

INSPECTION REPORT

FRED NICHOLSON SCHOOL

Dereham

LEA area: Norfolk

Unique reference number: 121256

Headteacher: Mr Malcolm Clayton

Reporting inspector: Mrs Rosemary Eaton
15173

Dates of inspection: 20th – 23rd March 2000

Inspection number: 183965

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	8 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Westfield Road Dereham Norfolk
Postcode:	NR19 1JB
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs I. Floering Blackman
Date of previous inspection:	19 th September 1994

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Rosemary Eaton	Registered inspector	Art; Design and technology	Standards; Teaching; Leadership and management
Roberta Mothersdale	Lay inspector	Equal opportunities	Attitudes, behaviour, personal development; Community links; Care; Links with parents; Residential
Ivor Evenden	Team inspector	English; History; Special educational needs	Assessment
Tim Lawes	Team inspector	Science; Geography; Physical education	Curriculum
Margaret Smith	Team inspector	French; Music; Religious education; Personal, social and health education.	Personal and social education; spiritual, moral, social and cultural development
Alan Tattersall	Team inspector	Mathematics; Information and communications technology	Staffing, accommodation and resources; efficiency

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Fred Nicholson is a community day and residential special school, for pupils aged 7 to 16 with moderate learning difficulties. Designated for 95 pupils, there are currently 89 on roll, 23 of whom are boarders for at least part of the week. All pupils have statements of special educational needs. Although 58 per cent of the pupils have moderate learning difficulties, a further 30 per cent have statements for emotional and behavioural difficulties, and others have speech and communication or medical needs or autistic spectrum disorders. Altogether, 48 per cent of pupils have some degree of emotional and behavioural difficulties and 20 per cent have been excluded whilst attending their previous school. The percentage with emotional and behavioural difficulties has almost doubled since the previous inspection. Most pupils enter the school with very low levels of attainment. Only one pupil is from a minority ethnic background. When all eligible pupils are taken into account, 56 per cent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, which reflects the high levels of unemployment within the pupils' families.

The local education authority is currently reviewing its special educational needs provision and the future role and nature of the school have not yet been established.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Fred Nicholson is a very good school. Pupils make very good progress and achieve very well. Their attitudes and personal development are very good, and their behaviour and attendance are good. The quality of teaching is very good, and the school is very well led and managed. It gives very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils achieve very well and make very good progress in their learning and personal development. Their attitudes are very good.
- Teachers have very high levels of subject expertise and very high expectations for pupils.
- The headteacher's leadership is excellent. The contribution of other key staff and the governing body is very good.
- The very high quality curriculum, including the provision for personal, social and health education, is very well planned.
- The school assesses and monitors all aspects of pupils' progress very well.
- The school's limited resources are used very efficiently.
- All staff, whatever their role, are committed to raising standards.

What could be improved

- Risk assessments have not been completed for all aspects of the school.
- There is no playground suitable for Key Stage 2 pupils.
- The residential accommodation provides insufficient privacy for pupils.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school's previous full inspection was in 1994, when it was found to be in need of special measures. However, by 1997 these were no longer required. Since 1994 the school's improvement has been outstanding. It is hard to find any aspect of the school where improvement has been less than very good. Pupils' achievement and progress and their behaviour have improved dramatically, in response to similar improvements in the quality of teaching and the school's procedures for managing behaviour. The curriculum and assessment practices, including individual education plans, have both improved considerably. The leadership and management of the school have improved very much indeed, and are now very effective. The school plans very well to use its resources, and the management of the budget has shown exceptionally good improvement. Learning resources are now good and are used very effectively. The school's accommodation has improved, although there are still deficiencies. The links between the education and residential provision have developed very

well and are very strong. Value for money, which was unsatisfactory or poor, is now very good. To all intents and purposes, this is a different school. It is very well placed to continue to improve.

STANDARDS

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

Progress in:		by age 11	by age 16	
speaking and listening		A	A	
reading		A	A	
writing		A	A	
mathematics		A	A	
personal, social and health education		A	A	
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*		A	A	

Key	
very good	A
good	B
satisfactory	C
unsatisfactory	D
poor	E

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

In 1999, the school set a target for 30 per cent of its Year 11 pupils to achieve a GCSE pass in art. This target was exceeded. Targets in pupils' individual education plans are suitably challenging, but are regularly surpassed, because pupils make such good progress. In the majority of subjects, pupils achieve much higher standards than are seen typically in schools such as this. In English, speaking and listening are particular strengths. Pupils steadily develop reading and writing skills and have frequent opportunities to apply them across the curriculum. In mathematics, the implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy has led to very good progress in pupils' understanding and use of number, and in the development of their skills. Investigative work is a particular strength in science. Pupils use information and communications technology independently and effectively, to support their learning across the curriculum. In art, the originality and quality of the work produced by Key Stage 4 pupils is of a remarkably high standard. Pupils' ability to analyse their own performance and that of others is a particular strength in physical education. In French, pupils speak with confidence and have an understanding of basic grammatical structures. In their personal, social and health education, pupils' confidence and self-esteem grow. They become independent and able to make informed choices, preparing them well for adult life.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils strive to succeed in their learning.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils recognise the boundaries of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. This means that they are able to make the most of the opportunities offered them – for example, to use computers without supervision.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils are confident with staff and each other. They become increasingly able to take responsibility for themselves.
Attendance	Good: above the national average for a school of this type.

Pupils enjoy their work and are keen to attend school. They are well motivated in lessons, especially

when they make choices about their work – for example, in art and design and technology. They participate well in discussions, showing concern for the opinions and feelings of others. Behaviour in the residential provision is very good. Relationships are very good, between pupils and with education and care staff. This means that pupils are willing to accept advice and to work together cooperatively.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:		aged 5-11	aged 11-16	
Lessons seen overall		Very good	Very good	

Inspectors make judgements about teaching in the range: excellent; very good; good; satisfactory; unsatisfactory; poor; very poor. 'Satisfactory' means that the teaching is adequate and strengths outweigh weaknesses.

In English, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education, the quality of teaching is very good.

Particular strengths of the teaching are teachers' very good subject knowledge, their very high expectations, their skilful use of questioning techniques to help pupils think for themselves, and their insistence that pupils be as independent as possible. Communication skills, including literacy and numeracy are taught very well. The very high quality specialist teaching is even more effective because all teachers take advantage of opportunities to promote these key skills across the curriculum. The school meets the needs of all pupils very well, because teachers are very aware of their individual targets and plan carefully for them to be achieved. During the inspection, teaching was very good or excellent in 46 per cent of lessons and there was no unsatisfactory teaching.

The quality of learning is very good. Pupils try very hard and make very good progress. They are interested in lessons and are willing to accept responsibility for their learning. They work very well together – for example, to carry out investigations in science.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum is broad and suitably balanced. Its relevance to the needs of the pupils is a particular strength.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural, development	Very good. In addition to very good quality specialist lessons, all teachers help pupils to develop the skills they need for the next stage of their education and the challenges of adult life.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school is committed to raising standards of all aspects of the care of pupils, and ensuring their good health and well-being.

The school works very hard to promote links with parents, who are increasingly supportive of its work. The National Curriculum is interpreted and modified very appropriately to suit the needs of the pupils. There is an appropriate focus on literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology. Very good attention is paid to the aspects that encourage pupils to apply their knowledge and understanding – for example, investigations in science and problem solving in mathematics.

The provision of recreational and social activities for boarding pupils is very good.

Careers guidance and work experience opportunities are very good. The school's links with the community make a very good contribution to pupils' learning.

Very good quality acts of collective worship make a positive start to the school day.

Mealtimes make a good contribution to the care of pupils.

There are very good procedures for meeting pupils' medical needs. Very good links between care and education staff ensure that information is shared efficiently. There are very good procedures for

monitoring and supporting
pupils' progress and promoting good behaviour.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher's leadership is exceptionally strong and effective. The deputy headteacher, head of care, senior staff and others with management responsibility work in partnership and fulfil their roles very well.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Very good. The governors are very effective. They are well informed and play an active part in developments and in shaping the future of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. A wide range of methods is used, including observations of teaching and learning and comparisons with other similar schools.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The school plans carefully to make very effective use of its resources to promote high standards of teaching and learning.

There are insufficient teaching and support staff. Learning resources are good. There is good specialist accommodation for subjects such as science and art, but there is no playground for Key Stage 2 pupils and the residential accommodation is unsatisfactory.

The headteacher has put in place highly effective systems and strategies to improve the school's performance. All staff share his determination to raise standards.

The arrangements for staff development are very good.

The school uses all available comparative data to help it plan and monitor its expenditure very carefully, to ensure that it obtains best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like the school. • The teaching is good. • They feel comfortable approaching the school with problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A large proportion is concerned that children do not receive enough homework. • Some parents feel that the school is not working closely enough with them. • There are some concerns about pupils' behaviour. • Some parents are unhappy about the range of activities available outside lessons.

The inspectors have formed a much more positive view of the school than have parents. Pupils take home reading books regularly, and there is mathematics homework, particularly in Key Stage 2. The school's homework policy is clear – it responds to parents' requests and encourages them to support their children by asking for work. This is a satisfactory situation. The school is trying hard to involve parents and keep them well informed. Behaviour is good. Pupils who board have a very wide range of activities, and a satisfactory number of lunchtime clubs and activities are available to all. Transport arrangements for pupils who are not resident inhibit the provision of activities beyond the school day.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. It is inappropriate to judge the attainment of pupils for whom this school caters against age related national averages or expectations. The report does however give examples of what pupils know, understand and can do. Judgements about progress and references to attainment take account of information contained in pupils' statements, annual reviews and individual education plans. Most pupils enter the school with very low levels of attainment, particularly in language and literacy, numeracy and personal and social skills. As a result of very good teaching and a highly relevant curriculum, they make very good progress and achieve very well in relation to their abilities. Standards have risen considerably since the previous inspection. At that time, standards were less than satisfactory in more than 50 per cent of lessons and in most subjects, particularly in Key Stages 3 and 4. The school has brought about these improvements by securing very good quality teaching and curricular planning, which pay close attention to pupils' individual needs and set challenging targets for them to achieve. By the time they leave school at the end of Key Stage 4, pupils achieve successes in GCSE art examinations and in other nationally accredited courses. In some aspects of other subjects, such as design and technology and physical education, pupils approach standards similar to those seen in mainstream schools.
2. There are slight variations in the standards achieved in subjects and between key stages in some subjects. These are linked to the quality of teaching and occasionally, as in music, to factors such as curricular planning or subject management. In some subjects, such as mathematics, older pupils are still making up for gaps in their earlier experiences – they are consolidating basic numeracy skills. At all key stages, pupils achieve very well and make very good progress in all aspects of English, mathematics, design and technology, information and communications technology, physical education and personal, social and health education. In art and French, standards are very high in Key Stages 3 and 4, and the same applies to history in Key Stage 3 and science in Key Stage 4. There is insufficient evidence to make firm judgements about history and music in Key Stage 2, and these subjects are not taught in Key Stage 4. In other subjects and key stages, progress and achievement are good, other than in music at Key Stage 3, where standards are satisfactory. Higher and lower attaining pupils make progress at similar rates, because teachers pay such good attention to their individual needs and targets.
3. The very good progress in personal, social and health education has a significant impact on pupils' achievement and progress across the curriculum, because they become increasingly confident and independent learners. Combined with a particular emphasis within the curriculum, this results in pupils' achieving especially well in those aspects of subjects where they need to demonstrate independent thinking and initiative – for example, investigative work in science and evaluating performance in physical education. Similarly, the very good attention paid by all teachers to developing literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology skills across the curriculum produces considerable benefits all round. Progress and achievement in English, mathematics and information and communications technology is enhanced, because pupils regularly practise and apply their skills and in other subjects, such as

design and technology and history, pupils' learning is accelerated by their ability to conduct research independently and record their findings.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

4. Pupils' attitudes to school are very good. They arrive at school smiling and cheerful, delighted to meet up with their friends and staff. They express clearly their pleasure in learning and displaying their skills. For example, Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils speak confidently in French, and this has a positive impact on their learning and acquisition of vocabulary. Pupils throughout the school are very keen to achieve well and they absorb knowledge readily. In a religious education lesson, when examining artefacts of the Muslim faith, pupils combined their curiosity and interest with respect for a religion that was not their own. The residential provision makes a very good contribution to pupils' attitudes to the school. Care staff know what pupils have been working on during the day, and regularly assist in the classrooms. After school, they talk to pupils about their work and this increases their motivation. Pupils are keen to take part in the activities offered, showing their enthusiasm to be involved in all aspects of school life.
5. Pupils' behaviour, both in and around the school, is good. This has a very positive impact on their learning, as it minimises the number of disruptions that take place in lessons. On the whole, pupils ignore anyone who is behaving badly and only react when their own learning is being threatened. One pupil had a number of fixed term exclusions last year. Where the school perceives that a threat exists to the personal safety of either pupils or staff, they do not hesitate to exclude pupils. However, the school's meticulous cross-referencing of behavioural incidents normally anticipates when a pupil's behaviour could lead to exclusion, and strategies are put in place to help them avoid this. Pupils' good behaviour enables them to make effective use of opportunities – for example, work experience placements or visits in the community. The school is justifiably proud of the positive feedback it receives from employers who have accepted pupils for placements. The good behaviour and trustworthiness of boarding pupils has a positive impact on the opportunities open to them, such as helping to build models and track for a train set.
6. Pupils' personal development and relationships are very good. They are very kind to each other, polite when helping or receiving help, and they derive great pleasure from their leisure time and the wide range of activities open to them. For example, many older pupils happily volunteer to play pool with younger children. Pupils clear up after meal times and tidy away after lessons. Pupils who have been elected to positions of responsibility within the school, such as house captains and prefects, take their roles very seriously and acknowledge the good example that they know they must set to younger pupils. Residential pupils are expected to fulfil a range of domestic duties and this supports the creation of a friendly, relaxed and homely atmosphere among pupils and all staff. The very good arrangements for mealtimes offer pupils opportunities to demonstrate good manners and consolidate relationships between pupils and with care and teaching staff. Older pupils show a mature understanding of world events – for example, conflict in Northern Ireland – and can take part in thoughtful and quiet discussions and appreciate the feelings of those who are involved. In lessons such as mathematics, younger pupils ask each other questions, play games together and share resources, contributing to the very good progress they make. In class assemblies, pupils willingly share and discuss their perceptions – for example, of bullying, being different, or their concerns about drugs. Pupils make very good use of the school's library to access information independently on the Internet to support their

studies, homework and interests. Pupils feel strongly that the school helps them to be independent.

7. Attendance at the school is good and above the national average for a school of this type. There are also fewer unauthorised absences than average, because the school is very keen to ensure that the reasons for all absences are known. Pupils enjoy coming to school, hurry to registration and are keen to start their lessons. They are generally punctual, as the school transport arrangements and liaison with school escorts and drivers are good. The small numbers of pupils who make their own way to school also arrive on time. The school regularly analyses attendance data and has a good partnership with the educational welfare service to follow up any persistent or worrying absences.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

8. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good. The teaching has many strengths and no significant weaknesses. During the inspection, teaching was very good or excellent in 46 per cent of lessons, good in 43 per cent and satisfactory in the remaining eleven per cent. This represents a considerable improvement since the previous inspection, when teaching was less than satisfactory in over half the lessons.
9. The improvements have been brought about by a large number of factors. For example, new appointments have been made, offering a better match of qualifications and experience to subjects and the age range in the school. The number of support assistants has been increased, and their role in classrooms has developed very well. Subject accommodation and learning resources have improved, and curricular planning is now well established, providing an effective framework within which teachers can work. Additionally, teaching and learning have been monitored effectively and any necessary action taken – for example, providing advice and support.
10. At the time of the previous inspection, a major weakness was teachers' lack of subject knowledge. As a result of some of the school's developments, teachers now have very good levels of subject expertise. For example, the skills of literacy and numeracy are taught very well, because teachers have a detailed knowledge of English and mathematics and the pupils' individual needs and this means that they are able to structure learning through a series of very carefully controlled small steps. The very good quality English and mathematics teaching is made the more effective because teachers throughout the school reinforce numeracy and literacy constantly, through pupils' work in other subjects. During a design and technology lesson, pupils in Year 11 used reference books to locate information and read and compared recipes. They recorded their decisions and justified them, tackling spellings independently but checking in dictionaries. This contributed to their progress in design and technology, but also provided a relevant opportunity for them to apply and improve their reading and writing skills. Similarly, pupils learn to use information and communications technology within the context of other subjects. Teachers are very skilled at identifying suitable openings. They treat resources such as digital cameras and the Internet as a natural part of learning and every day life, and their confidence has a positive effect on pupils' own attitudes. For example, in art lessons, pupils might use the Internet to locate images, and make extensive and effective use of photocopying in order to manipulate ideas, perhaps by enlarging areas or adding colour. In this way, pupils make very good progress in art, in information and communications technology, and in their personal development – because their ability to learn independently is enhanced.

11. Teachers are very aware of the importance of encouraging pupils to take responsibility for their own learning, and they make full use of all opportunities. Again, this is a particularly significant feature because at the time of the previous inspection pupils did not acquire habits of independent learning and were not given opportunities to be self-reliant. As a result of teachers' insistence that pupils not only do things for themselves but think for themselves as well, pupils throughout the school have an expectation that they will be as independent as possible. This is one reason why the quality of learning is very good. Support assistants, who make a very significant contribution to pupils' learning, almost always play their part – for example, by encouraging pupils to make decisions and carry out their chosen course of action. In an English lesson, Year 11 pupils were writing a news broadcast, a task well matched to their needs. They were given clear directions and plenty of examples to guide them, but ultimately had to think for themselves: the teacher and support assistant refused to do the work for them. However, very occasionally indeed, support assistants take over from pupils and give them too much help. This means that pupils may not fully understand what they are doing and their rate of progress is slowed down. In the majority of lessons, pupils who experience difficulty in making decisions are guided expertly by questions, designed to lead them to a logical conclusion by structuring their thoughts.
12. In contrast to the findings of the previous inspection, teachers have very high expectations of pupils – their behaviour and their participation in lessons and, particularly, the standards they are to reach. In order for pupils to meet these expectations, teachers plan lessons and projects very carefully, taking into account the targets in pupils' individual education plans. This means that tasks are nearly always pitched at a suitable level – pupils understand what they have to do, but need to concentrate and make an effort in order to succeed. In fact, they often try very hard because they enjoy learning and want to do well. For example, in a mathematics lesson, pupils in Year 9 listened very well to the teacher's questions, anticipating their turn and preparing their answer, so that they could give a quick response. Another reason why pupils are committed to learning is that very often teachers are clearly enthusiastic, and their own enjoyment is infectious. For example, in physical education lessons, the teacher injects pace and urgency, with the result that pupils are very well motivated and make very good efforts.
13. Pupils have confidence in their teachers and this means that they are prepared to tackle activities which might otherwise seem daunting. For instance, pupils in Key Stage 2 were happy to take part in a spirited dramatisation of 'The Pied Piper of Hamelin'. Although some pupils had difficulty in expressing themselves, they were confident to improvise dialogue and actions and to ask and answer questions whilst in role. Throughout the school, their very good quality relationships with teachers result in pupils who trust that their efforts will be valued. Additionally, pupils follow their teachers' examples and work very cooperatively with each other. For example, in science lessons, pupils work together to conduct investigations sensibly and safely, sharing tasks and taking turns, so that the available time is used very well and they make very good progress.

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

14. The curriculum of the school is very good. The statutory requirement to teach all National Curriculum subjects is fully met, indicating significant progress since the

previous inspection. A particularly effective feature is the way in which the school has adapted the National Curriculum to suit the needs of the pupils. This has resulted in a curriculum that is very relevant to the abilities and interests of all the pupils in the school, ensuring very good equality of access and opportunity. Throughout each key stage, an appropriate emphasis is placed on the acquisition of literacy, numeracy and information and communications technology skills. The school has worked particularly hard to implement both the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies. They have been suitably modified to meet the needs of all pupils and are having a very positive impact on the standards achieved.

15. Much work has been done since the last inspection to extend the learning opportunities available to the pupils, again with a considerable degree of success. As a result pupils benefit from a broad range of planned opportunities and experiences in all subjects. This is particularly effective in promoting their intellectual, physical and, especially their personal development. Older pupils benefit from an increasing range of opportunities to study for nationally recognised qualifications. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection and is having a positive impact on pupils' self-esteem and personal development.
16. The school has developed a very good programme of personal, health and social education, which includes sex education and awareness of the dangers of drug misuse. It has a significant impact on pupils' personal and social development. It prepares pupils very well for the next stage of education, and the challenges of adult life. The provision is further enhanced by the specific, planned development of those aspects of subjects that encourage pupils to apply their knowledge and understanding. For example, investigative work in science, speaking and listening in English and problem solving in mathematics are all promoted strongly. As a consequence, pupils quickly become confident, independent learners – for example, they regularly use the Internet facilities during lunchtimes. The range of evening activities for boarding pupils is very good. Some parents referred to a lack of activities for pupils who are not boarders, but this is not the case. The school recognises the constraints placed on it by transport arrangements for the majority of pupils, and organises a range of activities during lunchtimes. This provision enables pupils to develop and extend their knowledge, understanding and skills in such areas as French, football and music.
17. Carefully considered policies are in place for all subjects of the curriculum. These are supplemented by well-planned, well-organised schemes of work indicating what teachers intend to teach and what pupils are expected to learn. The same planning format is used for all subjects. This includes provision for links between subjects, the identification of those key concepts the school wishes to actively promote – such as developing research skills – and close reference to the National Curriculum requirements. In this way, the school achieves a high degree of consistency between the subjects, regarding not only what pupils are expected to learn but also how they should learn. As a result, pupils become confident in adapting and applying what they know to different subjects. For example, during a Year 11 geography lesson, pupils were able recall information from science lessons, about the process of photosynthesis, helping them to develop their understanding of balanced environments. In most subjects, these plans ensure that pupils are given very good opportunities to build on what they know, understand and can do. In music, curricular planning promotes pupils' progression less effectively.
18. The contribution of the community to pupils' learning is very good. Local facilities such as a swimming pool are used and boarding pupils can join groups – for example,

scouts or a football club – helping them to use free time constructively. The community is very supportive of the school, helping to boost funds for a new Key Stage 2 playground and more library resources, and enabling Key Stage 4 pupils to take part in work experience placements, with a wide range of employers and providers. Learning in the classroom is enriched by regular visits within the locality. For example pupils have explored the rock formations at Hunstanton beach as part of their work in geography and nearby villages to supplement their work in history and literacy. Through these visits pupils learn to apply the skills they have learnt – for example, observing buildings closely in order to identify, record and explain the location of paupers' graves in Wicklewood.

19. The provision the school makes for careers guidance, including work experience, is very good. Though it begins formally in Year 9, key skills such as decision-making and the development of research skills are actively promoted throughout the school from Key Stage 2 onwards. As a result pupils make well-informed choices – for example, about work experience placements and college courses in Key Stage 4. The school's very close links with the local careers service is very supportive of both work experience and pupils' transition to their next stage of education.
20. Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is provided for very well. Religious education lessons offer an insight into a wide variety of faiths, and pupils are encouraged to consider how our beliefs affect the way we live. The lives of people who have shown bravery or selflessness – for example, Grace Darling – are studied and related to the pupils' own experience of acts of courage or sacrifice. Older pupils learn about conflict, using Northern Ireland as an example, and consider how it can be resolved. The very good quality acts of collective worship play a significant part in pupils' spiritual and moral development. Pupils listen attentively to the message of stories, have opportunities to pray and reflect, and join in singing hymns.
21. Pupils are taught to understand the difference between right and wrong and helped to develop a strong sense of justice. Rules are displayed around the school, and pupils are helped to appreciate the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Discussions are used in many subjects including religious education, English and history, to provide opportunities for the development of moral awareness. For example, pupils are taught to recognise how their actions affect others. Relationships in the school are very good, and there is mutual respect between adults and pupils, and pupils and their peers. Collaborative work in lessons is well planned, and very effective. Pupils are encouraged to show initiative and take increasing responsibility as they progress through the school. Older pupils act as house captains and as prefects. Pupils in the residential accommodation are expected to help with chores, plan evening activities, and co-operate with each other in a mature and responsible way. Good opportunities exist in the leavers' flat, for older boarding pupils to work towards looking after themselves and cooking the occasional evening meal, but there are limited facilities for making snacks in the remainder of the dormitories.
22. Opportunities are provided, through literature, religious education, and local projects and visits, to enable pupils to understand and appreciate their own culture and a wide variety of others. For example, in French they study culture and tradition, art lessons make a significant contribution to pupils' awareness of the work of famous artists, and pupils are occasionally given the opportunity to hear live music in school. Understanding of multicultural issues is provided through history, religious education and personal and social education lessons. The library has a very good selection of books to support the provision of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural

development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

23. Overall, the school takes good care of pupils' health and well-being. All staff know the pupils very well. They work hard to ensure pupils' happiness, personal support and consistent and fair management of their behaviour. There are very effective practices to ensure that pupils' medical needs are known, that good links with health and behavioural specialists are maintained and that contact with pupils' homes can be made quickly. All members of staff are familiar with the present procedures of the area child protection committee and three have had recent and detailed training in child protection procedures. A recent social services inspection highlighted the necessity for refresher child protection training to be actively pursued for all care staff, and the school is committed to ensuring this. Very effective procedures ensure that incidents of challenging behaviour are dealt with quickly and firmly. Systems for recording all aspects of pupils' behaviour, from disruptive to praiseworthy, are very comprehensive, and provide an accurate gauge of any change in behaviour. The close links between the personal, social and health education programme, prominent anti-bullying notices around the school and the emphasis on pupils' right to be heard, highlights the seriousness with which the school regards any oppressive or bullying behaviour. It takes firm action to address such issues.
24. The procedures to monitor attendance are good and include regular contact with parents and carers to verify the reasons for a pupil's absence and to encourage their regular attendance at school. Close links to the education welfare service and the analysis of attendance data by computerised record keeping assists the school in identifying any attendance concerns. The school's procedures for ensuring the health of pupils are very detailed. A number of staff have completed specialist first aid training and are competent to administer specialist medical procedures for specific pupils. The arrangements for dispensing medication or dealing with accidents are all carefully recorded, and mirrored in both the day provision of the school and the residential provision. The school's policy of registering all boarding pupils with the local doctor ensures that expert medical care and access to pupils' detailed medical records is immediately available if there should be an emergency.
25. The arrangements for securing the safety of all pupils are satisfactory, but require the completion of risk assessments for all aspects of school care and activities. The school is very quick to respond to safety issues that are notified to them, such as the requirement for new fire exit signs, and is already addressing other aspects raised during the inspection. The school holds regular emergency fire drills, both during the school day and whilst boarding pupils are still in their beds, and is conscientious on checking the electrical safety of portable appliances around the school. All boarding pupils have access to a private telephone where the name of the school's independent listener is prominently displayed. The care staff have a regular programme to ensure that boarding pupils maintain contact with their parents and carers on the telephone at least once during the week. Boarding pupils enjoy very good relationship with all the care staff, and have several opportunities each evening to make their own choice of activity whether active, constructive, academic or relaxed. The care arrangements in place take good account of the 1989 Children Act. The very good links between care and teaching staff ensure that information about boarders is transferred accurately at the start and the end of the school day. The school's catering manager makes a very effective contribution to the good health and safety of the pupils and ensures that

school meals are high quality.

26. Assessment and monitoring procedures are very good. They are well used to promote pupils' academic development. They are driven by targets set for each pupil, decided after taking account of the statement of special educational needs and the progress already made. The school's assessment policy makes clear the importance of this process. All records are well kept and carefully retained. Access to most records is unrestricted and teachers are encouraged to consult them whenever appropriate. An electronic system is currently being introduced, to further improve the efficiency of the system. Annual review reports are meticulously prepared and circulated well in advance.
27. Test results have been found to be unreliable indicators, so the school undertakes its own baseline assessment procedures before setting initial targets. These emerge in the individual education plans that become a focus for monitoring each pupil's progress. The school has adopted comprehensive but manageable procedures that ensure proper attention is given to the individual education plans. Every class has a 'green file' that follows it around from lesson to lesson. This contains up-to-date targets for each pupil for English, mathematics and information and communications technology. One target from each subject is regularly selected for particular attention, enabling the teacher to keep each pupil's core subject needs under review. In the same file, there is a record of each pupil's behaviour in each lesson. In this way, their day is kept under scrutiny, thus making a valuable contribution to helping those with behavioural difficulties. The record also feeds house points into a system that is wholly positive. The care taken in keeping these records is extended into the marking process and in the way that pupils' achievements are cross-referenced to particular pieces of work. Marked work also records how the piece was prepared. For example, the teacher might note 'unaided' or 'worked in a pair' or 'written up from corrected text'. Thus the record and evidence of progress is providing a good basis for the assessments presented at the annual review. In Key Stage 2, an additional development provides a computer graphic version of progress that is more easy to interpret. When this has been sufficiently tested, there are plans to extend it to other key stages.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

28. The parents' views of the school are good and the school is working hard to include parents and carers as active partners in their children's learning. Parents are well represented at events such as a careers guidance evening. Few are involved in the day-to-day working of the school, but they do support the very successful Friends of Fred Nicholson group. Although not run by parents, but by a very committed cross-section of care, support and teaching staff, this does seek to bring parents into school for social events such as a Christmas Fayre. The regular use of the home-school book, especially for younger pupils and, very importantly, for boarding pupils, helps to maintain close links between home and school. The patience with which care staff address concerns by parents is acknowledged by the confidence parents have in approaching the school with problems. Some parents are worried that the school is not providing sufficient homework on a regular basis for their children. However, the terms of the home-school contract do require the involvement of parents in homework provision. Other than reading, no work goes home at present unless specifically requested by parents or pupils.

29. The quality of information that the school provides for parents is good. The school works hard to ensure that letters, newsletters and reports of pupils' progress, such as the annual review documents, are readily understood by parents and that staff are available to discuss any queries or worries. The school makes good use of telephone contacts and, where appropriate, home visits are made in order to maintain the links between home and school. This is a very positive feature of the school's provision, when so many of the pupils' families live some distance from the school.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

30. The leadership and management of the school are very good. This is in sharp contrast to the findings of the previous inspection, which referred to 'unsatisfactory and ineffective practices' and made a Key Issue of the strategic management of the school.
31. The headteacher's leadership is exceptionally strong and effective. Working in partnership with the deputy headteacher, senior staff and the governing body, he has established a vision for the school's future and put in place highly effective systems and strategies to raise standards and meet the school's aims. This has led directly to the excellent progress made since the previous inspection. It has been achieved by the headteacher's accurate analysis of what needed to be done and his determination to move the school forward, despite considerable obstacles – such as the necessity to make a number of changes to the staff. It is to the headteacher's enormous credit that all staff, whatever their role, share the same commitment to raising standards and providing the best possible education for the pupils.
32. The deputy headteacher works closely with the headteacher and carries out a range of crucial tasks. For example, she has an overview of the curriculum and leads assessment practice. She, and the principal teacher, lead by example and set very high standards for other teachers, by the efficient way in which they carry out their responsibilities and in the quality of their teaching. Most teachers have management responsibilities, which they understand and fulfil conscientiously and effectively, including setting the agenda for future developments. The head of care provides a focal point for care arrangements in the boarding provision and during the school day. He has devised new care plans for boarding pupils that effectively combine the pupils' targets for personal, social and health education with the care staff's very good knowledge of the boarding pupils. Although not all of these new strategies are fully in place, the vision that he has for the comprehensive care of pupils and his ability to ensure effective liaison between teaching and care staff are promoting a high standard of care in the residential provision.
33. Throughout the school, a climate of trust has been established, resulting from the very open style of leadership engendered by the headteacher. Because all staff are involved in decision-making and development planning, they appreciate the school's current priorities and are aware of how they can contribute to supporting them. In turn, this is another factor responsible for the shared commitment to improve.
34. Fred Nicholson is a school that is constantly seeking ways to improve. A wide range of methods is used to monitor its effectiveness. In addition to formal lesson observations, carried out by key staff and local education authority advisers, the headteacher also

listens to staff and pupils. As a result, senior managers quickly identify where staff need support and are ready to offer practical help and advice. All staff receive feedback on their performance and there is clear evidence of standards improving as a result of firm action taken to overcome shortcomings. Several staff commented that they are not at all threatened by this process – they do not feel judged, but encouraged. The school makes use of all available data to compare its performance with that of similar schools and to provide best value. For example, the headteacher uses data from OFSTED to inform his analysis of the school's resources and outcomes. Seeking to further improve standards, the school is beginning to use information technology to monitor pupils' progress more efficiently, to share this with parents, set targets for improvement and judge the impact of initiatives.

35. The governing body is very effective in helping to shape the future of the school. Governors are well informed, including knowledge acquired at first-hand, from visits to classrooms. Following the example set by the Chair, governors play an active role in developments, have a clear idea of the school's priorities, and share in the determination to improve. They take full advantage of training opportunities and are guided by the headteacher – for example, on the focus of classroom observations.
36. The school uses staff appraisal and professional development interviews well to determine the priorities for staff development. The provision for professional development is very good and has had a significant impact on promoting high standards in teaching and pupil support. It has ensured a very high level of training in information and communications technology and the Literacy and Numeracy Strategies and thus had an extremely strong impact on raising standards in these areas. The school has inducted new staff well, since the previous inspection. However, the shortage of teaching and care staff means that new staff do not always receive as much support as the school would like to give.
37. Teaching staff have a good level of expertise and experience, particularly to teach specialist subjects. However, the number of teaching and classroom support staff and care staff is insufficient to meet the needs of a school of this type. There are occasions when there are insufficient teachers and support staff in class to support pupils who have behaviour that is more challenging. When staff attend to behavioural difficulties, in a minority of lessons, they are unable to give sufficient support to the remainder of the class.
38. Accommodation for specialist subjects such as science and design and technology is good. This complements the teachers' specialist knowledge to contribute to the very high achievement of pupils. The school grounds are good for physical education and leisure activities. However there is not a designated area for pupils at Key Stage 2 to play outdoors at break times and they miss the opportunity provided for pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4. The school has endeavoured to improve accommodation with a limited budget. There are some good aspects to the provision for residential pupils, such as the flat for pupils to prepare for independent living. Pupils who board benefit from using good facilities in school such as the gymnasium, grounds and art room, enabling them to participate in a very varied programme of activities in the evening. However, the sleeping and study accommodation lacks sufficient privacy and the location of some bathrooms is unsatisfactory. The school has very recently negotiated additional funding to begin to address deficiencies in accommodation and the staffing of the boarding provision.
39. The use of financial resources was inefficient at the time of the last inspection and the

value for money was unsatisfactory. Budget management and administration of finances are now very efficient. Initiatives in the development plan reflect school priorities, with good arrangements to seek the best value in purchasing. In this way, the school makes very good use of available funds to support pupils, whilst balancing a limited budget. School administration is efficient and unobtrusive, and ensures that other staff can concentrate on their own responsibilities. High standards of decoration and cleanliness encourage pupils to care for the accommodation. Consequently, there is a high level of respect for the building and resources and no significant damage, with benefits to pupils' personal development and the finances of the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to raise standards further and improve the quality of provision, the school should:

1. Complete risk assessments for all aspects of its work and accommodation. (Para: 25)
2. Provide a playground suitable for Key Stage 2 pupils. (Para: 38)
3. Improve the quality of the residential accommodation. In particular, ensure greater privacy for pupils. (Para: 38)

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

- Provide all care staff with up to date training in child protection. (Para: 25)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	71
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	37

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
10	36	43	11	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	89
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	40

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

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

Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	5.2

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.6

Both tables give the percentage of half days (sessions) missed through absence for the latest complete reporting year.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	
White	88
Any other minority ethnic group	

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	10	1
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y4 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	7.8
Average class size	10

Education support staff: Y4 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	247

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	98-99
	£
Total income	822761
Total expenditure	835619
Expenditure per pupil	8705
Balance brought forward from previous year	13478
Balance carried forward to next year	620

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	89
Number of questionnaires returned	40

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	70	25	5	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	45	38	8	0	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	35	53	5	0	8
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	8	25	38	10	8
The teaching is good.	68	25	0	3	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	60	20	15	0	5
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	75	18	5	0	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	55	38	5	0	3
The school works closely with parents.	40	35	10	3	10
The school is well led and managed.	53	43	3	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	58	28	8	3	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	35	30	18	5	10

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

ENGLISH

40. Pupils achieve very good standards taking account of their special educational needs. Their progress is very good in all aspects of the subject, and the school's adaptation of the National Literacy Strategy to match pupils' needs has accelerated that progress. Overall, the quality of teaching is very good – it is never less than good and occasionally excellent. Lessons are always carefully planned and are driven along at a very good pace that makes best use of the time available. They are notable for the wide range of activities undertaken and the good interaction between pupils, the teacher and the support staff. There is an expectation that pupils will work hard and behave well. As a consequence, pupils learn in a flexible, supportive environment where their interests can be fostered, where they can respond positively through success and where step-by-step progress is maintained. Alongside this very effective teaching and learning, close attention is paid to each child's needs, assessments are made continuously and records and work are kept to measure progress and set targets for further improvement.
41. There is some evidence of steadily improving standards across the key stages. The considerable improvement in the teaching and learning process over recent years has had this effect and there is evident capacity for further improvement in standards as pupils move through the school.
42. At Key Stage 2, pupils who have failed to gain basic skills in their previous mainstream schools are learning to converse confidently, to listen to each other, to begin to read and to write. Older methods of teaching that simply repeated skills training have been abandoned in favour of lively, interactive methods that engage pupils' interest, raise their own expectations and involve good reinforcement techniques through the daily use of new technology. For example, one class was reading a poem aloud together, then adding physical actions to emphasise the meaning. The pupils identified the rhymes and then, using a prepared magnetic board, sorted these words into three spelling lists: 'ee' (tree), 'ea' (pea) and 'e' (he). Good work on phonics was also a feature of this lesson. The whole lists were then read through, up and down, by individuals, demonstrating that reading was fast developing. Lessons in Key Stage 2 are characterised by an exciting range of activities including role play and other very good oral opportunities, good story telling and very good independent work using simple computer programs.
43. Lessons in Key Stage 3 are similarly varied and result in very good progress. A feature of this work is the use of local historical themes that provide very good material for language activities. Two different parallel classes in Year 9 were taught by different teachers who were using the same material from a pamphlet about a local shipwreck in 1897. They looked closely at the pictures, read some of the text aloud using shared reading techniques and then discussed the events. The teachers questioned the class, drawing out meaning and focusing sharply on the vocabulary used before setting parameters of length and time for completion of the written work. Very good questioning techniques enabled pupils to take some responsibility for choice and presentation. The task – writing questions to require the answers to factual statements

that they identified in the text – was well matched to the pupils' competence and reinforced a number of literacy skills in the process. Both teachers generated interest and enthusiasm in achieving clear, well-planned objectives. The same resources were presented differently but used equally effectively to meet the needs of the two groups. In a Year 7 lesson, by contrast, pupils had studied Tennyson's poem 'The Lady of Shalott' and were making a short videotape of a scene to be presented to other classes later in the week. They were responsible for choosing the content of the piece, the players, the director, cameraman and other roles. Out of the 'chaos' of their deliberations and preparations evolved confident, serious filming. The skill of the teacher as facilitator ensured a very good learning experience where cooperation and agreement were essential to success. There were also very good opportunities for developing speaking and listening skills. English teaching was thus extended to good social training for pupils whose behaviour had been of considerable concern when admitted to the school.

44. At Key Stage 4, pupils were observed writing newscasts after they had considered different ways of reporting the same stories in four newspapers and then had viewed several television presentations of the same news items. The material was prepared and videotaped the day before. Reading and watching the news were unfamiliar activities for the pupils but they quickly understood how different perspectives can be obtained by different presentation techniques. Forced to think for themselves, they were able to write their own pieces drawing on their own ideas. This lesson that extended learning well beyond basic literacy training was typical of the work undertaken in these senior classes. Overall, progress was good despite the difficulties encountered in trying to write down what they wanted to say.
45. Since the last inspection, there has been considerable improvement in English teaching and learning. Attainment has improved, there is more emphasis on writing skills and drafting has become a normal process that affects the high standards of presentation expected for finished work. Among the English teachers, there is good shared professional dialogue. From this discussion, their understanding of how language is acquired has emerged as a major strength. Additional training for *all* teachers has had a very positive impact, by providing pupils with opportunities to practise and develop literacy across the curriculum. Events such as the Literacy Day, the Young Writer's Competition and World Book Day have reinforced the importance of literacy. The latter occasion resulted in all teachers, irrespective of their specialisms, delivering a carefully prepared literacy-based programme instead of the normal timetable. The significant contribution of the use of information technology illustrates how the subject is moving forward in every important direction.

MATHEMATICS

46. Achievement is very good in mathematics. The quality of teaching is very good throughout the school. A significant feature in lessons is the high level of subject expertise that teachers have developed to promote numeracy. They introduce lessons effectively so that pupils are very confident about the intentions for the lesson and this encourages independence in learning. Pupils make very good progress as they move through the school. Teachers use the information from the very good systems of assessment to plan work effectively to match pupils' needs. Pupils are highly motivated by the methods that teachers use and enjoy lessons and the success that they all experience when they develop new skills. They employ a good level of self-evaluation, remembering what they have learnt in the previous lesson and are intent upon learning

more.

47. The school has very successfully introduced the National Numeracy Strategy. The teacher at the end of Key Stage 2 is a leading teacher of numeracy and has provided strong advice and support to ensure that staff are well prepared. Pupils at Key Stage 2 are highly motivated to learn and attend well during mental number sessions. They anticipate questions with a sense of excitement in oral lessons, where the problems introduced are challenging, but well matched to their attainment. Pupils know how to double numbers, with higher attaining pupils able to double three-digit numbers. A lower attaining pupil anticipated well and suddenly understood a more difficult question, directed at another pupil, using the knowledge of doubling two, to explain how to double two hundred. This stride forward was greeted by spontaneous applause from the class. In another lesson a higher attaining pupil stated that he would find a harder way to choose coins to make twenty-two pence, showing an excellent grasp of his own progress and a determination to learn more. Pupils made very good progress in understanding the relationships between numbers when they investigated regular sequences, and used this information well to learn rules for multiplication, to help them to solve further number problems.
48. Because of previous shortcomings in the provision, pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 have ground to make up in understanding number to prepare them for life beyond the school. The school is aware of this and has made very good arrangements to introduce pupils to the benefits of the Numeracy Strategy, following its successful introduction at Key Stage 2. In one lesson, pupils at Key Stage 3 made very good progress when they built upon their recognition of fractions in order to understand the relationships between them – for example, by adding to find out what part of a whole they make. By the end of the key stage, they create databases, using information and communications technology to show how each pupil acquires merit marks during the week. Through very skilful questioning by the teacher, they discovered a relationship between the number of marks and the days of the week. They readily accepted support, and made significant progress, creating a chart with all class members to show that there is a common pattern for the whole class.
49. During Key Stage 4, pupils make good progress improving basic number skills in readiness for accreditation and to prepare them for life beyond the school. Pupils are encouraged to apply their numeracy skills to explain how they use number in everyday life. They describe their weekend activities and identify the skills required for shopping and travel. Pupils are already achieving well in mental arithmetic through the recent introduction of the Numeracy Strategy. They are confident to develop and explain their own techniques of counting numbers in their head, and evaluating the most effective method. This very good progress is having a beneficial effect upon pupils' self confidence and encouraging them to want to learn more. They understand that they can improve their own methods for undertaking calculations, to develop a deeper understanding of number.
50. The previous inspection report identified many shortcomings. Schemes of work and assessment procedures were unsatisfactory: consequently, pupils did not receive work matched to their needs, to build on knowledge as they moved through the school. Resources were unsatisfactory. The coordinator has made a very significant contribution to ensuring an exceptional improvement in numeracy provision. Schemes of work and assessment now provide very good information to enable teachers to plan work that both matches pupils' needs and provides challenge for them to make significant progress. Planning is effective to promote numeracy within lessons in other

subjects – for instance to provide practical opportunities for pupils to make further progress in measuring in design and technology. Resources are now good and teachers create some very good resources themselves to match the work closely to the needs of the class. There are good examples of the relevant use of information and communications technology to support learning. The school is eagerly awaiting the arrival of new computer resources to build on current good practice.

SCIENCE

51. Overall, pupils achieve high standards. By the end of Key Stage 4, their achievement is very high. This is because, although teaching is good in Key Stages 2 and 3, it is very good in Key Stage 4. Pupils make good progress in Key Stages 2 and 3 because lessons are carefully planned and pupils know what they are expected to learn. In Key Stage 4 progress is very good because the teacher's specialist knowledge ensures that tasks and activities are particularly well suited to the abilities and interests of the pupils, especially in investigative work. Pupils throughout the school make very good progress in investigative science and by the end of Key Stage 4, they regularly conduct quite complex experiments, making careful and accurate observations of what has occurred.
52. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils accurately label parts of a flower. They correctly identify what is required for plants to remain alive and healthy. Pupils know that the planets orbit around the sun and they understand how day and night occurs. They make good progress because teachers pose challenging questions and regularly celebrate pupils' success. As a result, they are well motivated during lessons and are keen to take part. For example, in a Year 6 lesson, the teacher asked the class to describe whereabouts on the globe the equator can be found and what characteristics are associated with countries near to it, and all seven pupils enthusiastically put up their hands to answer.
53. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils know that different forms of energy can be converted – for example using a steam engine to produce electricity. They understand how acid rain is formed and they can accurately measure the viscosity of a variety of liquids. Progress is good during the key stage, because the teacher carefully extends pupils' knowledge and understanding through the use of both direct and open-ended questions. For example, during an experiment to test the acidity of several liquids, pupils were initially asked to make predictions, then to relate their knowledge and understanding to the causes and effects of pollution, and finally to consider the principles of a fair test. In this way, regular opportunities were taken to extend learning at a pace that sustained pupils' interest and enthusiasm.
54. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils identify and explain the differences between brain, nerve and muscle cells. They understand the differences between series and parallel circuits, and conduct experiments to show the effects of different chemicals on a variety of metals. Pupils make very good progress during the key stage, because of the range and quality of investigative work planned for them. For example, an experiment into the flow of a dye in a daffodil led to an appreciation of how plants feed and a consideration of the process of osmosis. In common with his colleagues in Key Stages 2 and 3, the teacher regularly takes opportunities to extend pupils' learning through the use of open-ended questions that encourage pupils to apply their knowledge. For example, as a result of a consideration of what was learnt during a previous lesson on burning different fuels, pupils understood the concept of renewable

and non-renewable energy sources and the effects on the environment of burning fossil fuels.

55. There has been considerable progress since the last inspection in all areas of the subject. Teaching is now good in the majority of lessons. A specialist science laboratory has been developed which has enabled the full range of the subject to be taught. It is a testament to the organisational skills of those teachers responsible for science that they manage to provide such an impressive range of investigative work for the pupils without the support of a technician. Work is regularly marked and teacher assessment is accurate. Pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 have opportunities to take externally accredited examinations. These developments have taken place as a consequence of the high quality management of the subject over the last four years. The coordinator has worked hard to ensure that all aspects of the subject are well planned and organised. He provides effective support and guidance to his colleagues teaching in Key Stages 2 and 3. There is a clear sense of direction for the future development of the subject.

ART

56. Overall, pupils make very good progress. They achieve well and make good progress in Key Stage 2 and during the first two years of Key Stage 3. During Year 9, their progress accelerates and their achievement is very good by the end of the key stage. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils achieve very well and they make very good progress during the key stage. This is because the quality of teaching is good in Key Stage 2 and for pupils in Years 8 and 9, but very good, sometimes excellent, in Year 9 and in Key Stage 4.
57. During Key Stage 2, pupils learn a range of skills such as drawing and painting and how to use tools such as brushes and scissors sensibly and safely. By the end of the key stage, they can use their skills to illustrate their work in other subjects, such as religious education, and to record their observations and what they have imagined. Teachers plan projects and lessons very well, so that they are relevant both to the requirements of the National Curriculum and the needs of the pupils. For example, in one lesson, the task of creating a face from papier-mache was well chosen to build on Year 4 and 5 pupils' previous work on two-dimensional portraits. Pupils were encouraged to make choices about their work and a small number of alternatives were offered – egg boxes or newspaper to build up the eyes. This was appropriate for these pupils, enabling them to achieve well for their ability.
58. During the first two years of Key Stage 3, pupils build successfully on these early skills, often through projects which combine art and design and technology. For example, during textiles lessons, they learn skills such as batik and printing and ways of obtaining images through information and communications technology. Pupils become aware of the importance of aesthetics when designing products and they practise and refine skills such as painting. At the end of the key stage, pupils are taught by a specialist art teacher, and their achievement is very high. Using symbols from American-Indian art, pupils create interesting and effective designs. By transferring these to textured wallpaper, they are able to obtain striking prints. This is because the teacher provides very good individual support for pupils, giving encouragement and challenging them to achieve higher standards. Pupils behave well because they are totally involved in their work: they are encouraged to make decisions and are expected to work hard. Some can review their results critically, indicating their preferences and

expressing their pride.

59. In Key Stage 4, most pupils are working towards a GCSE examination, in which pupils have been successful for several years. Others have their work accredited by a unit award scheme. Pupils continue to acquire new skills and to refine existing ones by applying them in different contexts. Pupils learn about a very wide range of artists and styles and that details they observe can provide starting points for their own work. That is strongly evident in chairs, customised by pupils in response to works such as Dali's lobster telephone. The finished pieces – for example, an elephant chair, with a huge head and hinged arms – are exciting and vigorous, and an enormous source of pride for their makers. They indicate the teacher's ability to enable pupils to express themselves and to develop their ideas, persevering to complete a final product. By the end of the key stage, pupils have made very good progress and acquired a considerable repertoire of skills. Higher attaining pupils in particular are confident and independent, so they can pursue their own interests and ideas. This results in a vast diversity of activity during lessons, supported unobtrusively by teachers and support staff. Pupils use information and communications technology very effectively – for example, using a digital camera and distorting the images using a computer, or producing decorative effects with a computerised embroidery machine.
60. The subject has developed very well since the previous inspection. This is evident in the improvements in pupils' progress, the quality of teaching, the range of accreditation, and in curricular planning. Art now makes a significant contribution to pupils' cultural development – particularly in Key Stage 4.
61. The deputy headteacher has an overview of the curriculum, and the arrangements for each key stage are well organised. However, the specialist art teacher, who is part-time, does not have overall responsibility for art and so has not been able to have an impact on the curriculum of all year groups.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

62. Pupils achieve very high standards and they make very good progress. This demonstrates a considerable improvement since the previous inspection. These very high standards are possible because the quality of teaching is very good and the curriculum is very carefully planned so that pupils' learning builds successfully on what they already know, understand and can do.
63. During Key Stage 2, pupils are taught by subject specialists who work closely with the class teachers to ensure that the activities planned are relevant to the pupils' needs and age and to their work in other subjects. For example, at the end of the key stage, pupils' work in English was used as the starting point for their designs for glove puppets. In the course of an excellent lesson, they learned to make a paper pattern, to pin it to fabric, and to make allowances for seams before cutting out. Pupils can select suitable fabrics to embellish their puppets, according to the characters they represent – fireman, teacher or shop assistant – and can use fabric paints and crayons to add details. Because the teacher has considerable subject expertise, she is confident to encourage pupils to make decisions about their work. For instance, how the decorative fabric is used will depend on the pupils' own ideas. Pupils enjoy such opportunities to be independent, the activity is exciting, and they are busy and hardworking throughout the lesson. Teachers are skilled at giving very clear demonstrations and explanations, so that one pupil, describing how he chopped an onion, was able to write 'My hand

was a crab to keep my fingers safe’.

64. During Key Stage 3, pupils continue to make very good progress as the problems they encounter become increasingly challenging, requiring them to take account of a number of considerations. For example, at the end of the key stage, pupils designing toys to develop the coordination skills of young children had to think about aesthetics, safety and consumer preferences, and to apply their knowledge of materials and mechanisms. Teachers have very high expectations. In a lesson during which pupils were designing a means of preventing the fire alarm in the hall being set off accidentally, the teacher set time limits for each stage of the process, which ensured that pupils concentrated hard and put in the maximum amount of effort. Another reason why they tried hard was because the problem was a real one, which they could all appreciate. The teacher used questions very effectively to support lower attaining pupils, guiding their thoughts and enabling them to express their ideas. This meant that all pupils were able to suggest solutions to the problem, demonstrating their knowledge of mechanisms such as levers and some properties of materials. Their ideas were given equal consideration by the teacher, which developed pupils’ confidence in themselves and encouraged them to contribute to the discussion about the most suitable solution.
65. Key Stage 4 pupils become increasingly independent, both in their use of tools and equipment and in their ability to carry out research in order to help them make decisions. This is because teachers ensure that pupils develop necessary skills and provide plenty of opportunities for these to be practised, planning activities that motivate pupils and enable them to pursue their own interests and lines of enquiry. For example, Year 10 pupils could choose whether to design food or textile items, to raise money at a charity stall. Starting with familiar recipes or simple designs – for example, for a draught excluder – pupils could then modify these, to take account of factors such as the results of a survey of preferences. Producing prototypes, pupils revised and developed their practical skills, such as using a sewing machine or food mixer. The lesson demonstrated another strength of the teaching – the teachers’ very effective and consistent use of design and technology to promote information and communications technology, literacy and numeracy. Pupils used the computer to present the results of their survey, read from recipe books, wrote reports and instructions, and weighed and measured, all within a real and relevant context. By the end of the key stage, pupils can use a range of sources of information very effectively to help them in their work. They use the Internet confidently and locate books quickly in the library. Teachers and support staff usually give pupils every encouragement to take responsibility for their own learning. Very occasionally, support staff take away some control from pupils by criticising their ideas or altering their work. This has an adverse effect on their progress and confidence. Much more typical is a lesson in which a support assistant guided and questioned a pupil, enabling him to translate a picture he had drawn into a design suitable for making a bag.
66. Since the previous inspection, the subject has developed very well. The quality of teaching has improved greatly, as have curricular planning and the range of accreditation offered. The subject is managed very effectively. The two coordinators have established strong links between their specialist areas, ensuring that pupils learn about all the aspects specified in the National Curriculum. Additionally, they consult together to agree standards when assessing pupils’ achievements. The departments are forward thinking, so that already a new system has been devised to record pupils’ progress within the new National Curriculum framework.

GEOGRAPHY

67. Pupils achieve well and make good progress throughout the school because the quality of teaching is consistently good. A particular strength is the use made of illustrative video material in order to give practical demonstrations of the concepts being studied. For example, whilst learning about the various stages of a river, pupils in Year 8 were shown footage of a flood plain, strengthening their understanding of the characteristics of the mature stage of a river.
68. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils understand the effects of different rocks on the clarity of river water. They know that rivers flowing over shingle have clear water whilst those flowing over clay have muddy water. Teaching is characterised by constructive step-by-step explanation and the careful use of questions that prompt pupils to think carefully about their learning. As a consequence pupils begin to apply what they already know to situations they have not yet experienced. For example, during a lesson about the similarities and differences between houses in India and the United Kingdom, pupils in Years 4 and 5 were able to use photographic evidence to explain accurately why there were differences between the houses. The very good use of questions during lessons ensures that pupils' interest is quickly engaged and maintained, resulting in high levels of participation throughout.
69. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils understand why traffic volume can vary between places at different times of the day and at different times of the year. They can represent this information diagrammatically. Pupils understand how rivers can cause erosion and how they contribute to land formation. They recognise the symbols used on Ordnance Survey maps and understand the purpose of contour lines. Pupils make good progress because the teacher provides regular opportunities to extend and develop their learning and understanding. For example, in a lesson on the coastal features associated with hard and soft rocks, the teacher used well chosen questions and drew attention to details in video evidence. This successfully developed Year 7 pupils' understanding of how caves are formed.
70. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils understand the effect of weather systems on global climate differences. For example, they can explain how monsoons are caused. They understand the concept of a balanced environment and can demonstrate how changes in one element of a food chain can have serious implications for an ecosystem. The teacher has very good relationships with the pupils and high expectations of what they are capable of achieving. As a result they are challenged to do their best at all times, to make use of appropriate technical vocabulary and to respond to the questions asked of them. This ensures high levels of interest and involvement during lessons with pupils gaining in confidence in their own achievements and making good progress.
71. The coordinator has developed the subject well. He has successfully managed to incorporate his own interest in and enthusiasm for the broader aspects of the subject to the demands of the National Curriculum and the needs of the pupils. As a result pupils find geography interesting and stimulating, they enjoy their lessons and this contributes to the good progress they make.

HISTORY

72. In Key Stage 3, pupils make very good progress and achieve very high standards. History is not taught in Key Stage 4 and there is insufficient evidence to make firm judgements about Key Stage 2. The school has adapted the National Curriculum guidelines very successfully, to offer an interesting and challenging programme for pupils in Key Stages 2 and 3. The subject is enhanced by the historical topics taught as part of the Key Stage 3 English curriculum. By the end of the key stage, pupils show a good knowledge of events and people and some understanding of time. They know that times and circumstances cause societies to change the way they behave. They are aware that most facts can be interpreted in more than one way, that facts are reported differently by people with contrasting view points and they appreciate that many explanations are based on opinion. Pupils can handle simple historical statements.
73. Teaching is very good. It is based on well-developed materials that demand a range of responses from simple comprehension to elaborate role play. Lessons are backed up by well-chosen artefacts or good quality wall displays. Pupils are slowly building a time line to help them understand the passage of history. Demands on pupils include discussion, reading and writing. Much of the work set is closely linked to literacy skills and there are similar expectations of presentation and accuracy. But history goes further. There is a proper emphasis on decision-making skills and on pupils forming their own opinions. History teaching contributes significantly to spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Examples seen included references to the experiences of passengers on the sinking Titanic, exploration of some of the differences between Moslems and Christians in their conflict over Jerusalem at the time of the Crusades, and how toleration now allows Moslems to build their mosques in all our large cities. Information and communications technology is used effectively to back up the learning process.
74. At Key Stage 3, pupils learn about several distinct topics in very different times. In the sinking Titanic topic with Year 8 for example, a role play provided an opportunity for 'passengers' from the first and third class decks, 'seamen', 'the captain' and others to be interviewed about their feelings as the ship went down. There was even a 'French couple' who gave an account of themselves in their own language. All the interviews were recorded for later work. A particular feature was the way that the atmosphere was enhanced by the use of space in the classroom, simple costumes and illustrations to remind them what the ship was like. A quite different topic with Year 9 took the life of Saladin as its theme. First hand accounts were examined to establish different opinions of the man. Pictures of the time and information about Jerusalem built up a portrait of a very different age.
75. This is the first year that the teacher has taught history but her discussions with the former teacher of history who now teaches English has led to excellent cooperation that benefits both subjects. History has improved significantly since the last inspection. Standards have improved, the emphases are broader and repetitive one-answer exercises have been abandoned. Work sheets are broad in content and attractively prepared to meet the special needs of the pupils. Very good resources are already being assembled. There is every prospect that the enthusiasm already shown indicates the capacity to improve further.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY

76. Achievement is very good. The quality of teaching is consistently very good and is a

significant factor in promoting pupils' very good progress. The arrangements for pupils to learn information and communications technology skills alongside their work in other subjects mean that pupils apply their skills to a very wide range of tasks. One example is when pupils regularly draft and re-draft their literacy work and through this develop increasing skills in word processing. Pupils throughout the school make very good progress using the Internet for research.

77. At Key Stage 2, pupils make very good progress developing skills, using computers in class. Teachers and support staff promote independent learning, encouraging pupils to open their own work and record and save their scores when they solve problems using information and communications technology in numeracy lessons. Staff are vigilant to support pupils, by asking very good questions, guiding them to acquire new skills. A regular feature in lessons throughout the school is the encouragement for pupils to share equipment and particularly to help each other. This promotes both very good relationships and learning. Pupils work in pairs, transferring their newly learned skills to each other, and this has a significant effect on their learning. Pupils are highly motivated to improve skills. They see so many examples of pupils working independently around the school that they want to do the same.
78. Pupils at Key Stage 3 use information and communications technology as a natural part of their learning throughout the curriculum. Subjects such as science and design and technology provide good opportunities for pupils to develop further their skills in using modelling and control technology. Pupils use sensors to investigate the effects of light. This provides a visual display that helps pupils to understand and explain, for instance, that an electric light emits heat. Pupils improve the presentation of their work using word processing, correcting mistakes in their punctuation. When this is for display, pupils show growing skills in creating effects of colour, fonts and borders to increase the impact of their work. Pupils have a high regard for resources and treat them with respect and this means that they can be trusted to work independently.
79. At Key Stage 4, pupils have developed a very good awareness of the value of conducting research, for instance when they use information and communications technology to help them to design projects in design and technology. When they design a bird table, pupils move freely between researching information from the Internet, the library and the school's database of topics to find the most effective source. Teachers set challenging tasks that match pupils' needs. These provide plenty of opportunities for pupils to find out how to use the resources and build upon their existing skills. Pupils respond well, developing a mature attitude to research by trying to locate information themselves before asking for staff support. The provision for information and communications technology makes a very significant contribution to promoting pupils' skills of independent study. This is evident where pupils at the end of Key Stage 4 research information from the Internet and improve the presentation of their project work in their free time.
80. Systems to track pupils' progress as they learn skills across the curriculum are very good. Pupils have very good individual education plans. They know how much progress they are making and contribute effectively to the review of their targets. However the annual report to parents does not always fully celebrate pupils' very good progress. The coordinator manages the subject very effectively to provide strong support for teaching and support staff and to improve resources to raise standards further. Staff have a high level of expertise and the arrangements for staff development are very good to raise standards further. Teachers use information and communications technology to produce a significant number of teaching aids and for

display. They also plan effectively to use other resources such as video cameras, video clips and music recording to ensure that pupils make very good progress in a very broad range of experiences.

81. The previous inspection found that standards of achievement were extremely low, with minimal learning and unsatisfactory teaching. There have been exceptional improvements to the provision for the subject, so that pupils' achievements and the quality of teaching are now very good. Resources are good and this represents a considerable improvement since the previous inspection. The school keenly awaits the imminent arrival of significant new resources as part of its continued commitment to raising standards further.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

82. Pupils achieve very well, and make very good progress in both key stages, because the teaching is very good, and sometimes excellent.
83. During Key Stage 3, pupils are learning to greet others and respond to greetings appropriately. One boy replied in the negative, 'Ca va pas' because he had a headache, and was able, with a little help, to express that in French. Pupils are acquiring a good vocabulary, including French colours, numbers, months, days, and names of body parts. By the end of the key stage, they have an understanding of basic grammar – for example, masculine and feminine word endings. Pupils are developing into confident French speakers because of the teacher's excellent use of the target language, and the use of games which require them to communicate with each other in French. The emphasis is, appropriately, on oral work, and pupils can describe a member of the class with sufficient accuracy for others to guess the identity of the person in mind. However, pupils are also learning to read words and phrases from flash cards, and to write words in French – for example, to label body parts on a diagram. They also read and write in French when using a computer game.
84. Pupils in Key Stage 4 are increasing their vocabulary, building on skills previously learned. By the end of the key stage, they can name all the subjects on the timetable, in French, and put them into a sentence using, 'J'aime' or 'Je n'aime pas.' They make very good progress because of the very good teaching strategies, such as the use of flash cards and games which involve repetition, consistently excellent modelling of the language, and very high expectations. Pupils are expected to speak French most of the time, especially during game playing. The pace of lessons is very good, and this, combined with the very good use of resources, ensures that pupils work well for the whole of the lesson, and enjoy it.
85. There has been significant improvement since the previous inspection. Curricular planning is now very good. Resources are also very good, largely due to the work of the co-ordinator who devises and makes the very effective games.
86. Management of the subject is very good, with very good planning for progression within and between key stages. Support assistants make a significant contribution to

the success of lessons as they participate fully, speaking French, and leading groups well. The school is in contact with a French girl, whose visits and correspondence enhance the curriculum and increase pupils' enthusiasm for the subject. Contribution to the social and cultural development of pupils, is built into the scheme of work, as pupils study French culture and traditions. The links with coordinators of French, in other special schools, to share ideas and moderate standards, are very beneficial.

MUSIC

87. Achievement and progress in music is satisfactory overall. In lessons observed in Key Stage 2 and the beginning of Key Stage 3, achievement was very good. Music is not taught in Key Stage 4.
88. Only one lesson was seen in Key Stage 2, where pupils were learning to compose short pieces in response to written instructions. Pupils were learning to respond to a series of hand signals – for example, representing 'loud' and 'quiet' – devised by the class as a means of conducting. They exhibit very good listening skills as a result of previous experience in music lessons. The teacher organised groups of pupils very effectively and provided opportunities for them to share their work with each other. Because pupils are accustomed to cooperating with each other, they can work in a group to plan and perform a short composition, using untuned instruments and voices.
89. In one class, at the beginning of Key Stage 3, pupils are developing very good, critical, listening skills. This is due to this teacher's excellent subject knowledge and very good teaching strategies. Pupils are acquiring knowledge and understanding of the processes involved in producing a taped programme, including, stereo effects, background noises, and use of sound reduction to indicate movement or distance. For most of Key Stage 3, whilst the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, there is an over emphasis on performance, leading to a lack of opportunities for pupils to experience other areas of the music curriculum. Pupils are learning to sing and play simple tunes and recognise note value. There is an imbalance in the high level of challenge in the work presented in some lessons, and the acceptance of mediocre performance in others. Pupils are not always given the opportunity to consolidate learning, before moving on to a more difficult task.
90. There has been some improvement, especially in Key Stage 2, since the previous inspection. To improve standards still further, a more coherent whole school approach to curricular planning and more emphatic subject coordination are needed.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

91. Pupils achieve high standards in physical education. They make very good progress because the quality of teaching is consistently very good. As a consequence, pupils work hard during lessons, think carefully about what they do, show high levels of participation and cooperate well with each other.
92. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils can explain the qualities associated with good teamwork. They can apply this knowledge effectively when prompted – for example, agreeing who they will 'tag' during warm-up activities. Pupils learn quickly and make very good progress because the teacher gives very clear instructions, explanations and demonstrations – such as explaining and then showing pupils how to pass a

basketball more accurately. In addition, breaks in activity are regularly used in order to develop pupils' ability to critically evaluate their own performance and that of others. For example when questioned about why their passing and catching improved, pupils were able to say 'Because we aimed the ball and we didn't throw it too hard'.

93. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils understand why a warm-up is necessary before strenuous exercise. They have developed good knowledge of the purpose and function of the heart. During lessons they sustain high levels of activity and effort, because of the enthusiasm and dynamism of the teacher. As a result no time is wasted and pupils make very good progress. Pupils learn quickly because they have a clear understanding of the purpose of the lesson. The teacher always explains what they are going to do and what he intends them to learn. For example, the focus of the lesson was made clear to Year 9 pupils during the introduction – 'Today we are going to think about teamwork'. The teacher then referred to this aspect regularly, throughout the lesson – for example, by asking 'Why did that activity go well?' As a result, pupils were able to play a 5-a-side game of basketball, with minimal supervision and plenty of cooperation.
94. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils understand the purpose of oxygen in energy production. They know that we breathe in oxygen and breathe out carbon dioxide. They explain in simple terms why muscles become tired during exercise. Pupils again make very good progress. They improve their learning and performance as a result of the careful use of open-ended questions put to them. For example, in a Year 11 lesson, the question 'Can you think of a way to improve your passing?' prompted several pupils to respond 'Call out a name!' This had the effect of considerably improving the number of successful passes made during a game of basketball.
95. The improvement in the subject since the last inspection has been very impressive. A specialist teacher has responsibility for organisation, planning and teaching. A policy and carefully planned schemes of work are now in place. Expectations of what pupils should achieve are very high. The management of the subject is dynamic and purposeful with a clear sense of direction. As a result, physical education has a high profile amongst the pupils. They thoroughly enjoy their lessons, make very good progress and achieve very high standards.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

96. Achievement is good overall in all key stages, especially in oral work. Pupils make good progress within and between the key stages, because of the good planning and use of resources. It was not possible to observe a religious education lesson in Key Stage 2, because of timetable constraints, but scrutiny of work shows good progress. Marking is constructive and informative, commenting, not only on the written work, but also on the individual contribution to the preceding discussion. At the start of the key stage, pupils are learning about relationships with family and friends, about special occasions and celebrations. By the end of the key stage, higher attaining pupils can produce a 'Crimewatch' report on The Good Samaritan story, and a newspaper report on the birth of Jesus, using information and communications technology.
97. Pupils achieve well and make good progress in Key Stage 3, learning about a variety of faiths, including Christianity, Judaism, Buddhism and Hinduism. Very good planning, and use of resources, together with the teacher's very good subject knowledge, make a significant contribution to pupils' cultural development as well as increasing their

knowledge and understanding of the subject. By the end of the key stage, pupils can discuss the impact of belief on the way people live, relating well known stories of bravery and self sacrifice, to incidents in their own lives.

98. Good progress continues during Key Stage 4 and pupils are encouraged to think for themselves. As a result of effective planning and high expectations, lessons have a good working atmosphere, pupils know what is expected of them, work to the best of their ability, show interest in the topic, co-operate sensibly, and ask for help when they need it. During a lesson on conflict and resolution, with reference to Northern Ireland, pupils showed empathy for the participants and could imagine and articulate probable emotions in given situations. Individual support for pupils from both the teacher and support staff, is very good, encouraging and drawing out knowledge rather than intervening directly, resulting in increasing confidence and self esteem for these pupils.
99. There has been good improvement in the subject since the previous inspection. The curriculum is broad and balanced, and pupils make better progress. The subject is managed effectively and planned well, and resources are good.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION

100. Throughout the school, achievement and progress are very good, because of the very good curricular planning and teaching. The effect of the very good provision is felt throughout the school and the residential setting, in the responsible attitudes of pupils and their willingness to help each other.
101. During Key Stage 2, pupils are learning about the effect of smoking on heart and lungs, and are well prepared, by the use of role play, to withstand peer pressure. The teachers' very good subject knowledge, very good planning, organisation, and use of resources, results in well informed pupils, who show very good progress over time, in the answers they give, and their contribution to discussions. The curriculum is broad and balanced and includes elements of sex education, drug awareness, healthy living, getting on with others, and contributing to the community.
102. Pupils in Key Stage 3 are increasing their knowledge of healthy life styles, building up the confidence and self esteem to make informed choices, learning about citizenship, and preparing for work experience. Teachers give pupils scientific explanations, at an appropriate level, to explain how alcohol, tobacco and drugs enter the bloodstream and cause problems throughout the body. Pupils are encouraged to discuss issues, and teachers are very skilled in effective questioning.
103. The emphasis in Key Stage 4 is on preparing pupils for the next stage of education and adult life. In the excellent lessons, pupils identify their own strengths and weaknesses, compare what is expected of them at school, with their responsibilities at college, and work very effectively in pairs. Teachers are excellent facilitators of discussion, encourage and participate in role play, and work very well with support staff, who make a significant contribution to this subject. As a result, pupils learn to express feelings and opinions confidently and politely, listen with respect to others, and are prepared to learn from their peers. One girl was able to explain to others in her group, how to access the Internet, going through the procedure a second time, with diagrams, when some had difficulty in understanding.
104. Improvement has been very good since the previous inspection – in curricular

planning, teaching and assessment practice. The subject is very well managed, and the coordinator is very committed to development and further improvement – for example, the school has joined the Healthy School Award scheme, and has detailed plans for the next three years. The curriculum is very relevant to the pupils' needs, and assessment and target setting are excellent.