

**HEATH FARM SCHOOL**  
**CHARING HEATH**  
**NR ASHFORD, KENT TN27 0AX**

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**Reporting Inspector: Andrew Littlewood HMI**

**Dates of Inspection: 12-14 October 1999**

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**Information about the school**

Type of school:	Emotional and behavioural difficulties
Type of control:	Independent
Age range:	7-16
Gender:	Mixed
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Telephone number:	01233 712030
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Headteacher:	Mr HA Galbraith B.Ed. CANTAB
Proprietor:	Mrs J Lloyd

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## MAIN FINDINGS

Heath Farm School provides a sound and improving learning environment in which all the pupils are able to make at least satisfactory progress in their academic, emotional and behavioural development.

The pupils' attainments in most subjects are below national norms, due mainly to a previous lack of regular attendance and poor attitudes to learning but all are making real efforts to improve, have positive responses to work and are increasing in their self confidence to achieve.

Relationships throughout the school are a strength.

While there are occasions when pupils behave inappropriately, these are reducing and staff deal with pupils sensitively and effectively but there are inconsistencies in the implementation of the school's behaviour policy.

The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory in almost nine out of every ten lessons and is good in a half of lessons. Little time is wasted, work is reasonably matched to the pupils' needs and continues at an appropriate pace with good support provided by the special support assistants, but lesson planning is weak throughout the school.

Sufficient emphasis is placed on the core subjects but the curriculum lacks breadth. Music is not currently taught, French is not available to all Key Stage 3 pupils, religious education is not regularly taught in all classes and certain elements of the design technology (D&T) curriculum are not yet available. No subject has a suitable scheme of work and the number of teachers is below that recommended in Circular 11/90.

All pupils have individual education plans (IEPs) but the identified targets lack precision.

The length of the school week is below that recommended in Circular 7/90.

The assessment and recording of pupils' progress is weak. Marking does not support planning sufficiently and pupils' personal records of achievement have yet to be created.

The moral development of the pupils is good; their social and spiritual development is satisfactory but cultural development requires further attention.

The school is effective in its support for the pupils' foster carers. Liaison on social and behavioural matters is very good. Regular reports are provided for foster and natural parents, the pupils themselves, their social workers and the placing local authority.

The school site and premises are well maintained and there are several specialist facilities for teaching art, information and communications technology (ICT) and science. All but one of the classrooms are a good size and all contain good displays of the pupils' work. Health and safety checks are completed regularly; there are some minor repairs and alterations outstanding.

The school is adequately resourced but there are gaps in provision for most subjects. Most areas of weakness have already been identified by the school and are to be rectified as the new schemes of work are introduced.

The teaching staff are dedicated, suitably qualified and experienced. They all have subject and class responsibilities. Some are timetabled to teach their specialist subjects to more than their class and this practice is increasing. However, insufficient time is allocated to them for preparation or to fulfil their additional duties and they have had few opportunities for in-service training.

The special support assistants know the pupils very well, are sensitive to their needs and build good levels of trust between themselves and those for whom they are the key carer. Their contribution to maintaining a calm working atmosphere during lessons is of a high standard. However, the lack of lesson plans limits their role in supporting the academic development of the pupils.

The headteacher provides strong leadership and in the short time since his appointment has initiated many changes which have already helped to improve the quality of provision for the pupils. The present management structure does not make best use of the experience and expertise of the senior staff. The headteacher has a clear understanding of what is required and has a close working relationship with the proprietor, governors and staff. The current school development plan lacks sufficient detail to meet the identified needs of the school.

There are several statutory responsibilities which fall short of requirements. They are identified in the relevant sections of the report and the headteacher intends to rectify them as soon as possible.

## **KEY ISSUES FOR ACTION**

In order to improve the pupils' progress and the quality of their education, the proprietor, governors and headteacher should:

- implement the proposed new management structure and produce a new school development plan in which priorities are established, responsibilities and time scales set, success criteria identified and costings estimated;
- ensure the curriculum is broad and balanced and that schemes of work are written for all subjects;
- ensure that those with responsibility for curriculum leadership are given time to fulfil their responsibilities and update their knowledge of new initiatives through in-service training;
- increase the number of teachers and thereby improve the quality of teaching;
- ensure that the pupils' IEPs contain clear achievable short term targets, and that the assessment and the maintenance of pupils' progress files is effective;

- ensure that the special support assistants are fully briefed of their responsibilities lesson by lesson;
- ensure that sufficient time is allocated for pupils to study each week;
- ensure that the behaviour policy is consistently applied.
- ensure that repairs and alterations to the premises are completed and meet all statutory requirements.

## **INTRODUCTION**

### **Characteristics of the school**

Heath Farm School is an independent, mixed, day school for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties who have been placed by social services departments with foster families managed by Heath Farm Family Services. The school has charitable status and is currently finally registered for up to 60 pupils (40 boys and 20 girls) between the ages of 5 and 16.

The school occupies an attractive rural site which it shares with the offices of Heath Farm Family Services and a stables. It was opened in June 1993. At present there are 49 pupils on roll (35 boys, 14 girls) which includes two girls over 16 who are repeating the Year 11 work. The pupils come from 24 local authorities, mainly the London boroughs and south east counties. The headteacher took up his post in September 1999.

The school aims to provide its pupils with educational opportunities similar to those in a mainstream school and to encourage attitudes which will help the pupils to acquire knowledge and skills relevant to adult life and employment.

In line with the requirements of the 1996 Education Act, Heath Farm School aims, through its curriculum, to promote the spiritual, moral, cultural, social, mental and physical development of the pupils in its care and to prepare them for the opportunities, responsibilities and experiences of adult life.

### **Key indicators**

#### **Attendance**

During the week prior to the inspection the attendance was 87.5 per cent. Unauthorised absence was slightly higher than average at 4.4 per cent and authorised absence was 8.1 per cent.

#### **Exclusions**

Heath Farm operates a non-exclusion policy.

#### **Quality of teaching**

Percentage of teaching observed which is:

	%
Very good	5.3
Satisfactory or better	81.6
Less than satisfactory	13.1

### Key Stage 2 test results 1999

Two entered for English	1 level 5	1 level 4	—
Two entered for mathematics	1 level 5	1 level 3	—
Three entered for science	1 level 2	1 level 3	1 level 4

### Key Stage 3 test results 1999

Four entered for English	1 level 3	2 level 4	1 level 5
Eight entered for mathematics	3 level 3	5 level 4	—
Eight entered for science	3 level 2	4 level 3	1 level 4

### GCSE Welsh Board Certificate of Educational Achievement 1999

Two entered for English	2 merits awarded	—
Two entered for mathematics	2 merits awarded	—
Two entered for science	1 pass	1 distinction awarded
Two entered for geography	1 pass	1 merit awarded
Two entered for life skills	2 passes awarded	—

## **EDUCATIONAL STANDARDS ACHIEVED BY PUPILS AT THE SCHOOL**

### **Attainment and progress**

Within each age group there are a few pupils with significant learning difficulties but the abilities of most pupils fall within the normal range. Pupils are grouped according to their achievements for most subjects.

Almost all the pupils are working at levels below their capacities but, in about 40 per cent of lessons, they are attaining standards which are within national norms. This underachievement is due in most respects to the pupils' previously interrupted education and to their poor attitude to study. Both these features are being addressed by the school. Pupils' outbursts of unacceptable behaviour have been reduced and in all but one lesson the pupils' attitudes to work are at least satisfactory. In nine out of ten lessons their progress is at least satisfactory. The pupils are consolidating their knowledge, advancing their understanding and demonstrating satisfactory levels of progress across the full range of their studies.

The pupils are entered for the National Curriculum assessment tests at the end of Key Stages 2 and 3 in English, mathematics and science. It is difficult to identify trends or compare one year against another as the pupils seldom stay longer than three years. Last year's results, however, confirm the school's analysis that, on average, the pupils are capable of working at levels at or slightly below national norms in most subjects once they settle, develop positive attitudes to study and become regular school attenders. Last year one pupil was able to return to mainstream education and already this term teachers are making enquiries on behalf of another. At Key Stage 4 all pupils follow nationally accredited courses in English, mathematics, science, geography and life skills.

The pupils' progress in English is generally satisfactory and for a few it is good especially in reading. At Key Stage 2 most are developing phonic and word recognition skills and improving their fluency and comprehension. Several Key Stage 3 pupils read well while others are increasing their word building skills with confidence. Most Key Stage 4 pupils are competent readers and those with reading ages two or more years behind their chronological age are making a determined effort to improve.

Attainments in writing throughout the school are weak with even the highest achievers lacking the confidence or skill to write at length or in a range of styles. However, most are keen to present their work attractively and check for accuracy in spelling and punctuation. They are able to develop their ideas through redrafting and are making reasonable progress from a low baseline.

In all classes the pupils demonstrate satisfactory speaking and listening skills. The younger ones follow instructions well and are beginning to take an active and controlled part in group discussions. At Key Stages 3 and 4 the pupils listen carefully and generally respond well during discussions but there are still one or two who have difficulty in following the socially accepted routines of debate and fail to be willing to appreciate other people's opinions or points of view.

Standards attained in mathematics vary considerably but the majority of pupils are working at levels slightly below national norms.

By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils demonstrate a growing confidence and accuracy in simple calculations involving addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. They have an increasing knowledge of shape, simple measurement and can apply their skills to a range of problems including basic mental arithmetic. By the end of Key Stage 3 most pupils are working at level 4 of the National Curriculum's Attainment Targets for mathematics with the remainder achieving level 3. Pupils in Key Stage 4 are following GCSE Certificate of Educational Achievement courses in mathematics or the mathematics module of the life skills course. Last year's cohort all succeeded in achieving the required standard, two with merit.

In science the pupils at Key Stage 2 have a sound knowledge of the structure and basic functions of parts of the human body. They have some awareness of other aspects such as forces and light. The knowledge of most pupils, however, is shallow and patchy due to their previous lack of regular schooling and comparatively little time at Heath Farm. At Key Stage 4 the pupils follow the GCSE Certificate of Educational Achievement course in science or the science aspects of the life skills course. In previous years several pupils have gained merits and distinctions in science and this current year appears to be in line for similar results although several have made a patchy start to the course by failing to attend several lessons.

Attainment in information and communications technology (ICT) is variable with most pupils lacking the range of basic skills they would no doubt have acquired had they been regular attenders at their previous schools. There is currently a good level of interest in ICT, the specialist teacher has devised a suitable programme of study for all pupils and those in Key Stage 4 are following a certificated course. At Key Stage 2 pupils are making good use of a range of programs to support work in other subjects including one which reinforces and develops their phonic skills and understanding. Pupils at Key Stage 3 have regular ICT lessons and are also catching up on their basic keyboard and text manipulation skills.

### **Attitudes, behaviour and personal development**

In well over half the lessons the pupils' response to the work set is good and it was at least satisfactory in all but one. They settle quickly at the start of each period, pay careful attention to any instructions and show a good level of interest in the work by answering teachers' questions sensibly and demonstrating good recall of previously learned information.

Many pupils concentrate well and some complete their assignments independently. However, there is still a significant proportion who lack the confidence to work on their own and require additional help from the teacher and special support assistants.

Most are keen to learn and have a positive attitude to the tasks set. They are proud of their success and are interested in the subjects they are studying. They tackle practical assignments with increased concentration and commitment, and most are able to co-operate and work collaboratively during such sessions.



On the few occasions when pupils behaved poorly or were distressed, they were effectively supported by the special support assistants, and the rest of the class were able to continue their work with minimal interruption. However, there are inconsistencies in the way the school's sound behaviour policy is followed by a few staff and this confuses the pupils. These differences should be rectified as soon as possible. Several pupils, when upset, find it difficult to remain in class. The school deals successfully with the pupils when they abscond, in line with its policy, and the frequency of such behaviour is decreasing. However, more attention should be given to enabling the pupils to take greater responsibility for their actions as they grow older.

## **Attendance**

The school's admission and registration procedures are satisfactory. If pupils abscond, details are carefully recorded but would benefit from being entered in a bound book in which the pages are numbered.

The pupils' attendance is generally around 90 per cent and there is very little unauthorised absence. Considering the disrupted education patterns which most of the pupils have experienced previously, this underlines the high quality of support provided by their foster families and the good partnership they have with school.

Lessons usually start on time but in one or two classes the beginning of each day is unclear as occasionally there is no daily assembly or identifiable registration period.

## **QUALITY OF EDUCATION PROVIDED**

### **Teaching**

The quality of teaching is sound or better in almost nine out of ten lessons and good in over a half. Relationships between staff and pupils are a strength. The needs of each pupil are well known to both the teachers and special support assistants and their timely, good humoured, patient, intervention with help or calming reassurance is a feature of all classrooms. Praise, encouragement, the development of self-esteem and self control feature prominently and are used appropriately.

Suitable teaching strategies are employed and in most lessons the balance between explanation, individual study and questioning to check understanding is well managed and work is regularly marked. In the best lessons the teachers have high expectations, set suitable challenges for all the pupils and ensure that the special support assistants are well briefed and able to assist the pupils effectively. However, opportunities to include practical activities, which would aid the pupils' understanding as well as help to develop social and manipulative skills, are sometimes missed.

Lessons proceed at a suitable pace. Time for the reinforcement of the lesson's key features, a review of what has been learned and the assessment of the pupils' progress is well planned in several classes. Nevertheless, insufficient use is made of these assessments to plan future lessons or, in discussion with the pupils themselves, underline their progress and increase their self esteem.

All staff tackle moral issues very effectively, especially where the correct way to respond in particular circumstances is an issue. Appropriate social behaviour is encouraged and staff set good standards themselves in the sensitive manner in which they respond to the pupils and work in partnership with each other. However, occasions when the pupils reflect on the lesson's content, celebrate individual successes or underline the cultural aspect of the work in hand are often missed and need to be considered at the planning stage.

Lesson planning is a weakness throughout the school. At best teachers have a few brief notes referring to lesson content but seldom, if ever, are resources, the intended lesson outcomes, the role of the special support assistants or particular work for individuals, identified. There are no guidelines or a common format for teachers to adopt and, while termly individual education plans (IEPs) are produced for each pupil, the targets set are not referred to during lessons or given sufficient consideration when work is set.

Features of the unsatisfactory teaching observed include: weaknesses in presentation which left the pupils confused about what to do next; the inappropriate use of humour to highlight pupils' errors or poor behaviour; the teachers' failure to recognise that the pupils had lost interest in the work set; insufficient advice given to the special support assistants to enable them to contribute satisfactorily to the lesson's content.

### **The curriculum and assessment**

The school aims to provide each pupil with their full curriculum entitlement but currently the timetable fails to include music and not all Key Stage 3 pupils have an opportunity to study a modern foreign language. Religious education lessons are not securely established for all pupils and there are significant gaps in the current design technology curriculum.

Careers education is taught at Key Stage 4 as well as personal, social and health education and sex education, but the school has yet to introduce a drugs education programme.

The curriculum policy contains important statements concerning teaching, planning, evaluation and assessment many of which have yet to be implemented. It underlines the school's need to teach a broad, balanced programme of study and identifies the significance of giving due emphasis to providing accredited courses for the Key Stage 4 pupils. Although sufficient time is allocated to the core subjects overall, the weekly timetable falls about an hour and a half short of that recommended by the Department for Education and Employment.

This year for the first time, as well as the Certificate of Achievement courses already established, the pupils in year 11 will be able to study for Associated Examining Board (AEB) examinations in a range of subjects.

Few subjects have schemes of work and the quality of those available is weak as they fail to identify a term by term progression or relate the work to be covered to National Curriculum Attainment Targets or programmes of study. They also fail to

include information about how pupils' progress in the subject is to be regularly assessed. The creation of suitable schemes of work for all subjects, which identify work at each key stage and provide for continuity, is a priority which the school acknowledges and intends to tackle with some urgency.

There is some specialist teaching in certain subjects and the current teaching staff have a range of expertise and experience to cover most subjects. The headteacher is seeking to increase specialist teaching and recruit a part-time music teacher. He also has plans to create a senior management post to have oversight of the whole curriculum and co-ordinators to lead in the development, monitoring and evaluation of each subject. Such measures are essential if the quality of the curriculum is to be improved.

With schemes of work available the teachers can then construct half termly forecasts and daily lesson plans which will help to improve their teaching and provide special support assistants with the information they require to undertake their work more satisfactorily.

Teachers regularly mark the pupils' work, often alongside them when they are also able to offer encouragement and assistance. This is well managed but little use is made of the outcomes to plan new work. Individual education plans (IEPs) are available but the learning targets set are too vague, not yet linked to lesson planning and the pupils are not involved in their formulation or monitoring. The monthly assessments of the pupils' progress towards behaviour targets are useful and now need to be expanded to include curriculum assessment as well. As target setting improves the pupils themselves will be able to make a much more meaningful contribution to assessing their own progress.

Procedures for the induction of new pupils have been established but are in the early stages of development. It is anticipated that this initiative will lead to the production of a progress file for each pupil leading to a National Record of Achievement at year 11. This will be a useful development which will also enable the pupils to monitor their own progress.

### **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

The pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. While the school uses some situations to its advantage to reinforce the pupils' spiritual understanding is also misses other chances and does not always seek out and reflect on important moments during lessons because curriculum planning is weak.

Daily class assemblies do not always take place but those attended during the inspection effectively created opportunities to think about personal responsibilities and actions. The school needs to give more attention to the spiritual and contemplative dimension and to celebrate pupils' successes. However, a special assembly to mark a pupil's last day at the school, sensitively explained his unexpected departure, created a deep sense of empathy, understanding and loss amongst all present.

A further example of opportunities well used to encourage self reflection and personal questioning was seen in the way in which individual pupils are afforded the time and space to come to terms with, and acknowledge, the times when their behaviour has been unacceptable. Sensitive but firm counselling supports this approach.

A significant weakness is the absence of a coherent music curriculum through which the pupils could explore and experience a medium with high potential to evoke thoughtfulness, feelings and creativity.

The school's development of the pupils' moral understanding is good. There is a strong emphasis on correct and acceptable behaviour. Right and wrong are clearly taught and all adults provide good role models for the pupils and quickly respond to inappropriate responses as they arise. The special support assistants provide strong support in this respect and work closely with teachers and foster parents to reinforce the school's approach.

Social development has some strengths but also some weaknesses. Overall it is satisfactory. Staff purposefully engage pupils in friendly conversation during the journey to school and at appropriate moments throughout the day. The pupils are encouraged to develop friendships and most are successful in this respect. There are occasions when irritation and friction between individuals causes loss of control. These occasions are relatively few and are handled well by staff. While the pupils need to recognise that such incidents are declining they also need to be taught ways of avoiding conflict and confrontation without loss of face. In lessons most pupils co-operate well with each other and work collaboratively when the appropriate occasion arises but these skills are generally still at an early stage for most pupils. Further attention needs to be given to planning suitable activities so the pupils can practise and consolidate collaboration with confidence.

With adult assistance the younger pupils are learning to play together constructively but they still require much more help before they can achieve this successfully on their own. The older pupils generally demonstrate more maturity in this respect and most participate in informal ball games appropriately during breaks. However, in spite of the good adult support provided, the girls are occasionally left out or become the focus of inappropriate verbal exchanges.

Most pupils have journeys of an hour or more to school each morning and the opportunity for them to have some exercise on arrival has advantages and disadvantages as some pupils, particularly the older ones, use this opportunity to smoke or regenerate old arguments. The school needs to review this period with a view to providing an opportunity to promote the pupils' physical and social development and preparing them to start school on time and with the proper attitude to work.

The arrangements for eating packed lunches in classrooms does not help to make the midday break a social occasion. However, the Key Stage 4 pupils use their facilities well to prepare refreshments and include teachers and visitors as a matter of course. Such opportunities show independence and reliability but are currently not widespread throughout the school. However, visits and work experience for the Key

Stage 4 pupils are effectively used to promote this aspect and the school in planning to introduce lunch time clubs.

The pupils' cultural development is unsatisfactory. There are isolated examples where aspects of British and other cultures are identified during lessons. For example in a religious education lesson the study of the Sikh religion and in an art lesson a careful examination of the purpose and form of certain masks. Generally, however, the pupils have few opportunities to learn about their own and other cultures. There is little evidence of this aspect being included in teachers' plans or in curriculum documentation as no schemes of work currently underline the importance of developing the pupils' cultural knowledge.

### **Support, guidance and pupils' welfare**

All except three of the present cohort, who are currently undergoing assessment, have statements of special educational need.

The strong relationships established throughout the school provide the basis for the pupils' support, guidance and welfare and ensure the school is a safe and happy place in which to study. Individuals are effectively supported through the school's key worker scheme and the setting arrangements at Key Stages 3 and 4 which group the pupils according to their ability for most of their lessons.

Careers education is well managed at Key Stage 4 but still needs further development at Key Stage 3.

Child protection procedures are clearly established through staff training and written guidance. Several staff have first aid qualifications and accidents are appropriately dealt with and recorded. Annual and transitional reports are completed on time and every effort is made to ensure that those who have professional knowledge of the pupils are consulted and encouraged to attend reviews. The modification of the pupils' behavioural and emotional difficulties is a priority and the school's policy provides a sound basis for their support if all staff apply it consistently. The IEPs have made some contribution to the pupils' welfare and the new, more specific ones currently in draft will give both adults and pupils clearer targets to achieve over a realistic, short-term period.

Psychotherapy, art therapy and play therapy are available for those pupils who require it. Many, especially the younger ones, attend weekly sessions and it was reported that the contributions of the therapists have a valued impact on the pupils' academic progress and personal development. Therapy is planned to ensure that the pupils miss as little classwork as possible and the provision is reviewed annually.

Speech and language therapy is also provided for those pupils who require it. Both the speech and language therapist and the educational psychologist, who assesses all the pupils on arrival at the school and contributes to their annual reviews, regularly advise teachers of ways to provide additional support for particular pupils.

### **Partnership with parents and the community**

The links between the school and the foster families is a strength in the support and development of the pupils. There are regular contacts between home and school and all foster families are kept well informed of the pupils' progress.

The responses of the foster families to the questionnaire circulated prior to the inspection are very positive.

Contacts with the community are growing but since all the pupils live some distance from the school such contacts are difficult to develop.

## **THE MANAGEMENT AND EFFICIENCY OF THE SCHOOL**

### **Leadership and management**

The headteacher provides clear leadership and direction to the school. Since his appointment in September 1999 he has analysed the school's priorities, has acquired a sound grasp of what development is required and has made a good start at setting the school on track to meet its declared aims. He has produced an initial school development plan and intends to create a more detailed one soon which will incorporate the key issues arising from the inspection.

There is a good professional working relationship between the proprietor, the chair of governors and the headteacher. Liaison with the pupils' foster families is a strength. Day to day administration and general organisation and communication between staff is effective. The school does its best to keep the local authorities from which the pupils come well informed and invites them to send representatives to annual and transition reviews.

The school has a well established caring ethos which is shared by all staff, ensures good relationships and equal opportunities, and promotes good standards of learning. There are, however, inconsistencies in the manner in which several staff interpret and operate the school's behaviour policy which is not helping the overall management of the pupils' behaviour throughout the school. This needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

The headteacher is well aware of the present curriculum weaknesses and is taking steps to rectify them and ensure that each subject has a scheme of work from which teachers can create their daily and half termly plans.

The deputy headteacher has identified the shortcomings of the current IEPs and the need for the teachers to produce daily lesson plans. She is designing suitable formats for both to be agreed and adopted by all teachers in the near future.

The proprietor, governors and headteacher have draft plans for a more effective management structure which will draw on the expertise of the senior teachers and provide a stronger framework for the work on curriculum development which has to be undertaken. It is anticipated that the new arrangements will be established by January 2000 and, with increased staffing, senior management will be able to monitor more closely new developments and provide teachers with time to undertake their subject and administrative responsibilities.

The headteacher has also identified the need for regular staff appraisal and in-service training and a suitable scheme, which is currently in draft form, is due to be introduced in the next few months. All staff have suitable job descriptions.

There are several management responsibilities which need attention: the length of the school day is below the time recommended in DES Circular 7/90; the school needs to prepare and present a drug awareness programme to all its secondary aged pupils; senior management need to ensure that incidents are properly recorded; in order for all pupils to make satisfactory progress, each morning should begin on time, with a clear purpose and set the standard for the rest of the day.

## **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

### **Staffing**

The school has a well qualified and dedicated teaching staff who between them, are able to provide specialist expertise for all subjects of the National Curriculum with the exception of music, art, physical education and a modern foreign language.

The current number of pupils on roll makes it impossible to create separate classes for each age group. The number of teachers, excluding the headteacher, who does not have a teaching timetable, is less than the pupil/teacher ratio recommended in DES Circular 11/90. The present arrangements, which require teachers working in Key Stages 3 and 4 to teach other subjects as well as those in which they have had previous specialist training, are necessary to make best use of the teaching staff available.

The school employs instructors to teach art and some ICT and physical education lessons to the Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils and it has advertised recently for a part-time music teacher. There are good examples of teachers exchanging classes for certain periods to enable staff to make more use of their specialisms and this practice needs to be extended.

There is a teacher in charge of each key stage and they have responsibility for overseeing the programme of study for the pupils in their phase of the school. However, they have little if any time allocated to fulfil their monitoring and management duties. The deputy headteacher is also a full-time class teacher and there is no time assigned for her to complete her many responsibilities.

The school is keen to introduce the National Numeracy Strategy but so far none of the teachers has been able to attend the training courses. Similar difficulties were faced by the teachers who attempted to introduce the National Literacy Strategy last year. Very little staff development through in-service training has taken place during the past few years. This shortcoming is acknowledged by the headteacher. Funding has been identified to support a programme of in-service training. Courses and visits are being arranged which will not only update the teachers' knowledge and subject expertise but should be of considerable benefit in the overall curriculum development within the school.

The school employs a willing, hardworking, able and experienced group of special support assistants. There are at least two assigned to each class and, in partnership with the teachers, they form a valued and highly talented staff team. They each undertake the role of key adult for a few pupils in their class group and monitor their behavioural progress towards agreed termly targets. They all provide useful guidance and assistance by working alongside pupils during lessons and this role would be even more effective if they were provided with lesson plans and were able to discuss their responsibilities with teachers on a daily basis. Their patient perseverance to support pupils during periods when they are anxious or upset, which not only involves building a strong bond of trust between the pupil and themselves but also involves close liaison with their foster parents and teachers, is a real strength within the school's organisation and practices.

The school also employs seven therapists who work with individual pupils for short periods each week. Their work was not inspected.

All staff have job descriptions and although there is currently no formal appraisal for either teachers or special support assistants, the school development plan identifies this aspect as a priority for next year.

### **Accommodation**

The school premises overall are adequate for the current number on roll but one room presently used by a Key Stage 3 class is too small and has very little natural light. A recently constructed suite of rooms for the Key Stage 4 pupils provides suitable accommodation which has yet to be utilised to its full potential. There is a well-equipped ICT room, a satisfactorily stocked and furnished science laboratory which is currently under-used, and an attractive art studio/D&T workshop which requires further work if it is successfully to serve both purposes.

Classrooms contain good displays of pupils' work, posters and informative presentations relating to current curriculum study. There are clean, well maintained toilets for each key stage group. The shared areas in all buildings are well lit and provide easy access.

The school grounds include good sized, enclosed, hard surfaced play spaces for Key Stage 2 and 3 pupils and several suitable grassed areas. The patio and grass outside the Key Stage 4 suite requires further work including more robust fencing and would benefit from some garden furniture and flower beds if the area is to meet more suitably the pupils' needs.

Minor damage to the premises and footpaths needs to be repaired and the edges of steps need to be clearly marked. In addition, further precautions are needed to warn drivers that their route to the car park is also shared by pupils and staff on their way to and from certain classrooms.

The school's health and safety officer and headteacher make regular inspections of the premises, identifying potential hazards and listing work to be done. Electrical and structural damage is quickly repaired.



The site is graffiti free and the pupils generally treat the premises with respect.

### **Learning resources**

There are adequate resources to meet the school's current curriculum requirements. It is acknowledged, however, that certain subjects such as music and DT will need a considerable increase in equipment and materials before the school is able to provide a broad and balanced curriculum. There is sufficient good quality computer hardware but further items such as digital cameras and CD-ROMs will be required in order to teach the full ICT curriculum to all pupils. A good range of art materials has recently been purchased but a wider range will be necessary if the school intends to offer pupils the opportunity of studying the subject to GCSE level in the future. The school intends to create a library. There are small collections of suitable fiction and reference books in most classrooms. Plans to increase the book stock and include non-book resources such as CD-ROMs and audio tapes have been considered and a site identified. Further purchases for any subject should, however, be closely linked to schemes of work and these have yet to be produced.

### **The efficiency of the school**

Financial control is thorough and day to day administration is well managed.

The headteacher has identified funding for the purchase of library books and other school resources but has yet to link spending priorities to the school development plan.

The proprietor, governors and headteacher work in close partnership to review and monitor the school's organisation. They have sound plans to establish stronger links between care and education and create a broader based management structure in order to manage the school more effectively and meet the curriculum needs of all the pupils.

The overall quality of teaching is good but there are still areas for improvement which need to be implemented including regular daily lesson planning, developing a more consistent approach to the pupils' behaviour management and enabling the special support assistants to work more effectively in lessons.

Ways to enable those teachers with particular specialisms to teach their subject to a wider range of pupils are being sought and arrangements to provide a clear career structure for special support assistants are currently being considered in order to make best use of their expertise.

The pupils' attainment generally matches their current capabilities but as their attitudes change and they begin to consolidate their knowledge and understanding greater challenges will need to be set.

The headteacher has a clear vision of what is required to ensure the school operates both effectively and efficiently and he is actively encouraged and supported in his efforts to achieve these goals by the proprietor, governors and staff.

### **CURRICULUM AREAS AND SUBJECTS**

## **ENGLISH, MATHEMATICS AND SCIENCE**

### **English**

Almost all the pupils arrive at Heath Farm with previously poor attendance records and as a result many have missed vital steps in their development of literacy. Several also have specific learning difficulties. Their attainment in English is below nationally expected norms but all are making satisfactory or better progress as identified in the improvements achieved between their arrival and the results of end of key stage tests. All pupils follow certificated courses at Key Stage 4 and are entered for the Welsh Board GCSE Certificate of Achievement or AEB Basic Skills award. Results in the past suggest that the school is successful in enabling pupils to attain at least a pass level, with several merits and distinctions achieved over the last two years.

The school introduced the National Literacy Strategy for its Key Stage 2 pupils in September 1998 and most pupils are developing and improving their word building skills satisfactorily albeit, in some cases, from a low starting point. There are, however, a few reasonable readers in this age group who have acquired a good range of literacy skills.

At Key Stage 3 the more able readers read fluently and with confidence, good expression and understanding. The majority have a satisfactory range of skills and while are currently at levels below their chronological age, are making every effort to improve.

There are two distinct groups at Key Stage 4. One contains able fluent readers who use books and search for information with confidence and assurance. The others still require daily practice and a few need additional help in order to improve their skills and read for pleasure and information.

Writing skills are less well developed throughout the school but the younger pupils are making good progress with their handwriting and the Key Stage 3 pupils generally present their work attractively. Some redraft passages, compose pieces in different styles, understand and apply satisfactory grammatical knowledge and are beginning to spell with accuracy. There are others, however, who still require considerable adult support. Note-taking skills are reasonably well developed by most of the Key Stage 4 pupils but some are hesitant and their spelling and handwriting is still weak.

Speaking and listening skills are generally in line with or slightly below national norms throughout the school. There are a few pupils, however, who have yet to accept and adopt the usual conventions in discussions, of acknowledging others' points of view and asking questions to seek out further information, rather than continuing to make statements.

Almost all pupils work hard, concentrate well and show some enthusiasm for the subject, enjoying their success at achieving new skills. They make good use of their previous knowledge and understanding, and most demonstrate a reasonable level of independence, although there are those who still rely heavily on adult support.

The quality of English teaching is satisfactory and occasionally good. The pace of lessons is sound, work is reasonably matched to pupils' needs, and support provided by the special support assistants is generally effective. All teachers teach English to their class groups and there is a little specialist teaching in Key Stage 3 when the English specialist exchanges with another teacher for a lesson a week. However all teachers have a reasonable subject knowledge, present work with enthusiasm and are quick to offer praise and encouragement.

The subject lacks overall co-ordination and a suitable scheme of work. The teacher with responsibility for the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy has not been able to attend the courses designed to explain and assist its implementation, or any of the special school consortium meetings held in the area, to assess particular difficulties and share good practice.

Language and literacy are not well developed across the curriculum and the range and quality of resources, while adequate for the present needs, will need to be extended in the near future to match the requirements of the revised scheme of work. The formation of a library has begun but still has some way to go.

## **Mathematics**

Standards attained by the majority of pupils are just below national expectations. Last year's National Curriculum test results were good with one pupil achieving Level 5 but this year's cohort is unlikely to be so successful. At the end of Key Stage 3 over half the pupils achieved Level 4 and the remainder achieved Level 3. At the end of Key Stage 4 the two pupils entered for the Certificate of Educational Achievement attained a merit and in the previous year of the six pupils entered five attained a merit and the remaining pupil a distinction. There are, however, no targets set for the end of Key Stages and no specific strategy to raise the achievement of pupils by the end of Key Stages. There is no specific strategy to raise the achievement of pupils in line with national expectations or in line with what teachers feel many pupils could achieve.

Progress for pupils in most lessons in Key Stages 2 and 3 is sound and good for the most able pupils in Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 4 progress for the less able group is unsatisfactory due to the lack of a challenging programme of teaching and learning; currently pupils work at their own pace through a text book.

The quality of teaching is sound overall but ranges from unsatisfactory to good. In less successful lessons in Key Stages 3 and 4 the work lacks challenge and depends too much on worksheets and text books, with planning which does not take sufficient account of the stage pupils are at and the short term targets for their achievement. In more successful lessons in Key Stage 2, and for more able pupils in Key Stage 3, the objectives for the lesson are very clear and known to the pupils. There is a pace and challenge in these lessons which not only leads to a positive response from pupils and enables good progress, but it gives them a sense of achievement and self-esteem which is evident in the lesson.

Pupils respond well in mathematics lessons. Some pupils are very keenly aware of how they are doing from the marks they receive and are anxious to improve. For

others the marks they received were low and gave them little indication of how they might improve. This sometimes led to despondency, especially in Key Stage 4.

Planning in mathematics has improved recently but requires further work. Current plans do not cover the whole of the National Curriculum programmes of study. They concentrate mainly on number work. They do not show the continuity and progression for pupils as they move through the school, and neither are plans linked to the programmes of study or levels of attainment. This makes it difficult for teachers to focus on appropriate standards for pupils and thus raise their attainment. Short term planning, which sets out the specific objectives for lessons, links with the individual educational plans and records how pupils have done, so that further plans can be made, are not in use, but would almost certainly help improve teaching and learning in the subject. Assessment of the pupils' progress both at a day-to-day level and in relation to end of year summaries of the development of specific mathematical learning is unsatisfactory.

Management of the subject is not firmly established and there has been little staff development in recent years. Whilst some elements of the National Numeracy Strategy are being used, access to specific training would be beneficial. Resources in the subject are only just adequate, and have been enhanced recently with new software, but additional resources are required in order to support all aspects of the subject.

## **Science**

Judgements are based on observations of one lesson in Key Stage 2 and one in Key Stage 4, discussions with teachers and pupils, scrutiny of teachers' plans and of previous work on display.

Attainment in science is below that expected for pupils at the end of Key Stages 2 and 4 which are confirmed by the end of Key Stage test results for individual pupils. There are many gaps in the pupils' scientific knowledge.

Pupils in Key Stage 2 have a sound knowledge of the structure and function of parts of the human body. They have some knowledge of other aspects of science such as forces and light, but the knowledge is often superficial and insecure.

At Key Stage 4 pupils identify a range of common materials, classify them according to properties and use this information to suggest appropriate usage. They identify foods associated with healthy or unhealthy lifestyle and can explain their reasoning in simple terms.

Most pupils make satisfactory progress when judged against previous attainment, but it is not rapid enough to make up for the substantial ground lost previously. A very small number of pupils in Key Stage 2 and 4 make slightly better progress and attain standards close to national expectations.

The pupils' response in lessons is generally satisfactory. With valuable support from special support assistants, they stay on task and complete their work. They are keen to demonstrate their knowledge and are prepared to ask and answer questions. Behaviour

is satisfactory overall. Pupils with specific behavioural difficulties are well supported and disruption to learning generally kept to a minimum. Relationships are mostly sound although many pupils find it difficult to work with their peers, preferring to undertake tasks individually. Where lesson pace slows, or the lesson becomes too protracted, pupils' attention, concentration and standards of behaviour diminish.

The quality of teaching was at least satisfactory. Teachers and support assistants provide careful explanation to promote scientific understanding and provide good support with literacy skills. Assessment and planning are weak overall. Marking of work is regular and nearly always forms part of a dialogue with individual pupils. Assessment over longer periods to determine progress against National Curriculum requirements is under-developed. Plans for individual lessons list the tasks to be undertaken, but do not identify the key skills or knowledge which the pupils need to learn. Longer-term planning is based on two separate schemes of work and one derived from a national syllabus for Key Stage 4. The latter, with its emphasis on very short modules, is very well suited to the needs of the pupils. It enables the majority to attain nationally recognised accreditation by the age of 16. There are a few elements in the other two schemes which are appropriate to the needs of the pupils. However, there is insufficient coherence in this arrangement to maximise continuity of scientific development. The co-ordinator recognises the limitations and problems associated with the current situation but has insufficient non-teaching time to support other colleagues or monitor teaching. There has been no in-service training in recent years and staff lack the knowledge and confidence to plan appropriate work, or develop the curriculum.

There is a small well-equipped science laboratory. Resources are generally good although more resources are needed to support work at Key Stage 2.

## **OTHER SUBJECTS OR COURSES**

Information and communications technology (ICT) lessons are programmed for all pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 and the younger ones have regular opportunities to use computers and other programmable equipment during work in other subjects. Some of the older pupils also follow a design technology course which includes considerable computer use and the development of a range of computer skills.

The pupils' attainments are below national expectations due, in most cases, to their lack of suitable previous experience and relate mainly to simple word processing. Keyboard skills are, however, increasing as a result of regular practice, and pupils are making progress.

Attitudes to the work are generally good. In one Key Stage 2 lesson where computers were used the pupils were well motivated and focused on their assignments throughout the time allocated.

Most lessons are taught by specialists and the quality of teaching is at least satisfactory and occasionally very good. Tasks are clearly explained and plenty of assistance is provided to those who require it. Expectations are high and teachers are keen to increase the complexity of the assignments. There are, however, several

pupils whose keyboard and basic ICT skills need further consolidation and may become frustrated if the work level increases too quickly.

The school receives good support from the technician who also often assists the pupils to learn new computer skills during their ICT lessons.

The school provides a limited design technology programme of study which currently lacks much of the construction element but food technology (FT) plays an important part in the Key Stage 2 curriculum and, with better facilities, could be extended and taught throughout the school.

The pupils are making good progress in FT and their achievements fall within national norms. Pupils understand the importance of hygiene and cleanliness during preparation, have a growing knowledge of food types and their nutritional values and handle equipment safely and with confidence. They are interested in and enjoy the work.

The quality of teaching is good. Activities continue at a suitable pace, clear instructions and explanations are provided, resources are well prepared and easily accessible and during practical sessions plenty of encouragement and praise is given.

The specialist D&T workshop which doubles as an art room is not yet properly equipped and the dual use may not be suitable for making and storing a variety of D&T and art assignments.

In art many pupils achieve good standards, progress is satisfactory and pupils respond well. Even those who have little confidence in the subject are encouraged to participate and feel pleased with the outcome. There is, as yet, however, no external accreditation in the subject. Teaching is sound with most lessons taught by a special support assistant who is enthusiastic and has good subject knowledge. The art room is a good resource which has a wide range of materials which supports the standards of work achieved very well.

Pupils in Key Stage 2 receive regular French lessons. They concentrate well and use their limited vocabulary confidently and with reasonable pronunciation. The teaching is satisfactory and the pupils are making reasonable progress but the programme is still at the introductory stage and is not available to all Key Stage 3 pupils.

The life skills programme is well organised and the pupils make good progress. A good range of activities ensures that the pupils make best use of their mathematical and literacy skills while developing an understanding of the variables to be considered when planning a week's menus and creating a shopping list. The pupils' interest and concentration levels remained high and all were fully involved throughout the lesson.

The teaching is good. Effective use is made of the special support assistants who all contributed considerably through their well organised individual assistance and introduction of new ideas as pupils' imagination flagged.

In addition to working towards accreditation the lesson also contributed much to the pupils' social development.

Geography is timetabled for all pupils and in the few lessons observed the pupils are making sound progress. Those completing a topic on the British Isles can identify and name several major rivers, the seas around the coast and large towns and cities. The Key Stage 4 geography certificate of achievement group have a sound knowledge of the location, cause and formation of volcanoes. All are interested in the work, recall previously learned facts with confidence, and thoughtfully apply their knowledge to new situations.

The quality of teaching ranges from sound to unsatisfactory. In one lesson the teacher was successfully able to respond to queries and guide the pupils to greater independence and self-confidence, whereas elsewhere, insufficient attention was paid to individual difficulties.

Careers information is successfully provided by both the school and the local careers guidance officer. During one well taught lesson the pupils satisfactorily completed a self assessment questionnaire although a lack of concentration towards the end of the session was noticeable as several began to find fault and lose patience with each other.

The course has yet to be introduced to Key Stage 3 pupils but there is a reasonable collection of resources available. Work experience opportunities are provided and are proving to be helpful in guiding the pupils to make sensible choices when planning for college courses.

No history or religious education lessons were seen during the inspection.

With the exception of the occasional lesson in Key Stage 2, music is not taught.

Physical education is taught but no lessons were seen and planning is in outline only, making it difficult to make judgements about the quality of the provision. The school uses a local sports centre in Ashford and facilities in local schools. A good range of games is taught and swimming is available for all pupils and most make good progress in achieving the various stages of proficiency. Pupils enjoy physical education and look forward to their lessons.

## **INSPECTION DATA**

### **Summary of inspection evidence**

- A total of 38 lessons or parts of lessons amounting to over 19 hours of teaching throughout the school was observed and discussions held with all teachers and most of the special support assistants.
- The school's policies, prospectus, staff handbook and other documentation were scrutinised and reports, statements, annual reviews, IEPs, pupils' records and samples of the pupils' work were examined.
- Meetings with the proprietor, chair of governors and headteacher deputy headteacher and senior teachers provided useful information on the management of the school.
- The pupils' arrival and departure, lunchtime, breaks, registration periods and assemblies were observed.

- Completed questionnaires and discussions with several foster carers and pupils provided additional information concerning their satisfaction with the school.

## Appendix 1

### Pupil and teacher numbers

Number of full-time pupils	Girls: 14; Boys: 35 ; Total: 49
Number of part-time pupils	Girls: 0; Boys: 0; Total: 0
Number of pupils with a statement	46

Full-time qualified teachers	6
Part-time qualified teachers	0
Part-time unqualified teachers	3

Other staff	0
Special support assistants	21
School secretaries	2
Premises maintenance staff	3



## **Appendix 2**

### **Placing authorities**

Barking and Dagenham

Barnet

Bedfordshire

Brent

Buckinghamshire

Camden

Coventry

Croydon

Greenwich

Hackney

Hammersmith and Fulham

Hampshire

Hertfordshire

Hillingdon

Islington

Kent

Lambeth

Milton Keynes

Norfolk

Redbridge

Southwark

Waltham Forest

### **Finance**

<b>Income</b>	<b>1997-98 (£)</b>	<b>1998-99 (£)</b>
Basic budget	585,236	600,000
Grants	0	0
Income from facilities and services	0	0
Donations/private funds	0	0
Other income	0	0
<b>Total income</b>	<b>585,236</b>	<b>600,000</b>

Basic fee per pupil: £400 per week

#### **Pupil numbers according to National Curriculum years**

	Boys	Girls	Total
Year 3 (age 7-8)	1	0	1
Year 4	2	1	3
Year 5	1	0	1
Year 6	3	2	5
Year 7	2	1	3
Year 8	7	3	10
Year 9	7	1	8
Year 10	6	2	8
Year 11	6	2	8
Year 12	0	2	2

## PARENTAL SURVEY

Number of questionnaires sent out:	49
Number of questionnaires returned:	17

### RESPONSES:

	Agree	Disagree	Other/Comments
I am happy with the school my child attends.	17	0	
I think this school meets my child's special education needs.	16	1	1 - No longer able to meet complex SEN
I believe that the school helps me to understand what my child is taught.	16	0	1 - no response
I think that the school keeps me well informed about my child's progress.	16	1	1 - only at reviews
I am happy with the standards of behaviour at this school.	16	0	1 - no response
I believe that this school helps my child have positive attitudes to school work.	17	0	
I believe that this school helps my child to mix well with other children.	17	0	
I believe that this school promotes the personal and social development of my child.	17	0	
I think that this school prepares my child for the next stage of education and training.	16	0	1 - no response
I feel supported by the school.	16	0	1 - no response
I feel that my child is safe at this school.	17	0	
I believe my child likes this school.	15	2	1 - not lately 1 - sometimes

Views expressed by the pupils' foster carers/social workers. There were 17 responses.

There was a high level of satisfaction with all responses agreeing with two thirds of the statements. Concerns were few but one would have liked more regular information of the pupil's progress and another suggested that the pupil has recently not liked school as much as they used to.