussed by staff and governors.

Financial information

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1442078
Total expenditure	1331996
Expenditure per pupil	8594

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	50052
Balance carried forward to the next	160134

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision for children of reception age is **satisfactory**.

41. Children's attainment on entry to school is well below average, particularly in language, mathematical and social skills. Although they do not attain the level expected in each area of learning by the end of reception, overall achievement is satisfactory. The school has very good induction arrangements to help children settle in quickly, and links with parents are very good. Leadership of the Foundation Stage is satisfactory and lesson planning is generally sound with some good examples in music and language.
42. There are six children in the Foundation Stage, the majority of whom are children with autism. The two children with moderate or severe learning difficulties are in a class with pupils in Year 1 and Year 2 and provision for them is good. The school has recognised the need to improve its provision for the children with autism, especially the classroom environment and the resources. However, ways of managing their learning and helping these children to communicate are sometimes inconsistent.
43. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, with some good and very good examples for children with moderate or severe learning difficulties. Children with autism make satisfactory progress towards their goals, while children with moderate or severe learning difficulties make good progress.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision for personal, social and emotional development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children's achievement is good and they develop positive attitudes to work.
- Children are given many opportunities to experience working together.
- Teachers insist on good standards of behaviour and this aids learning.

Commentary

44. All children achieve well in relation to their prior attainment because the quality of teaching is good. For most of the time, teachers' effective behaviour management skills ensure children concentrate on tasks and begin to understand the difference between right and wrong. Although they find it hard to work together, children are beginning to recognise each other's achievements and celebrate by clapping. They sit together during snack time, wait their turn quietly and choose their snack, often using pictures, symbols and gestures. They listen and respond to greetings during registration. Secure routines are established and this enables children to feel safe. They are encouraged to recognise the needs of others. This is an area that they struggle with, but are making good gains in understanding that they cannot always have what they want when they want it. Teachers sensitively give them reassuring explanations as to why this is the case. This aids children's confidence considerably because they know that they are valued by staff.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Provision for communication, language and literacy is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are some good opportunities provided to support children's speaking and listening skills.
- Symbols and other visual prompts are not used effectively enough to help children with autism know the order of events.
- The use of sign and speech to develop the language skills of children who are not autistic is very good.
- Interest and enjoyment of books are promoted well.

Commentary

45. The achievement of children is satisfactory overall in all aspects of communication. However, although teaching is also satisfactory, teachers and teaching assistants provide good opportunities for children with severe and moderate learning difficulties to speak and acquire new vocabulary. Signing is used well for particular lessons to confirm understanding and to reinforce vocabulary and meaning. The very good support given by the sign co-ordinator to develop articulation skills and signing and listening skills is very good and children progress well. For example, children are so enthusiastic that they persist with their work on blowing feathers while attempting to say 'sh'. Children with autism use picture clues well to communicate their physical needs, but do not always choose to do so. This is because symbols and PECS are not used often enough to remind these children what to do next and to reinforce their importance as a communication aid. As a result children sometimes miss valuable learning opportunities.
46. Children in both classes make satisfactory progress in reading. They learn to turn pages of books and listen to a taped story of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*. Children with autism take off 'velcro' items from the book and replace them correctly. They recognise an increasing number of picture symbols, but do not yet read books. Children with moderate and severe learning difficulties follow similar lesson plans and begin to associate print with a story. Teaching assistants and teachers present books well and children are well motivated and eager to learn. Children's progress in writing is satisfactory. Although writing is at an early stage, children enthusiastically make marks on paper and patterns in sand.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in mathematical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teachers use a range of strategies to keep children on task when reinforcing number skills.
- Children achieve well due to good teaching.

Commentary

47. Teachers use a variety of effective strategies to keep children interested, such as singing number rhymes and using a washing line to display the order of numbers up to five. Throughout the day teachers take every opportunity to build counting and matching activities into lessons. Good use is made of stories, such as *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, which places learning of mathematical language in an exciting context. Children match numbers and colours and make good improvement in their understanding of the basic ideas of numbers. Children with severe learning difficulties make good gains in developing their vocabulary of time. They sequence events when they order the days of the week and match familiar events on the timetable.

Children with autism learn to count using an abacus and concentrate well when completing number jigsaws.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Provision in knowledge and understanding of the world is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children have good attitudes to learning and are curious about their surroundings.
- Teachers effectively encourage children to participate in all activities.

Commentary

48. Children's achievement is satisfactory. However, they are keen and curious about their surroundings and very quick to explore activities given to them. Staff provide only satisfactory opportunities for children to develop their knowledge of the world. However, ICT is used effectively. Children with autism use the mouse well to match shapes and to place ears, eyes and legs onto animals. Most concentrate well, enjoy the tasks and are keen to use the computer. They are encouraged to explore the simple devices that use electricity and know that switches can be switched on and off to make a light or buzzer work. They are given good opportunities to have hands-on experiences within a reasonable range of activities and resources, which they enjoy, concentrating well. When purposefully involved in the activities provided for them, children develop good attitudes to learning. However, when not directly supervised, they sometimes lose interest. Children with severe learning difficulties work on the five senses, enjoying sniffing scents to see if they are different.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Provision in physical development is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Children gain in confidence when using equipment because they are well supported by staff.
- Teachers plan lessons so that children quickly learn physical skills.

Commentary

49. Children often enter the school with poor co-ordination skills. Their achievement is good because of the good teaching that recognises this. Teachers carefully plan physical activities to meet their individual needs. They ensure appropriate reinforcement is used to check skills have been learnt. Children learn quickly and effectively because a range of good methods is used to develop their physical skills. For example, teachers use prompts to guide children around equipment so that they feel safe and secure. They encourage them to 'have a go' and model how to use apparatus correctly. As a result, children respond well, climbing, balancing and swinging. They move with confidence and jump off the apparatus correctly. Children's senses are further stimulated by music, to which they react very well. They copy dance movements to a rhythm and choose their own movements. They use outdoor equipment well at break and lunchtime for unstructured play.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

Provision in creative development is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Resources are inadequate to support children's learning.

Commentary

50. Teaching is satisfactory and teachers intervene appropriately in children's learning, helping them, for example, to engage in role-play. This ensures that children's achievements are satisfactory overall, but could be better with access to a wider range of activities. Some opportunities are provided such as blowing bubbles, putting together a fabric collage and making pizzas, which children enjoy. They draw leaves, extending the activity by painting and printing them. Music is well used in a range of lessons and is greatly enjoyed. However, there is a lack of other resources to successfully stimulate the children's senses, especially for those children with more complex needs, and not enough opportunities are provided for imaginative play.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 1 TO 4, AND POST 16

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievements are good overall except those in Years 3 to 6 where they are satisfactory.
- Teaching and learning are good and often very good for older pupils.
- Pupils' reading difficulties, particularly in Year 3 to 6, need greater analysis to improve achievement.
- The use of additional communication strategies is not developed well enough for younger pupils who need them.

Commentary

51. Pupils' achievement in listening and speaking is good overall due to the many opportunities to reinforce this given to pupils across the curriculum. By the end of Year 2, pupils make good progress in understanding and responding to what is being said. Their knowledge of everyday language improves steadily. They begin to answer simple questions, use signs, listen carefully to the teacher and watch for information. This is because they are often supported by the sign co-ordinator who is highly skilled and works with groups of pupils, improving their communication skills. This makes a significant contribution to their achievement and they begin to make their needs known through speech, sign and gesture.

52. In Years 3 to 6, pupils continue to make progress, but at a slightly slower rate. This is because sign and symbol systems are not used often enough to prompt pupils' understanding, or to make their needs known. Although the gradual training of staff by the sign co-ordinator has helped staff improve their signing, there is no clear definition of how signs, symbols and other additional means of communication should be used to best effect. This is particularly so for the younger pupils with autism now entering the school.

53. By the time they are in Year 9, all groups of pupils effectively improve their ability to listen and respond to speech. Higher attaining pupils answer questions readily and discuss their work with a partner. They improve their vocabulary and their ability to express feelings. In Years 10 and 11, pupils' achievement is sometimes very good because it is supported by very effective teaching and a good range of relevant tasks. Post 16 students present information about what they have done several days before, and hold short conversations.
54. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 make good progress and achieve well in reading when responding to relevant books which are accompanied by spoken and signed language. Pupils have reading journals and books to take home and so teachers and parents are well aware of what pupils read and what they know. By the time they reach the end of Year 6, pupils recognise rhyming words and poetry. Higher attaining pupils count the syllables in words and increase their ability to discriminate between different sounds. While some pupils make good progress, other pupils do not have enough strategies to extract the information from printed words and pictures in front of them. This is because opportunities are missed for analysing the difficulties pupils have in reading, particularly in Years 3 to 6. Most reading assessments are descriptive and do not show what pupils know. This makes it difficult for teachers to be sure of the next steps they need to take. Some books for junior age pupils are also repeated so they do not always widen their reading vocabulary. However, apart from these aspects of reading, teachers use assessment well and systematically to make sure that they know what pupils have learnt.
55. For secondary age pupils and Post 16 students, achievement is good in response to the varied, interesting and age-appropriate texts on offer. For example, although pupils were tired after swimming, they were quickly engaged in a lesson on sequencing, and concentrated until the end.
56. The difficulties many pupils have sequencing and drawing make writing especially difficult for them. However, they make good progress because teachers are aware of this and plan accordingly. Pupils in Years 1 and 2 begin to form letters with support and make marks on paper independently. By the end of Year 6, pupils make good progress in letter formation and write simple sentences. Older pupils write in short paragraphs and use ICT effectively to word-process their work. By Year 9, pupils of all abilities discuss and amend their work as necessary.
57. Very good teaching and well-prepared lessons for older pupils ensure they have a good idea of the purpose of the lesson and what they are to do next. Year 11 pupils search text to look for answers and write and re-draft their work as necessary. They use writing frames and write in simple sentences. In the Post 16 department, students continue to extend and develop their writing skills at a good rate.
58. Good teaching overall is supported by very good relationships between adults, pupils and students. These aid learning and over time ensure pupils achieve well. While primary age pupils have access to a wide range of opportunities, activities are not always appropriate to their ages and interests. The new subject co-ordinator has made a good start to her leadership and management role and has already identified this as a priority for development. In the secondary and Post 16 provision the curriculum is good. This is because the school has introduced and implemented accreditation and a syllabus since the last inspection. This has proved very effective in moving the work on and giving teachers very clear guidance. Improvement since the previous inspection is satisfactory with the library being developed into an attractive room for pupils to work in.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

59. Pupils make good progress in the use of language in other curriculum areas. Teachers use every opportunity to develop pupils' understanding of speaking and listening, in particular in subjects such as French, PSHE and citizenship, while in science key words are used.

Presentations round the school are clearly labelled, easy to read and set a good example of the purpose of writing and pictorial information.

French

Provision in French is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching is very good and the strong emphasis on speaking and responding gives pupils the confidence to speak in French.
- Teachers who are not subject specialists are supported well by the subject leader.

Commentary

60. French is taught to pupils from Year 7 to 11 and their achievement is very good. This is because teachers provide a wide range of practical activities, supported by symbols to help reinforce learning. Throughout lessons, pupils of all abilities are involved and keen to learn. Very good relationships between pupils and staff mean that pupils enjoy and look forward to lessons. A wide variety of high quality resources, such as games, are used which appeal to pupils
61. French is spoken as much as possible by teachers so pupils become familiar with the language and feel confident to practise their vocabulary during lessons. As a result they steadily acquire an understanding of simple sentences and commands. For example, in Year 7, this consists of pupils beginning to ask simple questions and answer with a few words, or with a picture, when completing work on classroom items. By Year 9, pupils practice more complex sentences where they talk about which day of the week a certain lesson is on. Some pupils also have the opportunity to complete accreditation through ASDAN and Year 10 pupils run a French café as part of this course. By Year 11, pupils work on a rap in French about Dracula that they perform confidently to others.
62. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. There is now an experienced co-ordinator who leads and manages the subject well, supporting other staff when needed. There is a wide range of resources such as games, tapes and videos and these help teachers who are not specialists. As yet there is little formal assessment, except through ASDAN, although some moderation has taken place. All pupils are encouraged to enjoy French through other activities such as the Bastille Day, held every year.

MATHEMATICS

Provision in mathematics is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has been effective in raising achievement.
- The achievement of pupils is good overall and very good for those in Year 10 and 11.
- Leadership and management are good, with the co-ordinator identifying the right priorities for improvement.
- Ways of ensuring teachers assess work are in place but judgements are not always consistent.

Commentary

63. In mathematics, achievement is very good in Years 10 and 11 due to a well-structured programme of practical activities and expectations of what pupils will learn being clearly communicated in lessons. It is good in all other years because of the effective implementation of

the National Numeracy Strategy and good staff training. For example, pupils' attainment in number is consistently strong throughout the school. By Year 6, some higher attaining pupils read and write numbers to 10 and count confidently to 100. Some lower attaining pupils join in together counting to five and demonstrate an understanding of the idea of 'more' or 'fewer'. By Year 11, some pupils show an understanding of place value up to 1000 and use mathematical names for common two- and three-dimensional shapes as well as describing their properties. Pupils who attain at lower levels are able to add one to, or take one away from, a number of objects, and recognise simple patterns.

64. The implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy in Years 1 to 9 has given staff confidence to plan work that is challenging for pupils and extends learning. Resources are varied and appropriate to pupils' ages and needs and teaching assistants skilfully support their learning. Mental work, where pupils listen to and answer mathematical problems without writing them down, is a particularly strong feature. Teachers effectively use learning objectives from the earlier National Curriculum years within their numeracy teaching. As a consequence, the lessons are well planned and relevant. Sometimes, the full breadth and range of the mathematical programmes of study are restricted, specifically in relation to handling data. However, mathematics teaching throughout the school is good and pupils and students learn well. This is due to the very good knowledge staff have of pupils' individual needs. This includes younger pupils with autism; however, staff occasionally find it difficult to make sure these pupils are focused all the time and get the most out of the subject.
65. In Years 10 and 11, the very good use of ASDAN enables all pupils to achieve accreditation, with nine out of ten higher attaining pupils gaining Entry Level mathematics last year. The ASDAN Pathways to Independence provides a good framework for students' learning at Post 16. From Year 10, there are good opportunities for pupils to practise their number skills in 'real life' activities. For example, older pupils are closely involved in running the school bank on a weekly basis and in Post 16 some students have mathematics targets related to using money in vending machines.
66. Since the previous inspection there has been satisfactory improvement in assessment. Staff knowledge of the assessment process and their subsequent confidence has increased. There is now a systematic approach using P Scale and National Curriculum level information. All pupils have a mathematics target based on previous assessment and there is a clear link with subsequent teaching and learning. Although work has begun to be compared against that of similar pupils, both in school and with a similar school, there are still too few opportunities to do this. As a result, consistency of judgements is variable.
67. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory; however, a strong lead has been taken in developing the provision for mathematics. This includes staff training, liaison with governors and outside agencies and reorganising the relevant resources, which are good. The approach has been strongly evaluative, involving a subject audit and a range of monitoring strategies. Much has been done to check what does and does not work. This has resulted in a clear vision for improvement and management of the subject.

Mathematics across the curriculum

68. Teachers provide good ways of developing pupils' mathematical skills in other subjects. Work in science with older students includes the use of graphs and indexes, and in history pupils are developing a sense of chronology. In careers, students are given calculators to work out how much they would earn in a working week. For younger pupils, ICT is used to reinforce number and sequencing, whilst in music they sing songs such as 'Ten green bottles' and count the beats of the drum.

SCIENCE

Provision in science is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Teaching and learning for pupils up to Year 9 is good and for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is very good and this ensures pupils achieve well overall during their time in school.
- Planning of lessons is very good and pupils are motivated by the practical activities.
- The wide range of ability means tasks are not always appropriate for pupils with more complex needs, particularly those with autism.
- The new subject co-ordinator has very good subject knowledge.

Commentary

69. Good teaching means that pupils get off to a good start in science. Teaching continues to enthuse pupils as they move through the school. High expectations mean that pupils stay on task and remain motivated. Pupils up to Year 2 are introduced to simple investigations using their senses of smell, touch and hearing. The well-planned and interesting lessons ensure they are very involved and make good progress. Most name parts of their body; for example, one boy says he listens with his ears and eats with his mouth. They have fun during practical lessons sniffing covered jars to say whether they like a smell or not. By the time they are in Year 6, pupils are making good progress in understanding and anticipating which objects conduct electricity. They show great delight when they complete a circuit to make a light work. The supportive adults ensure pupils are developing good skills of working and learning together.
70. By the end of Year 9, pupils respond to the interesting teaching when reasoning and working out experiments in order to understand how long and short sounds are made. Teaching assistants work effectively with teachers, questioning and prompting pupils so they progress in their learning. Previous work shows good attention to writing out experiments and acquiring a science vocabulary. The very good attention to sensible behaviour ensures pupils listen in order to carry out a safe experiment. They work and solve problems together, such as how to clean rock salt and separate materials. Where, on occasions, a lesson lacks structure, this is because there is little subject expertise, tasks are not appropriate to all abilities and behaviour targets are not followed. There are then missed opportunities for learning. This is especially so for pupils with autism.
71. Although achievement is good, it is most effective for older pupils and students when the co-ordinator teaches the whole year group. This is because teaching is most successful where pupils and students are taught by a specialist whose confident subject knowledge means pupils have access to a wide range of activities. It also ensures they have an understanding of safety and why they should behave well. Experiments are introduced and demonstrated well so pupils know what is expected of them. For example, Year 11 pupils responded well to the excellent organisation and clear instructions given to complete, and evaluate, their experiments when comparing the advantage of burning different fuels as they complete modules of accreditation. In one lesson, they helped each other to read and record the temperatures as well as working out the differences.
72. This well thought out approach to teaching, where pupils are clear what they need to learn, is successful with most pupils and students. This makes sure Post 16 students continue to make good progress. The excellent use of correct terms and resources in order to build on previous learning supports Post 16 students in biology studies where they make good progress to understand and sensibly name the different parts of the human anatomy. The modules of work contribute well to the ASDAN units of work. As a result, although provision is good overall, the combination of teaching by a specialist teacher and the use of a well equipped science room means that provision for older pupils and students is very good.

73. There has been very good progress in the quality of teaching, the curriculum and accommodation since the last inspection. There is very good leadership and management from the new co-ordinator who is beginning to have an overview of teacher planning and assessment of young pupils. Work is marked with relevant comments to support learning. Accreditation for older pupils and students provides a secure learning structure for work. The new science area, equipped for experiments, provides a good, safe working space for the large classes.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- All pupils and students in Years 5 to 13 achieve well and the higher attaining pupils in Years 7 to 11 achieve very well.
- Teaching and learning are good and motivate pupils to work hard.
- Leadership and management are good and have successfully contributed to improving the subject.

Commentary

74. Pupils and students achieve well overall because of the big improvement in training of all staff since the previous inspection. This has resulted in staff being more confident in their understanding of the subject. This is particularly true of those teachers who teach Years 5 to 13 where effective teaching ensures pupils consistently achieve well and enjoy the subject. Teaching in lessons taken by those teachers who are specialists is very good. This is because they have very good knowledge of the subject and are very skilled at meeting the needs of all pupils well. They are particularly successful in challenging the older higher attaining pupils. For younger primary age pupils, teaching is at least satisfactory and improving as staff become more confident in their skills.
75. All lessons are characterised by clear, high expectations of work and behaviour and good use of additional adults to support individual pupils, particularly those with the most severe learning difficulties. In the best lessons, there are very high levels of pupils' interest and involvement and the sense that learning about ICT is fun. All pupils have folders on the computers in which they save their ongoing work. Teachers use this evidence and pupils' responses to assess their learning. Pupils generally have good mouse and keyboard skills and a good understanding of how to carry out key tasks such as logging on and off, opening programs and navigating menus. They work purposefully at all times, concentrating very well on their work.
76. Improvement since the last inspection, when ICT was unsatisfactory, is very good. There have been considerable developments in many aspects of the subject, including teaching and learning, leadership, accommodation and learning resources. At the time of the previous inspection, there was little teaching of the subject itself or use of it to enhance learning in other subjects. Information and communication technology skills are taught well to most of the pupils in the ICT room. The good leadership and management have resulted in clear guidelines for teachers' planning and assessment. Lessons have been observed to identify good practice as a model for others. Senior staff have carried out further observations as part of a focus on the progress of pupils in Years 7 to 9. Examination of teachers' planning and pupils' work shows that the curriculum is now good and that there are effective procedures to record and evaluate pupils' achievements. Resources are much improved, with pupils and students being highly motivated when working in the ICT room.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

77. The use of ICT to support pupils' learning across the curriculum is satisfactory overall. However, this is improving and good examples were seen of work from other subjects being completed in the ICT room. Work often involves pupils typing and changing text for a range of purposes, including electronic mail, writing stories, letters and poems and designing posters, menus and invitations. This work is successful in reinforcing and consolidating the key skills of both literacy and ICT of the higher attaining pupils from Year 7 to Year 13. There is less evidence of such links between ICT and numeracy but some examples were seen of the use of computers to input and analyse data in several year groups and to reinforce the basic number skills of the Post 16 students. Work carried out in the ICT suite and the classrooms contributes satisfactorily to pupils' designing skills and links well with art and design and design and technology. Pupils use computers to support their work in other subjects, including accessing the Internet for research and in musical activities.

HUMANITIES

Geography

78. Only one lesson was seen in this area of the school's work and so no judgements can be made about overall provision. The subject is taught in modules alternating with history and is planned to have a more significant role during the next two terms. There is some evidence of appropriate geography teaching in displays on improving the environment and through assessment. In the one lesson observed with a group of pupils with autism, teaching and learning were satisfactory. It centred on the activity of the previous week and pupils were able to identify retail outlets such as the pharmacy. Department documentation and schemes of work are good.

History

Provision in history is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievement is good because staff work well together.
- Good use is made of artefacts to keep pupils motivated.

Commentary

79. Pupils achieve well because teachers have sufficient knowledge and understanding of both the subject and the special educational needs of pupils to effectively plan lessons with teaching assistants. Staff work hard together to make the subject practical and interesting and pupils make good gains.

80. Teaching and learning are consistently good for pupils up to Year 9. No teaching was seen in Years 10 and 11 although there are opportunities to complete work as part of external awards and certificates. The effective use of very practical resources, such as artefacts, helps pupils successfully compare and contrast old and new. For example, in a very well planned lesson for Year 5 pupils on schools in Victorian Britain, good use was made of a range of Victorian artefacts. These intrigued and interested the pupils, helping them to clearly see differences between schools of that period and those of today. In a lesson for Year 6 pupils, good planning and imaginative use of Tudor costumes assisted them in understanding how clothing has changed, often for the better. The use by teachers of a range of information using documents, video and pictures assisted pupils in Year 8 to understand the enormity of the Black Death. Pupils here related what happened in the past to present-day practice.

81. Since the time of the last inspection there has been good improvement in the quality of planning to ensure that all pupils have access to learning. There has also been good progress in checking what the pupils know, understand and can do. Leadership and management are good. This is because the newly appointed subject co-ordinator is a humanities specialist and is already monitoring schemes of work and supporting non-specialist staff. There is a good work sampling programme so staff can evaluate pupils' progress.

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Very good subject knowledge and a good overview of the school provision by the co-ordinator ensure there is effective learning.
- The scheme of work is thorough and linked well to the agreed syllabus.
- Good use is made of the community for visits to places of worship.

Commentary

82. Religious education is linked effectively to festivals throughout the year to illustrate the differences and similarities and how people throughout the world celebrate. Pupils are encouraged to participate by the good use of artefacts, the multicultural workshop and visits to local places of worship. There are very good elements of multicultural celebrations and festivals. This was illustrated well in a letter to parents to explain that pupils may have staining on their hands when taking part in a Hindu workshop.
83. A strong improvement since the last inspection is that religious education is now taught effectively in all classes. This is clearly shown in the responses of pupils and students during lessons. Pupils in Year 2 make good progress in understanding how to convey a message to someone they love. This is achieved with good planning and clear explanation to encourage speaking, listening and writing skills. These help pupils to express their ideas and understand about a celebration by creating their own message on a Christmas card. They follow the Christmas story well with the teacher's explanation about a very special message from 'God'.
84. For older pupils and students, provision is very good. The very good religious content of a lesson for Year 11 pupils built well on their previous knowledge in order to ensure that they understood Advent in relation to the church. As the lesson was so interesting, the pupils increased their understanding of traditions. This was effectively supported by a sequence of photographs which reminded pupils about the visit of a local vicar who came to talk to them. Pupils and students at Post 16 learn well because there is a very good curriculum, matched to their needs. Excellent teaching of Year 13 students created an atmosphere in which they had a spiritual time for reflection and where everyone was silent as they watched the candle flicker in the darkness.
85. The subject is well led and managed and this has given staff a great deal of support and confidence when planning lessons. A good scheme of work that follows the agreed syllabus matches pupils' and students' needs well. This underpins the very good contribution to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development the subject makes.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

86. Insufficient evidence was available to make judgements on the overall provision for design and technology, on pupils' achievement, and on the quality of teaching and learning. Three lessons were observed, however, and the teaching and learning in these were good. Planning shows that, overall, there is a good balance between designing, making and evaluating. Staff who teach the subject in the secondary department have good subject knowledge and plan together effectively for textiles, food technology and resistant materials. By contrast, teachers in the primary department plan and teach the aspects of the subject separately. Although there is a leader for food technology and a temporary co-ordinator for textiles, with no co-ordinator over the whole of the provision the subject lacks some coherence.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is very good and enthuses pupils well.
- Formal assessment of pupils' attainment is not yet systematically recorded.

Commentary

87. In the lessons seen and in work on display, pupils' progress and achievement are very good. They develop a wide range of artistic skills and use a variety of materials and processes. Pupils in Year 2 worked hard to complete a weaving of Elmer the Patchwork elephant. Year 8 pupils have spent time producing a range of portraits reflecting Picasso's blue period. In the art room, Post 16 students have used skills previously learned to produce clay dishes and papier-mâché heads.
88. Very good teaching by teachers who know the subject well motivates pupils. They are eager to undertake activities, often working independently or collaboratively. This is due to the clearly prepared lessons and effective use of visual cues and appropriate language. This prompts pupils' thinking and helps them concentrate. The curriculum is enhanced by visiting artists and pupils have opportunities to attend local art exhibitions, such as at Bordesley Abbey and Worcester Cathedral.
89. Since the last inspection there has been improved reporting of what pupils know, understand and can do. However, there is not yet a consistent link between assessment and activities planned for pupils. This means that not all skills gained are formally recorded. However, teachers know their pupils well and plan further work effectively.
90. Leadership and management are good and the new subject leadership has already established priorities for the subject's development. This is despite the fact that the subject has been maintained at the same high standard since the last inspection. Effective monitoring and evaluation are undertaken and as a result discussions are held with other staff teaching the subject to raise standards. For pupils from Year 10, modules from ASDAN courses are providing art coverage which is appropriate to their age and interests.

Music

Provision for music is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils' achievements are good, particularly in singing.
- Good teaching gives pupils the confidence to perform well.
- There is a well-planned curriculum which supports learning.

Commentary

91. Pupils' achievements in music are good because it is taught well. Lessons are well planned so that there is plenty of work for pupils to do, built carefully on previous knowledge. The pace of teaching is good, and sometimes very good, with teachers using resources very well. Teaching assistants work very effectively as a team to enable pupils to take part in activities. Lesson planning includes a good range of work, so that pupils have good opportunities to listen, perform and learn some new information. Teachers keep pupils very busy with no gaps in activities, and this helps them to concentrate and learn well. As a result, pupils are very eager to learn, and are confident performers and attentive listeners. They take pride in their work. This was especially apparent when the choir sang songs from different countries and Christmas music.
92. Pupils enjoy the subject and they sing particularly well in groups. By the time they are in Year 2, most pupils sing with a good sense of rhythm and pitch, and are beginning to become aware of differences in dynamics. These skills develop steadily in Years 3 to 11. Lively teaching challenges, reinforces and extends pupils' knowledge and experience. For example, in Year 1 and 2, they signed and sang 'Good morning Mr Sun' with delight and they responded quickly and eagerly to the teacher's instructions and to musical prompts. In a Year 4 lesson, pupils' attention to instructions was maintained for 30 minutes. They showed their ability to note and respond to crescendo and diminuendo in the Aboriginal song 'Sunrise', and kept a good sense of rhythm. Pupils play tuned percussion instruments well and treated them with respect. Secondary age pupils continue to develop skills in singing, follow rhythms of increasing complexity and extend their musical knowledge.
93. There is a well-planned curriculum. This helps teachers to present a balanced and consistent programme of work to improve pupils' achievements, although assessment is still being developed. Music from other cultures is an essential and valued part of pupils' musical education. There is provision for composition and ICT. However, progress in these aspects is limited. This is because there is a lack of dedicated accommodation and of software and keyboards. The school has good links with a local specialist arts college and this adds to the good range of activities for older pupils.
94. Subject leadership and management are effective. As a result, pupils and students thoroughly enjoy music and become confident performers in front of audiences whom they may not know. Improvement since the previous inspection is good and there is a clear vision for extending the curriculum and developing the use of ICT in the subject. Under this leadership there is a strong commitment to performance and to the value of music in the school.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

The provision for physical education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school has achieved the Sports Mark award.
- There is a wide range of activities offered which effectively motivates pupils and students and supports their learning.
- The recent involvement with Physical Education, Schools, Sport and Club Links [PESSCL] has helped raise pupil achievement.

Commentary

95. Achievement in physical education, particularly gymnastics in school, is satisfactory. However, there is a range of very comprehensive activities taken by instructors, often off the school premises. These support pupils' skills and physical development and give opportunities to play competitive games. This means that pupils achieve well overall in gaining sporting skills, and in recognition of this the school has achieved a Sports Mark award. Secure climbing and play resources in the playground for young pupils encourage them to explore and develop skills and confidence.
96. While teaching by school staff is satisfactory, the use of instructors effectively widens the variety of experiences for pupils. For example, pupils in Year 1 and 2 responded with enjoyment to the instructor of Asian dance. They dressed in beautiful costumes and danced creatively together. They seemed to feel the rhythm of the strong music following finger and hand movements while responding to the very expressive instructor. Pupils with more complex needs responded particularly well.
97. For other pupils there are opportunities to work with pupils from a local primary school who join them for gymnastics. These pupils enjoyed a good noisy activity with Year 3 pupils at Pitcheroak as they warmed up before a lesson in which they experimented by balancing, climbing and swinging on the apparatus.
98. A local stadium is used well to promote competitive sports and fitness. Pupils in Year 9 make good progress in dribbling a ball, passing and scoring when playing team games. The way that lessons are structured creates a competitive atmosphere where decisions by the referee are accepted and enthusiasm is evident when a goal is scored. During gymnastics, for older pupils, they climb wall bars, jump on the trampette and balance along benches with support. However, in some of these lessons there is insufficient structure. Skills are not always taught in an order that enables pupils to refine skills, and this sometimes results in unsatisfactory learning.
99. Instructors and sports contacts add an exciting dimension to pupils' learning and experiences, such as Bangra dancing, ballet, sailing, football and hockey. Lunchtime dance and sports activities are encouraging pupils to make choices and to use their leisure time effectively. Success is celebrated during assemblies where pupils show their awards for taking part in the Special Olympics and dance performance. The involvement in the PESSCL project is providing a very good opportunity to promote personal and social education, citizenship and fitness and healthy eating awareness, as links and relationships develop with the community and other schools. Skills checklists and certificates are recorded well.
100. The subject is well led and managed. As a consequence, the curriculum is imaginative and pupils and students benefit, gaining skills that will help them stay fit. Comprehensive records show most pupils achieve well in water skills, distance awards and life saving. This was illustrated well at the local baths where pupils showed confidence and enjoyment in their swimming skills. The groups were very large. However, teaching assistants and teachers worked together with each specific group and pupils' achievement was good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve very well due to the emphasis put on personal development.
- Pupils and students study a range of topics suitable to their ages as they move through the school.

- Staff provide a range of very appropriate activities within lessons and throughout the day to support work in PSHE.

Commentary

101. In lessons, pupils achieve well in Years 1 to 6, and very well from Years 7 to 13. However, overall they achieve very well because of the varied activities provided throughout the day and because effective teaching in many lessons places a great emphasis on personal and social development. Activities such as lunchtime clubs, good eating routines, and the many opportunities given to pupils to practice independence, co-operation and turn taking, support PSHE very well, as do a range of appropriate visitors.
102. Activities in PSHE lessons are relevant, taught well and are very effectively matched to pupils' and students' ages. Skills are successfully developed and built on as pupils move through the school. Younger pupils in Years 1 and 2 progress in understanding about keeping safe while completing work on road safety and traffic lights. By Year 6 they demonstrate their understanding of looking after themselves during a lesson on 'What happens when I am ill?' Older pupils successfully build on this work. By Year 9 they have an understanding of keeping clean and healthy. They express thoughts and feelings while completing work on relationships. Older pupils and students achieve very well due to further support through high quality careers work, work experience, opportunities to go to college and citizenship lessons.
103. The subject is very well managed and led and this results in pupils and students experiencing activities relevant to their age and interests, helping them to gain valuable life skills. There is good attention to sex and drugs education. From Year 7 all pupils have opportunities to gain awards and certificates via ASDAN Key Steps and this aids their motivation and self-esteem. There is a very good understanding of the importance this subject plays in equipping pupils and students for life in the community as young adults.

Citizenship

Provision in citizenship is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Programmes of study are covered well.

Commentary

104. For primary aged pupils the relevant aspects of citizenship are appropriately covered through the PSHE programme. From Year 7 there are citizenship lessons which are based on ASDAN Key Steps. Achievement is good and students have the opportunity to reflect on a wide range of political, economic, social, moral and environmental issues. For example, some students discussed, and were balloted, as to their views on capital punishment, while other pupils have examined the power of advertising.
105. In the lessons seen, teaching and learning were good. Very effective, probing questioning was used to encourage pupils to really think and reflect on their personal views and the choices they make. Pupils of all abilities are fully involved in the lessons and staff use their excellent knowledge of individuals to ensure that the level of challenge is high.
106. Pupils and students are encouraged to take responsibility within the school and the local community, including an involvement in raising money for charities such as Children in Need. The school councils are well organised to enable pupils to express and explain their views.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

<i>Inspection judgement</i>	<i>Grade</i>
The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	3
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	3
Value for money provided by the school	3
Overall standards achieved	6
Pupils' achievement	3
Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	3
Attendance	4
Attitudes	3
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	3
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2
The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	4
How well the curriculum meets pupils' needs	3
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	3
Accommodation and resources	4
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	3
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	3
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	3
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	3
The quality of the school's links with the community	3
The school's links with other schools and colleges	3
The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	3
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	3
The effectiveness of management	3

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

