

INSPECTION REPORT

THE LINCOLN ST CHRISTOPHER'S SCHOOL

Lincoln

LEA area: Lincolnshire

Unique reference number: 120754

Headteacher: Derek Metcalfe

Lead inspector: Mike Kell

Dates of inspection: 15th – 18th September 2003

Inspection number: 259053

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Special (moderate learning difficulties)
School category: Community
Age range of pupils: 3 – 16
Gender of pupils: Mixed
Number on roll: 158

School address: Hykeham Road
Lincoln
Postcode: LN6 8AR

Telephone number: (01522) 528378
Fax number: (01522) 521110

Appropriate authority: The governing body
Name of chair of governors: Mr Barry Fippard

Date of previous inspection: 28th September – 2nd October 1998

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SCHOOL

Lincoln St Christopher's is much bigger than average for a school of this type, with 158 pupils on roll. The vast majority of pupils have moderate learning difficulties but the school does have on roll some pupils with autism and others with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Therefore, pupils' levels of attainment on entry to the school are below national expectations. There are approximately twice as many boys than girls and very few enter or leave the school other than at the usual times. All pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs except those who attend the nursery class whilst undergoing statutory assessment. The school has a wide socio-economic mix, in keeping with its intake from a wide geographical area. There are no pupils from ethnic backgrounds and none have English as an additional language. Some pupils attend some classes at local primary and secondary schools in order to extend their learning and to encourage their personal development. The school is also the base for staff who provide an outreach support service for pupils with autism who are not on its roll but who attend local primary and secondary schools and other special schools. Thirty pupils of all ages are currently supported in this way.

The school has received a number of awards in recent years. These include the Basic Skills Quality Mark, Healthy Schools Award, Investors in People, Schools Achievement Award, Basic Skills Secondary and Primary Awards, and the Career Mark.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Members of the inspection team			Subject responsibilities
13101	Mike Kell	Lead inspector	Religious education Personal, social and health education and citizenship
9327	Stuart Vincent	Lay inspector	
21267	Pamela Miller	Team inspector	English Design and technology Music
27826	Andrew Parsons	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Science French
3055	Clive Tombs	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology (ICT) Physical education
22948	Mary Vallis	Team inspector	Art and Design History Geography Special educational needs

The inspection contractor was:

Tribal PPI
Barley House
Oakfield Grove
Bristol
BS8 2BN

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

OVERALL EVALUATION

St. Christopher's is an **effective school** that is well led and managed. High quality teaching promotes pupils' learning well and they make good progress. The very good school ethos enables pupils to make substantial gains in all aspects of their personal development. The school provides **good value for money**.

The school's main strengths and weaknesses are:

- Good quality teaching enables pupils to achieve well.
- The promotion of very good personal development, behaviour and attitudes.
- Pupils with autism in local mainstream and special schools benefit greatly from the very high quality outreach support that the school provides.
- Links with the community and local schools and colleges enhance and extend pupils' learning.
- The oldest pupils are prepared very well for leaving school and going into further education or into employment.
- The very strong partnership with parents makes a significant contribution to pupils' learning.
- Features of assessment are unsatisfactory. Inconsistent practice does not give teachers enough information to plan future lessons or pupils with detail about how they can improve.
- Shortcomings in the quality of long, medium and short-term planning reflect some inadequacies of monitoring the curriculum by subject co-ordinators.

The school has made **satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection** even though this has been a difficult period when the school has faced extreme problems because of long-term staff illnesses. All members of the senior management team have been in an acting capacity for over a year. The provision for English and mathematics and the curriculum for pupils in Years 1 and 2 have improved well. Assessment procedures have not improved sufficiently. A new building programme is well under way and this will greatly improve the quality of accommodation.

STANDARDS ACHIEVED

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

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

Overall, in relation to their prior levels of attainment and capability, **pupils achieve well** and make good academic progress and **very good progress** in their **personal development**.

Boys and girls make similarly good progress and pupils with autism and other additional special needs achieve equally well. Children in the **Foundation Stage** and pupils in **Years 1 and 2** achieve **satisfactorily** because on occasion some pupils' behaviour, which is associated with their special educational need, inhibits learning. An increased range of accredited courses in Years 10 and 11 has introduced a level of challenge and helped to raise standards, and links with other schools enable the highest attaining pupils to extend the range of accredited courses they can follow.

Pupils display very high levels of commitment to learning and extra-curricular activities. The school's work in promoting pupils' **spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very successful**.

Attendance is satisfactory and broadly in line with similar schools nationally. **Relationships and behaviour are very good**. Pupils' **attitudes** to lessons and all other activities are **very impressive**. There are **very high quality relationships** between adults and pupils and between pupils themselves, reflecting the **very good ethos** in the school.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION

The school provides a good quality education for its pupils. Overall, there is **high quality teaching** across the school and pupils make good progress. Teachers are especially skilled at promoting pupils' speaking and listening skills and all adults are particularly effective at managing pupils, with very high expectations of behaviour.

Pupils' personal development is very well supported by procedures that encourage them to talk with adults they trust and through **very good** systems that offer them **support, advice and guidance**. Procedures for ensuring pupils' **care, welfare, and health and safety** are **excellent**.

There is a **very strong partnership** with **parents** and **very effective links** with the **community and local schools and colleges**. These links enable some pupils to extend their learning and social development through attending lessons in local mainstream schools. The school is **very effective** in providing an **outreach service** for supporting pupils with autism, and their teachers, in mainstream schools. The quality of the support is highly acclaimed by receiving schools.

The school offers a **satisfactory curriculum** overall. There are good learning opportunities for children in the Nursery, where every opportunity to assess what they can do is used and planning adjusted accordingly. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow a well-considered programme supported by an age-appropriate curriculum, including careers advice, work experience and courses at the local college. Accredited courses provide a framework for planning and assessment. However, generally planning does not identify what different groups of pupils might be expected to learn. This is because not all subject co-ordinators have informative long-term plans in place and they do not monitor colleagues' medium-term and daily planning routinely, consistently, and critically.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher and senior staff have **managed** the school **well** during a period of staffing uncertainty. The school is **well led** by the headteacher, who has a clear sense of purpose. The **governing body** performs its **statutory duties well** but it does not yet have procedures that enable it to formally monitor the work of the school and to evaluate the impact of its spending decisions.

PARENTS' AND PUPILS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

Parents regard the school extremely highly and are overwhelmingly supportive of what it achieves for their children in terms of their academic progress and personal development. **Pupils enjoy coming to school**, are appreciative of the support they receive and fully engaged in all that it offers.

IMPROVEMENTS NEEDED

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

- Develop the quality of curriculum planning at all levels.
- Identify learning outcomes for lessons and to share these with pupils.
- Enhance assessment procedures and to show pupils what they need to do in order to improve.

- Clarify and extend the role of subject co-ordinators to make them more effective.

PART B: COMMENTARY ON THE INSPECTION FINDINGS

STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS

Standards achieved in areas of learning, subjects and courses

Overall, in relation to their prior levels of attainment and capability, **pupils achieve well** and make good progress. Children in the **Foundation Stage** and pupils in **Years 1 and 2** achieve **satisfactorily**. Boys and girls make similarly good progress and pupils with autism and other additional special needs achieve equally well.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good teaching ensures that all children and pupils are included in the activities provided and learn well.
- Pupils achieve very well in their personal development.
- An increased range of accredited courses in Years 10 and 11 has been introduced.
- Links with other schools enable the highest attaining pupils to extend the range of accredited courses they can follow, including General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE).
- Opportunities to promote numeracy skills and the use of new technology to support learning across the curriculum are not yet included regularly in teachers' planning or practice. Literacy skills are developed well by other subjects.

Commentary

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

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

1. Pupils' good progress in subjects of the curriculum is due to the overall good quality teaching and adult support that is available across the school. Achievement in English is good and it is satisfactory in mathematics. This is a significant improvement on the findings from the last inspection when achievements were judged as unsatisfactory in both subjects. Even though children in the Foundation Stage and pupils in Years 1 and 2 are taught well, they achieve satisfactorily because on occasion the behaviour associated with their special educational needs interferes with their learning. Pupils' achievements are further enhanced when they go out into the community. Local schools, resources and facilities are used very effectively to extend and enrich learning and to meet the learning and social needs of individuals through the school's effective inclusion programme.
2. The school places great emphasis on pupils' personal development and this is evident in its ethos and all the work that it does. In addition, the good provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) provides more formal, planned opportunities to promote all aspects of personal development. The school uses these opportunities well. The youngest pupils are encouraged to develop their communication skills and confidence through activities like 'Circle Time' while the oldest ones have the maturity and self-esteem to consider their own strengths and weaknesses, work on the areas for development and use these skills on work experience placements.
3. The limited range of accredited courses in Years 10 and 11 was judged as a weakness during the previous inspection. The school has responded well and has extended these opportunities. It now offers Certificate of Educational Achievement Entry Level Awards (CoEA) in English, mathematics, science and art and design in addition to GCSE art and design and the Award

Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) at appropriate levels to meet pupils' age and needs; Bronze/Silver Challenge and Silver Awards. These courses provide increasing challenge and opportunities for pupils to receive recognition of their success. Higher attaining pupils can extend this range even further through links with other schools.

- Subjects such as physical education, French, geography and history provide opportunities for pupils to use and apply their mathematical skills in other subjects of the curriculum but generally planning does not identify opportunities when numeracy skills can be developed or reinforced. Similarly, some subjects, such as art and design and English, help to develop pupils' competence with new technology but overall the planned and progressive use of information and communication technology is not an integral element of teachers' planning of different subjects. Teachers provide extensive opportunities for pupils to improve all elements of communication and language and literacy skills.

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities

Attendance is **satisfactory** and broadly in line with similar schools nationally. **Relationships** and **behaviour** are **very good**. **Pupils** come to school willingly and display **very high levels of commitment** to learning and extra-curricular activities. The school's work in promoting pupils' **spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very successful**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The commitment of pupils to lessons and all other activities is very impressive.
- Standards of behaviour are very good.
- There are very high quality relationships between adults and pupils and between pupils themselves.
- There is very good provision for promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Commentary

Attendance in the last complete reporting year (%)

Authorised absence	
School data:	9.1%
National data:	8.4%

Unauthorised absence	
School data:	2.0%
National data:	2.4%

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

Ethnic background of pupils year

Categories used in the Annual School Census
White - British
White - Irish

Number of pupils on roll
156
2

Exclusions in the last school year

Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
14	0
0	0

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

- In lessons, pupils are very interested in learning and committed to succeeding. In many lessons their application and determination were judged to be excellent. They are keen to please their teachers, they enjoy their work and they achieve well as a result. Pupils themselves say that they learn something new every day. They also say that teachers make the lessons interesting and they particularly enjoy practical work, residential trips, visits and extra-curricular activities. During the inspection week, almost every pupil was involved in at least one of the various clubs available to them.

6. Standards of behaviour are very high. Respect and care for others are expected and pupils know that anything less is unacceptable. In the classroom and the playground, pupils work and play together in a very friendly manner. The school is an enjoyable place in which to work. Instances of poor behaviour are very rare and are disapproved of as much by other pupils as by the staff.
7. Relationships between pupils are a very great strength of the school. In lessons, they take pleasure from their own successes but also celebrate those of their classmates. They are increasingly able to work together and enjoy doing practical work together. At lunchtime, they sit together in 'family groups' and the dining room is quiet and relaxed. When pupils board their transport at the end of the day, the older pupils often help the younger ones and there is much talk of things that have happened during the day.
8. The school is very successful in promoting the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. All staff understand the importance of this and have identified how it can be done in all subjects of the curriculum. Moments of spirituality occur in discussions of religious beliefs, and in the emotions of music and art, although opportunities for this are missed in whole school acts of collective worship. Moral issues of war, invasion and conquest are discussed in history, and health education deals with life in the Third World compared with our own. Cultural experiences are provided in music, art and design and the school's own links with Uganda, and shared experiences of other cultures in projects with other schools.
9. The school promotes the social development of pupils quite outstandingly. Subjects of the curriculum give opportunities for role-play, collaboration and group work. In addition, subjects such as science, design and technology and physical education teach pupils how to work and play together, safely and with respect for rules and conventions. Residential visits have a particular learning focus, but always with the expectation that pupils will develop personal independence. Personal responsibility grows as pupils get older. They take on more work in the community, for example, organising the annual party for senior citizens. They are involved in their own career choices and preparing themselves for work experience. They work at 'Team Enterprise' when they create and run a small business. As a result of the school's efforts, by the time pupils leave school they are confident and mature young people.

QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED BY THE SCHOOL

The school provides a good quality education. Good teaching ensures that pupils achieve well. Pupils receive a satisfactory range of worthwhile curricular opportunities. The school has created a very strong partnership with parents. Community links are extensive and benefit pupils greatly. There are very strong links with other schools. The outreach service offered by the school to support pupils with autism in mainstream schools is very effective.

Teaching and learning

Pupils of all ages are **taught well** and lessons make a good contribution to pupils' personal development. Consequently, all **pupils learn well** and make good progress in developing new skills, knowledge and understanding. **Assessment** procedures are **unsatisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- High quality relationships underpin teachers' very high expectations of pupils' attitudes and behaviour.
- Teachers manage pupils extremely well.
- Learning support assistants make a significant contribution to pupils' learning.
- Pupils' communication skills are encouraged very well, particularly speaking and listening.
- Teachers use time effectively to promote pupils' personal development.
- Information from teachers' assessment of pupils' achievements is not always used to plan lessons to show clearly what individual pupils or groups of pupils are expected to learn by building on previous learning.

- Systems for assessing and recording pupils' achievements are inconsistently used throughout the school.
- Pupils are not sufficiently well involved in their own learning.

Commentary

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection in 74 lessons

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very poor
1 (1%)	12 (17%)	33 (44%)	28 (38%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	0 (0%)

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

10. The overall quality of teaching and learning is good and lessons have many strengths. However, occasionally plans do not consider in sufficient detail how individual pupils', and groups of pupils', needs are to be met or how tasks need to be modified based on detailed assessments of pupils' prior learning.
11. Pupils are very well managed and relationships are very good so that lessons are characterised by the quality of interactions, encouragement, rapport and good humour. Trust and mutual respect are evident throughout the school and there is an emphasis on 'listening to' and 'sharing with' others. Consequently, pupils' speaking and listening skills are promoted very well and they show developing maturity in expressing their own views and listening to those of others as they move through the school. Teachers' very effective use of questions is particularly influential in this respect as they are carefully worded to challenge individuals and others are given the opportunity to extend the detail of the answers provided. All of these features were evident in lesson when a class of 16 year olds discussed the concept of 'suffering' sensitively and maturely.
12. Teachers' high expectations of behaviour mean that pupils listen carefully to what they are asked to do and respond positively. As a result, they make a great deal of effort and approach tasks with very good interest and concentration. Skilled teachers with good subject knowledge provide many opportunities for their pupils to acquire subject-specific skills, knowledge and understanding. Because teachers are committed to developing pupils' personal qualities as well as their subject knowledge, these tasks frequently require pupils to work independently or collaboratively. Pupils research information independently, such as those in Year 8, who used reference books correctly to find out information about fuses in design and technology, and the Year 9 pupils, who explored the internet to find works of famous artists. Similarly, a careers lesson in Year 11 showed pupils working collaboratively as they considered their own strengths and weaknesses, and those of others, in preparation for work experience.
13. Lessons plans are of variable quality. The best planning identifies clearly tasks that have been carefully chosen to promote individual pupils' acquisition of new knowledge and understanding. The activities are founded in teachers' detailed information about pupils' prior learning and therefore lessons are very worthwhile experiences for all pupils, including those with autism and additional educational needs. At other times, plans do not provide this detailed information, such as the use of visual approaches that will help children with autism or the use of signs and symbols. However, on these occasions pupils still learn well because all adults know their pupils very well. Teachers and learning support assistants form highly effective teams and consequently they ensure that individual pupils consolidate and extend their learning. They are able to do this because they are very responsive to pupils' needs and changing moods and interest and therefore constantly adapt activities and approaches to maintain their concentration.

14. Although teachers and learning support assistants monitor pupils' work well in lessons and offer appropriate support, this information is not then always recorded and incorporated into future planning. However, this is not the case in the Foundation Stage. There, every opportunity to assess what the children can do is maximised and targets adjusted accordingly, and speech and language therapists play a valuable role in helping to plan for pupils with speech and language difficulties. There are better assessment procedures in Years 10 and 11, too, because pupils follow a number of accredited courses that have assessment processes built into them.
15. There is inconsistency in the way lessons are structured. Some teachers follow the pattern of a three-part lesson. An introduction that recaps on what pupils have done and learned previously is followed by a main teaching and practical middle part, and a plenary at the end. At these times, teachers begin lessons by sharing with pupils the aims of the lesson and what it is they hope pupils will learn. They end them by referring back to these aims to see how successful teaching and learning have been. This provides good opportunities for assessing pupils' achievements and for allowing pupils to celebrate their success by reflecting on what they have been doing and what they have learnt. When this format is not used, both these opportunities are missed.
16. Pupils are not sufficiently well informed about how they can improve. Their work is marked regularly but marking does not always explain what features of it they need to improve in order to get better. In addition, they are not involved in setting their own personal targets to the extent that they are not always aware of these targets. Pupils at St Christopher's are thoughtful, frequently articulate and need to know what it is that they are aiming for. They accept praise and sensitive suggestions for improvement modestly and with good grace, knowing that mistakes are a part of the learning process.
17. A computer-based system is used well to track small gains in literacy and numeracy so that targets are reviewed regularly and shared at well-attended parents' meetings. However, in other subjects, very little information is recorded. This means that staff new to the school cannot quickly identify the strengths and weakness of individual pupils and information is not instantly available to inform reviews and reports. Ensuring consistent but simple assessment systems within all subjects has not formed part of the co-ordinators' role and this is an area that needs developing.

The curriculum

The school provides a **satisfactory** range of worthwhile curricular opportunities. The quality of the curriculum in the **Foundation Stage** and in **Years 10 and 11** is **good**. Opportunities for enrichment of the curriculum through **extra-curricular provision** are **very good**. Aspects of the buildings, particularly the lack of specialist accommodation, have had an impact on learning but this is being addressed through an impressive new-build programme that is under way.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There is very good provision for pupils' personal and social development and health education.
- The oldest pupils have very good preparation for life after school.
- Planning of the curriculum and lessons in the Foundation Stage provides a good base for future learning.
- Pupils enjoy a good range of clubs and many activities in the arts and sport.
- Pupils' individual education plans focus on a limited range of skills.

Commentary

18. There has been good progress since the previous inspection in relation to the key issues relating to the curriculum. Provision for accredited courses and planning for teaching literacy skills have both improved well and pupils in Years 1 and 2 now have full access to the National Curriculum. Progress with planning for teaching numeracy skills is satisfactory.

19. The school's curriculum takes appropriate account of national guidance for children in the Foundation Stage, the National Curriculum for older pupils, and the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies for pupils in Years 1 to 9. Statutory requirements, including provision for religious education and collective worship, are met. All pupils, including those with additional special needs, benefit from the full range of the curriculum. Lunchtime clubs provide many well-planned opportunities in activities such as gardening, dance, art, football and recorder playing. Drama and musical performances, for example, in the Christmas production, further enrich pupils' experiences.
20. There has been good progress since the previous inspection in relation to the provision for accredited courses in Years 10 and 11. The range now includes a CoEA course in English, as well as courses for mathematics and science, and further ones are being introduced. Pupils also have very good opportunities to complete challenges through ASDAN that are planned to cover a wide range of subjects and the skills needed for adult life. Arrangements are in place with mainstream schools to enable pupils who have the capability to take GCSE courses, for example, in English, mathematics, and dance. College links give pupils valuable experiences of different vocational areas to help the planning of the next steps in their education.
21. "Circle Time" for the younger pupils is good preparation for their future work in PSHE. The programme for older pupils takes appropriate account of matters relating to sex education and relationships, as well as alcohol and drugs misuse and it is supported effectively by organisations such as St. John's Ambulance. The school's very successful Healthy Schools Award recognition has made a major impact on a number of subjects of the curriculum, as well as on school life. Pupils have opportunities to take part in residential visits and these make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development.
22. There are a good number of well-qualified teachers and support staff to allow the curriculum to be taught effectively, supported by good quality resources. Some aspects of the accommodation are inadequate and affect the quality of learning, such as the small size and location of the library and the quality of art and design and science facilities, but these are currently being addressed through a major building programme.

Care, guidance and support

There are **excellent care and welfare arrangements**. The **support** that pupils receive throughout their time in school is **very good**. The school could do more to ensure that pupils have a forum to share their views and contribute to the way it functions.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- There are excellent arrangements for child protection and pupil welfare generally.
- Health and safety arrangements are excellent.
- The quality of personal guidance, culminating in the very good opportunities for careers advice and work experience, prepares pupils very well for their lives beyond the school.
- Pupils do not have enough planned opportunities to express their views about their experiences in school.
- The changing facilities for the youngest children are not sufficiently private.

Commentary

23. The headteacher ensures that procedures for child protection are thorough and that staff are vigilant and trained regularly. Any concern about the well being of a child, however minor, is recorded and shared with parents and carers. All teachers are kept fully aware of pupils' physical and learning difficulties and this helps staff give them the very best care and consideration in the classroom and at other times. All adults have been extensively trained to handle medical emergencies which can arise from time to time. The school uses its many contacts in social services, school medical services, agencies and support groups dealing with drug abuse and aspects of autism to create a comprehensive network of care. This often extends beyond school and into the home. The PSHE curriculum also contributes very

effectively to the welfare of the pupils, dealing with sex education, drugs awareness, good health and the environment. The school has achieved the Healthy Schools Award.

24. The management of health and safety is exemplary. There is a standing committee, which includes the site manager, to co-ordinate responsibilities within the school. These are properly defined and all the routines of classroom safety, fire drills, first aid and medicines are dealt with consistently. There are regular site risk assessments and these are also undertaken before educational visits. There are daily site inspections and comprehensive records maintained. However, the changing facilities for the youngest children are insufficiently private and need to be improved.
25. Each pupil is valued as an individual and adults understand their problems as well as their aspirations. Pupils speak highly of their teachers and all adults and know that they are there to help them. This is evident in the trust and respect seen in the easy and confident way in which adults and pupils talk to each other. Adults provide exemplary role models. When asked, pupils are confident that if they have worries or concerns they will always be listened to and helped. There is a shared determination to ensure that every pupil is helped to develop and achieve their full potential, regardless of the difficulties which many of them face.
26. Even though there are shortcomings in the way pupils' achievements are assessed formally, they still receive very effective support for their learning and personal development because adults know them so well. Induction routines ensure that pupils joining the school settle well and make new friends. 'Circle Time' is used effectively with the youngest pupils. As pupils move from 'primary' to 'secondary' classes, they are expected to become more independent. In Year 9, pupils and parents begin the process of career planning, with effective support from the Connexions careers advisory service. They are helped to make choices about subjects and the possibility of some pupils spending part of their time in mainstream schools is discussed. All pupils are expected to take part in work experience. Some pupils will be part of Team Enterprise. The school works very hard to ensure that all pupils have equality of opportunity and the necessary support to achieve their best.

Partnership with parents, other schools and the community

The school has created a **very strong partnership** with **parents**. **Community links** are **extensive** and benefit pupils greatly. There are **very strong links** with **other schools**. The **outreach service** offered by the school to support pupils with autism in mainstream schools is **very effective**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Parents express strong support for what the school does for their children.
- The school informs and involves parents in their child's education very well.
- Very good use is made of local community facilities to extend pupils' learning opportunities.
- The school works very effectively with other schools and colleges for the benefit of its pupils.
- The outreach support service is valued very highly by mainstream schools.
- Annual reports do not show parents in sufficient detail what their children have achieved in the subjects they have studied.
- The effectiveness of links with other schools is not formally evaluated.

Commentary

27. Parents are fully involved in the work of the school at all times. The questionnaires completed before the inspection show how highly they approve of how the school is run and what it achieves for their children in terms of their academic progress and personal development. They think the school has the highest expectations of behaviour and hard work. Many parents used the questionnaires to give particular examples of how their children have benefited by joining the school, explaining how confidence, self-esteem and behaviour have all improved dramatically. A very welcoming induction process establishes the initial link between school and home and from then on regular contact is maintained. When their children are near to leaving school, parents have further meetings to help plan careers and further education.

However, pupils' annual reports do not show parents what their children can do now and how they might progress in the future, and this is a significant weakness.

28. The school is very well-established in its local community. The gymnasium at HMP Morton Hall is used for physical education; Industry Day involves many local companies giving displays and running activities in the school; Team Enterprise draws on the skills of many local businessmen; and a great many companies are pleased to be visited by pupils as part of their work experience. These links significantly extend the quality and range of experiences available to pupils. The school also contributes to the local community. School premises are used by local sports teams and other schools, several local charities, such as the Nomad Trust, are helped by pupils, and the annual party for senior citizens is organised entirely by pupils. These activities are not only enjoyable, but they greatly extend the range of experiences open to pupils and make a positive contribution to their personal development as maturing young adults.
29. The school's links with other schools and the local college are very good. The school is committed to the principle of inclusiveness and is a pilot school for the new 'Inclusion Quality Award'. The core purpose of the school's partnership with other schools is to extend curriculum opportunities for some pupils in the school, to give others the opportunity to experience a mainstream setting and, where appropriate, to facilitate permanent transfer. Currently, one primary pupil and 12 secondary pupils attend local schools for part of the week. Links with specialist secondary schools for the creative arts, language, science and design and technology enable higher attaining pupils from the school to have the opportunity to follow courses leading to GCSE in English, mathematics, dance and ICT. These links with other schools are two-way. An advanced skills teacher of French from a local school teaches some lessons in St Christopher's and four pupils from a local secondary school join pupils in the school for ASDAN and physical education activities. The current link with the college involves all pupils in Years 10 and 11 in ten-week sessions spread over the year. It gives them an experience of a range of vocational courses, including construction, painting and decorating, home maintenance, child-care, and health and beauty. The college also provides work experience placements to pupils. Seventy per cent of pupils go on to full-time college courses after they have left school. The school works collaboratively with other support services, such as the learning support service and behaviour support service.
30. The school's very effective outreach service focuses on supporting pupils with autism in mainstream schools in the city of Lincoln. Two teachers currently support 30 pupils in mainstream primary, secondary and special schools and students in the community college. The purpose of the outreach provision is to support class teachers in working effectively with pupils by helping them to draw up targets, particularly with regard to communication and behaviour, and to monitor and review the pupils' progress. The outreach teachers might also work directly with pupils in the class, attend meetings with parents or annual reviews, and work with parents in the school. In addition, they provide training to schools and a Website Help Line. All the schools visited during the inspection acknowledged the very good knowledge and skills of the teachers involved but the school does not itself formally collect data about the quality of its service in order to make it even more effective.

LEADERSHIP AND MANAGEMENT

The headteacher **leads** the school **well** and **manages** it **effectively**. The work of the **governing body** is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The school is fully committed to including all pupils in the work that it does and to providing additional opportunities for pupils to experience mainstream schools.
- The headteacher has high aspirations and a clear sense of purpose in providing a source of specialist expertise for local schools.
- Senior staff provide very good role models for other staff and pupils.

- The role of subject co-ordinators is unclear and so there are some shortcomings in some aspects of curriculum leadership and management.
- Governors do not have in place effective systems for evaluating the school's work for themselves.

Commentary

31. The governing body performs its statutory duties well. Governors are enthusiastic about the school, support it well, and are beginning to challenge senior staff about proposals they put forward. While a number visit regularly, they do so on an informal basis, with no formalised system for reporting back to fellow governors, rather than with a clear focus on examining particular aspects of the school's work. Therefore, they have limited knowledge, based on their own first-hand information, of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Although governors question and challenge the headteacher on proposed major items of expenditure, they do not follow this up by requiring him to identify how this will result in improvements and how ongoing progress will be reported to them. Consequently, they are not able to evaluate the impact and outcomes of these spending decisions. Governors have recently signed up to a Best Value Statement, which includes adherence to the principles of best value, but currently, although the school works hard to achieve best value in its day-to-day work, the application of each of these criteria is not always evident when governors take decisions.

Financial information for the year April 2002 to March 2003

Income and expenditure (£)	
Total income	1,071,744
Total expenditure	957,397
Expenditure per pupil	6,059

Balances (£)	
Balance from previous year	57,870
Balance carried forward to the next year	114,212

32. Long-term staff illnesses, including the need to have in place an acting headteacher and senior management team for a year, have limited the school's ability to implement change as quickly as it would wish. At the time of the inspection, the headteacher had only been in permanent post for three weeks and other members of the senior management were still in acting roles. The team had done a very good job in stabilising and maintaining the school during a difficult 12 months. However, the long-term interim arrangements meant that the headteacher was unable to assert his leadership vision in any practical or meaningful way. This is now changing as the headteacher is able to articulate and implement his ideas, such as the possibility of the school offering provision for post-16 students and extending links with other schools. However, the links between the school's strategic and development plans and the outcomes of its self-review are not totally transparent and tightly linked. Whilst the leadership of some other key staff is equally effective, such as in the Foundation Stage, the provision for PSHE and citizenship, and the outreach provision for supporting mainstream schools, in other areas it is less so. Generally, subject co-ordinators do not provide colleagues with clear guidance on planning and assessment systems, or show how their subject will move forward through subject development plans.
33. The headteacher manages the school effectively and innovatively, such as the implementation of computer-based management systems and planning, to which all staff have access. However, on occasion, staff who are not so competent in the use of new technology do not use these systems as efficiently or effectively as intended. Good induction arrangements for new staff, very good arrangements for the performance management of all staff and a commitment to their ongoing professional development all contribute to raising standards. The school is supported in this through an effective self-review process which is now being monitored by the local education authority. Good financial planning and administration mean that the school is able to direct resources towards its priorities and develop appropriate

surpluses to meet longer-term needs, such as the current building programme. Overall, subject co-ordinators manage their subject in a satisfactory manner. They are able to monitor colleagues' planning and marking of work but this is not done routinely and consistently and not all have opportunities to monitor the quality of teaching and learning within their subject area. These are areas of weakness because they detract from the school's ability to disseminate best practice and they allow inconsistencies to develop.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

Provision in the Foundation Stage is **very good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Effective teaching promotes children's learning.
- High quality teamwork maintains high expectations.
- High standards for behaviour are set, although individual difficulties are acknowledged.
- Very good quality assessment information is used well.
- Effective management by the co-ordinator maintains a strong match between the curriculum and pupils' needs.
- The outdoor play area is too small.

Commentary

34. This is limited to one class, an assessment nursery, which takes in a number of children with quite pronounced learning difficulties, most of whom have features of autism. During the inspection, the children were aged between approximately three and four and a half years.
35. The quality of teaching is consistently good in all six areas of learning. The environment is controlled well so that, whilst the children are not over-stimulated by too much on display, they experience a wide variety of different activities in every session. There is a particular emphasis in the planning on two areas of learning; communication, language and literacy, and personal, social and emotional development. This emphasis reflects the main needs of the children very well and is supported, not only by focused work, but also by the learning targets that underpin each day's planning. The co-ordinator has a very good understanding of the curriculum and creates regular opportunities to assess the children's progress. At times, pupils' achievement lags behind the progress in individual lessons, but the reverse is also true because, in common with the features of autism, so much depends on the tolerance level of each individual pupil at any one time. The entire staff team work very well together, both informally and formally, so that every opportunity to assess what the children can do is maximised and targets adjusted accordingly. Records and plans are working documents and used well while the Foundation Stage profile provides a clear summary of where each child has reached at the point of transfer to the next stage of their education.
36. In each area of learning, except physical development, most children are working at levels significantly below those expected of children aged three years. In physical development, they are working at, or slightly above, the three-year level. The previous inspection report contained very little about the Foundation Stage, but based on the quality of the current provision, this suggests that progress in the interim period has been very good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL DEVELOPMENT

All the children experience the first step in the curriculum for this area but the majority show little obvious curiosity. They tolerate their situation rather than respond to it. Members of staff richly interpret what the children do and this helps to develop, for example, their responses to their individual toileting programmes. Most of the children have brief temper tantrums but all staff members respond consistently to these outbursts in line with the daily plan. They then refocus the children before praising them when they settle once more.

COMMUNICATION, LANGUAGE AND LITERACY

Only one or two children show any really meaningful attempts to communicate. The staff respond sensitively to fleeting eye contact and small vocalisations to infer something about what the children might be trying to communicate. They interpret scribbling, for example, as either writing or sketching, depending on context, and the children do sometimes show some real pleasure when this happens. Most of the children are at a pre-verbal stage but they do respond briefly to staff they know

and attend to them equally briefly. Only one or two communicate and initiate a brief interaction. Even then the intention behind their actions is not always clear. Most of the children do not respond to rhymes and songs in any obvious way, although they are used to help the children to quieten and remain still on occasions. This reinforces the link to their personal and social development.

MATHEMATICAL DEVELOPMENT

One child shows some interest in numbers and counting and is able to count up to four and to recognise the number three. His achievements are the exception, however, and while the majority play with shape sorters and form boards, their interest in them is fleeting and their awareness of numbers in any form is uncertain.

KNOWLEDGE AND UNDERSTANDING OF THE WORLD

Simple repetitive play rather than active curiosity determines how the children play with toys and use road plans. At times, they track bubbles and watch them 'pop' with excitement but on other occasions they show no interest and ignore the member of staff working alongside them. The children's difficulties with all kinds of communication and their understanding of other people do not deflect the staff, however, from continuing to challenge the children to experiment and to try new things.

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

The physical development of the pupils is in general their strongest feature and they are learning to move in a variety of ways and trying to master the control necessary to hold a position. Staff note and reward the degree of tolerance of each child as they move around and share space. Soft play offers similar assessment opportunities and also a different set of experiences for the children to enjoy. However, the children lack a developed sense of the world around them and their ability to use tools and equipment purposefully is progressing slowly. The outside play area is just about adequate for the size of the group in the nursery but it does not provide adequate opportunities for the children to learn to move around a large area on their tricycles and in their cars.

CREATIVE DEVELOPMENT

The children tolerate finger and hand painting and some grow to enjoy it. They make sounds with a variety of instruments and everyday objects and persevere quite well on such tasks. It is difficult to evaluate how much they notice and respond to directly, but staff encourage them consistently and behave as though the children express preferences. In this area of learning, as in the others, staff draw children to them rather than direct them and they offer children choices so that the children do have some control at all times and learn about taking responsibility from an early age.

SUBJECTS AND COURSES IN KEY STAGES 1 - 4

ENGLISH AND MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

English

Provision in English is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The quality of teaching is good overall and very good in Years 7 to 11.
- The implementation of the National Literacy Strategy in Years 1 to 9 has helped to raise pupils' standards of reading and writing.
- The accredited course in English at the end of Year 11 gives pupils opportunities to use their skills in reading, writing, and speaking and listening through activities that are useful preparation for the next steps in their education and adult life.
- Curricular plans are not drawn together into a framework, and assessment and marking are inconsistent across classes.
- The co-ordinator does not have sufficient time to monitor teaching.

Commentary

37. Pupils achieve well overall and very well in Years 7 to 9. Their achievements are good in speaking and listening, reading and writing across the school. This helps their learning in other subjects.
38. The skills of the teachers make a considerable impact on pupils' learning. Their lively delivery and enthusiasm usually catch pupils' interest and influence their attention and listening skills. Pupils' grasp of these skills is helped by role-play and drama experiences. Very clear questioning and instruction help all pupils to understand and contribute, especially those with autism. Learning is often made fun and a challenge, even when the task is quite basic, such as using a dictionary. Ideas about the next step are put into pupils' heads, for example, 'just wait until tomorrow' and 'you could borrow the whole book'. The very good and easy relationships help pupils to get the best from their learning and encourage their contributions to group and paired work.
39. The impact of the National Literacy Strategy is evident in the best lessons. When teaching is good and very good, lessons start with a review of previous learning and include later opportunities to review what has been learnt. However, plans are usually very brief and have little detail about the approaches that will be used for different groups of pupils and, in some instances, intentions such as the use of ICT are mentioned in plans but not included in lessons.
40. Approaches are appropriate for the subject though there is some variation in the effectiveness of their use across classes. Pupils respond very well to the two main reading schemes and also appreciate the other available story, non-fiction and subject books. They like tasks based on well-known stories and take note of the teaching points included in the Big Book readings. Storyboards are used at different levels in Years 1 to 9 and there is some very good use of dictionaries. Practical tasks, for example, the use of letter fans, make a very good impact on learning. Effective activities require pupils to make decisions, for example, when Year 2 pupils matched word shapes to words, and when pupils in several classes sorted pictures and sentences into the correct story sequence. Other tasks supported pupils through demonstration, for instance, when the class edited writing as a group. For the Year 1 pupils, Bertie Bear's involvement in modelling good practice improves their attention and involvement.
41. The sound grounding that pupils receive becomes most evident in Years 10 and 11 when they use their previously acquired skills very effectively in their accredited coursework. They have greatly improved their ability to speak up in class and explain their ideas fluently in group as well as class work. They use their reading skills for practical purposes, such as finding items in a catalogue. They know about reference books and the key skills for research and take part confidently in formal dramas and role plays, for instance, their own versions of *Macbeth* and a 'soppy soap'. Pupils write well and use word processing for text, as appropriate. They use their increased vocabulary and improved writing skills by preparing more sophisticated information about themselves for job and college interviews.
42. Good records are made of the letters and words that pupils have learnt. However, opportunities to assess progress are not outlined in plans. In lessons, assessment does not take account of the approaches that have been tried and this is a weakness because it means that this information cannot be used in future planning. In Years 1 to 6, there is very little marking and work is not annotated to show the level of support given to pupils. This limits opportunities to assess pupils' progress over time. In addition, pupils' work is not always marked in sufficient detail to show them how they can improve. Speech and language therapists play an important role in assessing pupils in the assessment class and in the early stages of their education. They also give very good support to the learning support assistants working on special programmes with pupils with speech and language difficulties. However, as yet, there is limited evidence of the consistent use of signs and symbols in classes. There is evidence of word processing in displays but little use was seen during the inspection.

43. Co-ordination of the subject is satisfactory, although the co-ordinator does not have sufficient time to monitor teaching and learning to ensure consistently high standards are maintained. While there have been notable improvements since the previous inspection, overall curriculum planning still has some limitations. There is no effective long-term plan that shows when key units of work are to be covered so that teachers can plan in advance and cross reference their work with other subjects. Assessment procedures tend to focus on small steps achieved, rather than how pupils respond; this sometimes limits teachers' ability to plan strategies and resources to support the achievement of individual targets.

Language and literacy across the curriculum

Pupils' language and literacy skills are promoted well through other subjects of the curriculum. Teachers provide extensive opportunities for pupils to improve all elements of communication. They are particularly skilled at encouraging pupils to rehearse their speaking and listening skills through well-managed discussions. The promotion of key subject vocabulary and the use of dictionaries and reference books to research information encourage pupils to read. Most subjects also encourage pupils to write in styles, but in some subjects, such as science, there is limited evidence of older pupils' independent written work.

French

Provision in French is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The recent revision to long-term planning provides an improved subject curriculum.
- The quality of relationships between staff and pupils enhances learning opportunities.
- Accreditation at the end of Year 11 challenges pupils and recognises their achievements.
- Clear individual records of pupil progress are not maintained.
- The highest attaining pupils are not always extended.
- Parents do not receive sufficiently detailed information about their children's progress.

Commentary

44. French is taught only in Years 7 to 11. During the inspection, only lessons involving pupils in Years 7 to 9 were observed. Teaching and learning are satisfactory, with good relationships between staff and pupils. Although teachers know different pupils and their needs well, assessment procedures lack thoroughness and there are no individual targets for pupils. Throughout the school there is insufficiently detailed information about how well individual pupils understand and use French. Therefore, teachers are not able to use information about what individual pupils, and groups of pupils, can do, know and understand when planning lessons. Consequently, planning does not identify what pupils are expected to learn in order to make progress. Therefore, there tends to be a whole class approach to teaching and learning, rather than a sequence of activities matched to the needs of individual pupils and groups of pupils. As a result, teachers are not always able to assess precisely enough what different pupils have learnt successfully.
45. There has been satisfactory improvement in provision since the last inspection. Leadership and management of the subject have suffered from staffing difficulties but the very good recently-established link with a partner specialist school is now beginning to make an impact. The input of the specialist attached teacher is most evident in the new subject policy and the wholesale revision of curriculum planning. Subject documentation now identifies planned links to other subjects, such as literacy and numeracy, and opportunities for assessing pupil progress. This has improved the confidence of all members of staff teaching French and it provides a strong basis for future development of the subject. Further work now needs undertaking to ensure that the new rigour in the subject translates into better information for parents about what their children know, rather than a series of statements about areas that they have studied.

MATHEMATICS

The provision for mathematics is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The National Numeracy Strategy has been adopted but the recommended lesson structure is not applied consistently. When the format is implemented it contributes to the quality of teaching and learning.
- Pupils' behaviour is very good and their attitude towards mathematics is very positive.
- Learning support assistants made a consistently good contribution towards pupils' learning and progress.
- Leadership and management are unsatisfactory.
- During the week of the inspection, ICT was underused in support of this subject.
- Pupils do not receive enough information about the level and pace of their own learning.
- Opportunities to develop numeracy skills in other subjects are variable.

Commentary

46. Pupil progress is satisfactory as the qualities of teaching and learning are satisfactory overall, although they are occasionally good. This represents an improvement on the previous inspection when pupil progress was judged to be unsatisfactory. When teaching is good teachers display good subject knowledge and present pupils with interesting activities that meet their individual needs. On these occasions, teachers implement well the principles and practice of the National Numeracy Strategy. A three part lesson format includes well-paced introductions, carefully chosen activities, and effective plenary sessions that establish the degree of pupils' learning. For example, a class of six and seven year olds made good progress in their understanding of shape because good questioning challenged pupils and, when responses were limited, the teacher probed to extend pupils' answers. A very good plenary reviewed pupils' work and progress and further extended their learning. A class of 13 and 14 year olds made equally good progress because sharp introductory mental activities got the lesson off to a good start and the teacher maintained this good pace throughout. Clear explanations, supported by challenging questions to each pupil in turn confirmed their understanding, and subsequent well-organised group work, supported by effective learning support assistants, developed new skills.
47. At times, pupils do not learn so effectively because teachers do not plan lessons in a structured way. At these times, the activities provided do not always recognise individual pupils' needs. Consequently, the highest attaining pupils are not sufficiently extended and lower attaining pupils do not always get opportunities to consolidate their learning.
48. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have the opportunity to follow an accredited course, the CoEA Entry Level examination. The school meets the individual needs of some pupils by enabling them to attend a local secondary school in order to follow a course leading to GCSE accreditation.
49. The role of the mathematics co-ordinator is unsatisfactory and in part this is because of the staffing difficulties that the school has experienced. The co-ordinator does not have opportunities to monitor and evaluate teaching, to audit resources, to promote numeracy across the curriculum, to develop the use of new technology, or to check on the quality and consistency of marking. Pupils are not aware of mathematics targets in their individual education plans and they are insufficiently informed about the level and pace of their own learning.

Mathematics across the curriculum

Pupils are not always given structured and planned opportunities to use and apply their mathematical skills in other subjects of the curriculum. There are examples of numeracy skills being promoted well; pupils counting in physical education and French, using keys, scales, graphs and co-ordinates in geography, and learning Roman numerals and sequencing Tudor dates in history. However,

generally planning does not identify opportunities when numeracy skills can be developed or reinforced.

SCIENCE

Provision for science is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Scientific investigations are now well established throughout the school.
- Lessons are purposeful and have a clear scientific focus.
- Specialist accommodation is under construction.
- The assessment of pupils' understanding of the subject is unsatisfactory.
- Long-term planning and assessment procedures require considerable development.
- The subject is not being effectively led and managed at the present time.

Commentary

50. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall but varies across different age groups; it is very good in Years 1 and 2, good in Years 3 to 9, and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Teachers working with younger pupils are confident in their subject knowledge and set up tasks which challenge them to find things out for themselves. At the beginning of lessons, they share with pupils what the lesson hopes to achieve and then review the work carried out in the light of those objectives. Lessons in Years 7 to 11 lack this structure, although the practical tasks that pupils undertake still interest and motivate them, and they learn to make more careful predictions and to complete the observations that inform scientific method. Throughout the school, learning support assistants make a substantial contribution to the quality of teaching in this subject. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 respond well to open-ended tasks that are within their capabilities and are keen to understand more. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 recall learning points from previous lessons and apply that knowledge well to make sense of new information. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 work towards an accredited qualification and are keen to complete the study modules that help them towards the final tests.
51. Although pupils are taught well overall, their achievement is satisfactory. This is because learning and verbal responses in lessons do not transfer into written work that provides a lasting record showing how well pupils are making progress. In addition, pupils in Years 10 and 11 have too much assistance with their work with the result that everyone's work is very similar. It is then especially hard to determine how much each pupil really understands and knows prior to the outcome of the final assessment.
52. Satisfactory progress has been made against the issues for developing the subject identified in the last inspection, although there has been very limited leadership and management because of the long-term illness of the co-ordinator. There is also a sense of waiting for the new purpose-built accommodation to be completed. Whilst some of the day-to-day management functions for the subject are discharged by a subject specialist, a number of issues remain unresolved. Long-term planning is little more than a summary outline of national expectations for the subject. Current planning fails to support the work in all classes. It does not provide teachers with a secure basis from which to plan what they are going to do and how they will do it. Consequently, teachers still do not have effective assessment mechanisms for enabling them to accurately assess what pupils know, can do and understand, and to diagnose in which areas they still need additional support, and this is a significant weakness.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Resources for the subject are very good.
- There is a good level of staff subject expertise, including an ICT technician.
- Pupils enjoy ICT and are well motivated and interested.

- Teachers use ICT to record planning and the digital camera and video to record pupils' achievement and progress.
- Opportunities to use ICT are not an integral part of all lesson planning so that during the inspection ICT was underused in support of other subjects.

Commentary

53. Very good resources represent a significant improvement since the last inspection. They include a computer suite, 30 computers networked using wireless links, laptops for all teachers, and several digital cameras and digital videos. Alongside these developments, all staff have successfully undertaken recent training and a knowledgeable and supportive technician has been appointed. The school is now able to timetable the computer suite and most classes have discrete ICT lessons. As a result, the majority of pupils' learning and progress in ICT lessons is at least satisfactory and on occasion it is good but there are missed opportunities to consolidate this learning through other subjects. Achievement overall is satisfactory.
54. No discrete ICT lessons were observed for pupils up to the age of nine years, but records show that pupils know about a variety of sources from which information can be gathered, such as books, tape recorders, televisions, and video players. They begin to recognise that everyday devices respond to signals and become familiar with a computer keyboard and operate a mouse with increasing accuracy. They present and share ideas using text, images and sounds. Pupils aged ten to 14 years develop their independence and confidence and consolidate their ICT skills. They clearly enjoy using the computers and handle equipment appropriately. Pupils learn to enter and store information in a database and increasingly access the Internet and, with help, successfully search for information. Older pupils use a growing vocabulary of technical terms when talking about what they are doing and by the end of Year 11 the highest attaining ones work independently and with confidence. The school awards its own accreditation in ICT but good links with a local science and technology school enable the most competent pupils to follow a course leading to GCSE accreditation.
55. Management and leadership of ICT are developing well and there is potential for the subject to become a strength of the school. Recently-developed planning is not yet firmly established across the school and so there is some inconsistency in teachers' understanding of what pupils with different levels of competence could do in each unit of work. Therefore, on occasion, this limits the progress that some pupils make.

Information and communication technology across the curriculum

Pupils are provided with opportunities to rehearse and further develop their skills in some subjects of the curriculum. Using the internet to research information about famous artists, improving the quality of design drafts in technology, and reinforcing literacy skills through interactive CD ROMs associated with the reading scheme all contribute to consolidating ICT skills. New technology is also used to improve writing skills, such as the art of redrafting. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 experiment with font size, colour and style, organise and reorganise text, and import Clip Art to illustrate and enhance their work to better reflect the mood of the poems they have written on such themes as 'Fear', 'Disappointment' and 'Boredom'. However, the planned and progressive use of ICT is not yet embedded in all teachers' planning of different subjects of the curriculum.

HUMANITIES

Religious education

Provision in religious education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are taught well.
- A broad curriculum ensures that pupils learn about Christianity and other major world religions.
- Lessons make a significant contribution to pupils' spiritual development.
- The oldest pupils are challenged to consider complex moral and social issues.

- The co-ordinator leads the subject well and provides satisfactory management.

Commentary

56. Pupils achieve well and make good progress. Religious education makes a significant contribution to developing pupils' understanding of living in multi-cultural Britain through their exposure to features of religions such as Hinduism and Judaism as well as Christianity. Lessons provide pupils with many opportunities for them to familiarise themselves with the vocabulary associated with religion and the language used when expressing feelings and emotions. Teachers are highly effective at promoting pupils' spiritual development by producing an atmosphere of calmness during lessons and enabling them to reflect and think about their lives. Pupils were seen considering places that are special to them through different, but highly appropriate, activities as they experienced moments of reflection. A group of six year olds passed round Bertie Bear in 'Circle Time' and felt comfortable telling him, and their classmates, about their favourite special place, while a class of nine year olds were sufficiently mature to examine and discuss candle flames as they considered the concept of special places, people and events. Many pupils in Years 10 and 11 are very perceptive and show great sensitivity when discussing and debating topics such as 'suffering'. They have mature attitudes and a willingness to express their opinions and to listen to the views of others.
57. The co-ordinator shows good vision in developing the subject. For example, the recent introduction of teaching the subject through an activity called 'The Godly Play' is proving effective at making the subject 'come alive' by involving pupils more in their own learning. However, whilst the co-ordinator has a role in monitoring planning, teaching and assessment, these activities are not carried out routinely and systematically and therefore there is some inconsistent practice in assessment procedures across the school.

History

Provision for history is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils enjoy history and achieve well.
- Teaching is good, with teachers conveying their enthusiasm.
- The subject reinforces pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and presents good opportunities for pupils' social and cultural development.
- Assessment procedures do not provide teachers with sufficient information to plan future lessons.

Commentary

58. Pupils' achievement is good in history because teachers use methods that capture pupils' interest and make the subject relevant to them. Effective learning support assistants help pupils with additional special needs to make equally good progress, sometimes by acting as scribe or by keeping pupils focused. Lessons are characterised by good relationships and pupils' willingness to work. However, teachers do not share with pupils the learning that lessons aim to promote and therefore they do not effectively evaluate at the end of lessons the quality of learning that has taken place and this is a weakness. In addition, marking does not include suggestions that show pupils how they can improve the quality of their work. This feature of assessment and the lack of detailed assessment records means that teachers have limited information upon which to plan work for individuals and provide information for teachers new to a class. There is no evidence to show that pupils extend their learning through the use of new technology to plan or record their work and this is unsatisfactory.
59. In lessons, the younger pupils develop a sense of time through studying 'old' and 'new' toys and putting family members in age order. Good learning of this nature is further reinforced by involving parents, such as encouraging them to write about family events in the home school book. Staff are then able to engage pupils in discussion about what they did 'yesterday' or 'last week.' Year 6 pupils research sources such as maps and books to learn about Egypt and literacy skills are further reinforced as pupils record their findings and write to an Egyptian god

'Help me have some fresh water.' Older pupils consider inequalities in the lives of rich and poor Victorians and by Year 9 are beginning to show some awareness of cause and effect. They understand some of the events leading to the First World War and discuss the horror of the trenches. Year 11 pupils demonstrate humour and good skills in speaking and listening as they speculate about the purpose of a range of Edwardian artefacts. They now benefit from having their work accredited through ASDAN. The historical richness of the local area provides many opportunities for promoting pupils' social and cultural development. The school makes good use of these local facilities as all classes visit places of interest.

60. Leadership and management are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has good subject knowledge, which is shared effectively with staff on an informal basis, but has had no recent opportunity to monitor the quality of history teaching across the school. Plans that have been produced relate well to the National Curriculum and are helpful to staff in identifying which skills are being taught in each unit of work and the resources available. Overall improvement in provision since the previous inspection is satisfactory.

Geography

Provision overall for geography is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils achieve well in Years 7 to 9.
- A recently introduced humanities course in Years 10 and 11 enables pupils to receive accreditation for their work in geography.
- Pupil achievement is unsatisfactory by the end of Year 6.
- Assessment procedures are unsatisfactory.
- Long-term plans are incomplete making it difficult to ensure that the skills, knowledge and understanding of the subject are covered fully.

Commentary

61. Weaknesses in provision mean that improvement since the previous inspection is unsatisfactory. Overall, pupils' achievements are satisfactory. They achieve satisfactorily by the end of Year 2, unsatisfactorily by the end of Year 6 and well by the end of Year 9. No judgement can be made on achievement in Years 10 and 11 because the humanities course, which will be accredited through the ASDAN award scheme, is new this term. Although pupils in Years 3 to 6 are taught satisfactorily, they do not cover the subject curriculum in sufficient depth to develop enough new knowledge and understanding of the subject and there are restricted opportunities for independent learning. On the other hand, challenging teaching and high expectations in Years 7 to 9 develop good attitudes in pupils and this results in them making good progress.
62. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Relationships are very good and adults work well together, which encourages all pupils to try hard. Pupils with autism achieve as well as other pupils because teachers ensure they are included in all lessons through the effective use of signs and symbols and by good behaviour management strategies. However, what pupils are expected to learn in lessons is not always shared with them because some lessons are not planned in sufficient detail.
63. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory but its management is unsatisfactory. Although the co-ordinator has produced a helpful list of topics for each class related to the National Curriculum and carries out some monitoring of teachers' planning, there are shortcomings in long-term planning and assessment procedures. The lack of any recorded assessment information and no regular monitoring of pupils' work means that the co-ordinator is not sufficiently aware of strengths and weaknesses within the subject.

TECHNOLOGY

Design and technology

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- The curriculum provides a broad range of well-planned design projects that help pupils to progress and to produce high quality products.
- The quality of teaching and learning is enhanced because the subject is taught by two specialist teachers in well-established specialist rooms.
- Lesson planning includes little detail about how pupils at different levels of ability will be taught and how their achievements will be assessed.

Commentary

64. Pupils are introduced at a young age to the idea of 'design and make' in both food technology and when working with resistant materials. This helps to develop their thinking skills, ability to solve problems, and independent working. They explore a wide range of materials that they use to make simple models and collages. Therefore, by the end of Year 6 pupils choose materials with care and draw useful pictures and diagrams to plan their designs, such as packaging for cereals. These skills are developed further through Years 7 to 9. By the age of fourteen pupils apply their knowledge of nutrition and healthy eating to choose appropriate ingredients to prepare and make foods. Through working on projects such as designing a fuse tester, pupils learn to sequence their ideas and contribute to solving problems. They apply their skills well when making high quality lidded boxes and soft building blocks for teaching younger children. By the end of Year 11 pupils use their knowledge and skills to very good effect when meeting challenges for their ASDAN accreditation, such as making an item for the house or a design for a T shirt.
65. Pupils use an increasingly technical vocabulary to explain their ideas. The oldest pupils review and amend their designs and improve the quality and presentation of their products by using new technology to cut round complex shapes and add patterns or words. Pupils respond well to the excellent attention shown to health and safety and use resources with care. Their successes and collaborative working contribute well to their personal and social development.
66. The quality of teaching is good. Teachers inspire good quality products through demonstrations and high expectations. Pupils are given good opportunities to give their views and to share their ideas. Careful attention is given to subject vocabulary and to opportunities for the development of mathematical and ICT skills. Consequently, pupils generally learn well but on some occasions sparse lesson planning limits progress because there is insufficient detail about how tasks will be modified or extended to meet the needs of all pupils. As a result, their developing skills, knowledge and understanding are not assessed effectively.
67. Leadership and management are good and the good standards and the quality of teaching and learning have been maintained since the previous inspection. The curriculum is planned well to indicate the different projects that pupils will cover across the years.

VISUAL AND PERFORMING ARTS

Art and design

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are well taught and accrediting pupils' work through GCSE and CoEA examinations has raised expectations and the status of the subject.
- Pupils concentrate well and try hard and so they achieve well.
- The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development.
- Limited recorded assessment information restricts teachers' ability to plan effectively.

Commentary

68. The quality of art work has improved well since the previous inspection. Teachers and pupils show an enthusiasm for the subject which is reflected in the quality of displays that brighten the school. Teaching and learning are good overall and occasionally very good. Learning support assistants are adept in supporting teachers to make lessons accessible to all pupils, including those with autism, so they make equally good progress. Very good relationships contribute to the peaceful working atmosphere and the good attitudes and behaviour that pupils display. Teachers make some use of ICT, for example, pupils use digital cameras and explore the internet to see the work of famous artists, but there is scope for more regular use. Lunchtime art clubs support learning well.
69. Pupils like art and design and are prepared to experiment with a range of techniques and plentiful resources. Pupils' cultural development is promoted well through their studies of a wide range of artists and the influence of their work is evident in the work of pupils of all ages. Pupils in Years 4 and 5 discuss the work of Escher and Dennis de Caira showing respect for the work of others during discussion. Year 9 pupils research books and photographs of artists such as Kandinsky before creating their impression of cubism or abstract art. The regular use of sketchbooks contributes to good achievement, especially in Years 7 to 11. Pupils show quiet pride in their examination work in Years 10 and 11 and it is unsurprising that their art and design has been specially commended by the external moderator. Community facilities such as the Usher Gallery are used well to stimulate ideas so that one pupil was able to write 'I blended colours like the artist then I experimented with paint'.
70. Subject leadership is good, such as the decision to use some specialist teaching in all classes in Years 7 to 11, which has helped raise achievement and prepare pupils for examination work. The subject is also well managed and good planning documents are helpful to teachers across the school as they show opportunities for extending pupils' learning and an increasing use of media and techniques. Accommodation is unsatisfactory but this is being addressed through the new building that is now being constructed. There is some good practice in assessment procedures, such as examples of annotated work that are retained in pupils' portfolios, but overall there are inconsistencies. Therefore, there is restricted recorded information of pupil progress and this affects the planning of future work.

Music

Provision for music is **satisfactory**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Lessons are taught with enthusiasm and develop positive pupil attitudes.
- Music makes a very good contribution to pupils' personal development.
- Lunchtime recorder groups provide good additional learning opportunities.
- Different levels of planning fail to exploit all opportunities to develop pupils' knowledge and skills.
- Opportunities for pupils to listen to music and sing vary across classes.
- There are no assessment procedures in place.

Commentary

71. The subject is taught only in Years 1 to 9 but only one lesson was observed in each of the groups Years 1 and 2 and Years 3 to 6. Pupils are taught satisfactorily and their achievements are satisfactory overall. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 achieve well as they benefit from being taught by a skilled and knowledgeable subject co-ordinator.
72. Teachers help pupils to improve their performances by demonstrating how to play percussion instruments. They present musical activities with a sense of enjoyment and fun, and learning support assistants contribute much to this. Musical vocabulary is promoted well in most lessons and class teachers' confidence is supported by guidance from the subject co-ordinator. However, class teachers are at different stages of making the most of opportunities to get pupils to sing, listen, perform and create musical ideas. Therefore, pupils in different classes have quite different musical experiences. The subject makes a very good contribution

to pupils' personal and social development through opportunities for choosing, turn taking and performing, and through engendering a general 'feel good' factor. Pupils enjoy singing and school assemblies provide a good range of attractive songs with lively choruses that present them with good opportunities to perform.

73. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The co-ordinator offers support and guidance to colleagues and curriculum planning shows what will be covered each year. However, there is insufficient detail about teaching approaches, the use of resources, or about what different groups of pupils might be expected to learn. As yet, there are no assessment procedures for the subject, which restricts any opportunity to evaluate pupils' progress. Overall, there has been satisfactory progress since the previous inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Physical education

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

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Good quality teaching and learning reflects the high level of subject expertise in the school.
- There are good facilities and the curriculum is further enhanced by lunchtime clubs and the use of community facilities.
- Pupils are effectively managed and have very positive attitudes to the subject.
- The subject makes a major contribution to pupils' social and moral development.
- There is an absence of assessment details of what pupils know, understand and can do by the end of each unit of work.

Commentary

74. The high quality provision represents a good improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils make good progress and achieve well because knowledgeable teachers with high expectations provide good and varied learning opportunities. Pupils' learning is celebrated well and their success is accredited through national awards such as the Swimming Teachers' Association. All pupils and staff are properly changed for lessons, reflecting the high standards expected, with younger pupils given opportunities to improve their dressing and undressing skills. Teachers use encouragement well and provide ongoing coaching in lessons as they assess pupils' response to tasks. However, there is no system yet in place to measure and record progress at regular intervals so that individual pupils' needs can be better met. Learning support assistants are well deployed and are clear about their role in maintaining pupils' concentration. They also provide good models for pupils in terms of their participation and posture.
75. Pupils develop a number of skills as they move through the school. The youngest pupils reinforce basic skills, such as improving eye-hand co-ordination, as they roll a ball to each other while sat in a circle. Activities such as this also encourage the development of skills in addition to those associated with the subject, such as listening and responding to instructions and counting as the ball moves around. Older pupils are given many opportunities to consolidate their skills and to develop new ones. For example, a well-planned and managed lesson enabled a class of 13 to 16 year old pupils to make good progress working on a variety of activities. One group, including two pupils from the local secondary school, warmed up vigorously and performed dances, showing control and sensitivity to the music. Another group consolidated their football skills by first practising relevant skills, such as dribbling and passing, and then reinforcing them in a small-sided game. Pupils have very good attitudes to the subject and this is evident in their ability to work well independently and collaboratively.
76. Community facilities make an important contribution to the quality of provision. The regular use of a swimming pool at a local school enables pupils to make good progress in learning to swim unaided, competently and safely. A high level of adult support and expertise ensures that everyone is included. The school makes very good use of a link with a local prison. Groups of

pupils aged 13 to 16 years visit the prison and take full advantage of the high quality facilities and equipment available in the multi-gym as they follow personal cardio-vascular programmes. Community links such as these and links with other schools, such as through competitive matches and tournaments, provide many opportunities that promote pupils' social and moral development. A range of lunchtime activities are used well to give pupils opportunities to enjoy games as well as to rehearse their skills.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

Personal, social and health education

Provision for pupils' personal, social and health education is **good**.

Main strengths and weaknesses

- Pupils are taught well overall and those in Years 10 and 11 learn very well.
- A well-planned curriculum ensures that pupils study a range of topics.
- Pupils in Years 7 to 11 follow a comprehensive citizenship programme.
- Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have a good and appropriate work-related curriculum that prepares them well for leaving school.
- The subject is well led and managed.
- Formal mechanisms for assessing and recording pupil progress are not yet fully effective.

Commentary

77. Overall, pupils achieve well and make good progress. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve very well. The school places great emphasis on pupils' personal development and this is evident in all the work that it does. The school's success in this area has been recognised through its receipt of the Healthy Schools Award and the Careers Mark. Lessons in PSHE are used well to promote pupils' personal development in a formal and planned way.
78. A very enthusiastic and well-organised co-ordinator has produced a subject syllabus that addresses topics such as physical activity, safety, healthy eating, emotional health and well-being, and sex and relationships in a structured and progressive way. Consequently, pupils in all years develop knowledge and understanding of these aspects through activities that are appropriate to their age and interests. In addition, pupils in Years 10 and 11 are introduced to topics such as aspects of the law, the concept of rights and responsibilities, and understanding the media. This equips them very well with the skills required to become full members of society. The high quality careers programme also contributes significantly to preparing pupils for leaving school and this is supported through taster courses that pupils follow at the local college. Careers education and guidance in lessons is well supported through links with the school's Connexions personal adviser, an accessible careers library, and work experience in Year 11. Pupils are very well prepared for their work experience placements so that they are able to obtain maximum benefit from them. For example, a group of pupils were observed during the inspection reviewing their practical and personal skills in order to summarise their strengths and areas for development. Very good relationships enabled the teacher to challenge pupils through skilful questioning and pupils had the confidence and maturity to discuss and, on occasion, contradict classmates' views.
79. The co-ordinator leads the subject well and is constantly reviewing how the provision can be improved. For example, the school is now in the process of introducing the Employability Graduation Award that accredits pupils' skills and knowledge. Relatively few teachers teach PSHE but there are limited opportunities for the co-ordinator to monitor teaching and pupils' work to ensure that high quality practice is sustained.

PART D: SUMMARY OF THE MAIN INSPECTION JUDGEMENTS

Inspection judgement

Grade

The overall effectiveness of the school	3
How inclusive the school is	2
How the school's effectiveness has changed since its last inspection	4
Value for money provided by the school	3

Overall standards achieved	3
Pupils' achievement	3

Pupils' attitudes, values and other personal qualities	2
Attendance	4
Attitudes	2
Behaviour, including the extent of exclusions	2
Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	2

The quality of education provided by the school	3
The quality of teaching	3
How well pupils learn	3
The quality of assessment	5
How well the curriculum meets pupils needs	4
Enrichment of the curriculum, including out-of-school activities	2
Accommodation and resources	3
Pupils' care, welfare, health and safety	1
Support, advice and guidance for pupils	2
How well the school seeks and acts on pupils' views	4
The effectiveness of the school's links with parents	2
The quality of the school's links with the community	2
The school's links with other schools and colleges	2

The leadership and management of the school	3
The governance of the school	4
The leadership of the headteacher	3
The leadership of other key staff	4
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).