

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **CAPENHURST GRANGE SCHOOL**

Chester Road, Great Sutton, Ellesmere Port

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 111517

Headteacher: Mrs C Creasy

Reporting inspector: Adrian Simm  
21138

Dates of inspection: 20 – 23 June 2000

Inspection number: 188280

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

|                              |  |
|------------------------------|--|
| Type of school:              | Special - residential and day (EBD)            |
| School category:             | Community Special                              |
| Age range of pupils:         | 11 – 16 years                                  |
| Gender of pupils:            | Boys   |
| School address:              | Chester Road<br>Great Sutton<br>Ellesmere Port |
| Postcode:                    | CH66 2NA                                       |
| Telephone number:            | 0151 339 5141                                  |
| Fax number:                  | 0151 348 0348                                  |
| Appropriate authority:       | The governing body                             |
| Name of chair of governors:  | Mr H Evans                                     |
| Date of previous inspection: | 10 June 1996                                   |

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members        |                      | Subject responsibilities                  | Aspect responsibilities  |
|---------------------|----------------------|---|--|
| Adrian Simm         | Registered inspector | Humanities (Geography & History)          | The school's results and pupils' achievements                          |
|                     |                      | Religious education                       | How well are pupils taught?  |
| Daljit Singh        | Lay inspector        |   | Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development                     |
|                     |                      |   | How well does the school work in partnership with parents?             |
| Kathleen Cannon     | Team inspector       | English                                   | How well does the school care for its pupils?                          |
|                     |                      | Modern foreign language (French)          |  |
|                     |                      | Special educational needs                 |  |
| Christine Humphreys | Team inspector       | Art                                       | How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? |
|                     |                      | Design and technology                     |  |
|                     |                      | Equal opportunities                       |  |
| Mary Kingsley       | Team inspector       | Science                                   | Residential provision  |
|                     |                      | Information and communications technology |  |
|                     |                      | Physical education                        |  |
| Eric Nash           | Team inspector       | Mathematics                               | How well is the school led and managed?                                |
|                     |                      | Music                                     |  |

The inspection contractor was:

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Demeter House  
Station Road  
Cambridge  
CB1 2RS

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Inspection Quality Division  
The Office for Standards in Education  
Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London WC2B 6SE

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## **PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT**

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Capenhurst Grange School is a day and residential community special school for boys aged between 11 and 16 years who have emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD). The school is funded for 50 residential and 35 day places. This is an increase since the last inspection, owing to amalgamation with another school. Whilst it has only 65 boys currently on roll, it has already been funded in anticipation of admitting an additional group of boys and girls. The number of admissions of pupils with additional and more challenging needs has increased in the last three years, including pupils with learning difficulties, hearing impairment and autistic tendencies. The school has also admitted large numbers of Year 9 pupils excluded from other schools. During the inspection all Year 11 pupils were either on study leave for examinations or on work experience. Pupils' attainment on entry is low in comparison with their chronological ages but similar in comparison with other EBD schools. Pupils attend the school mainly from disadvantaged areas of Cheshire, Halton and Warrington. Fifty-eight pupils receive free school meals and although this is affected by the residential provision, it is still high. All pupils currently come from homes where the first language is English. All pupils have Statements of Special Educational Needs. Partly owing to the amalgamation with the other school, 70 per cent of teaching staff are new to the school since the last inspection. The school has been affected recently by much staff turnover and illness.

### **HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS**

Capenhurst Grange is effective in providing an acceptable quality of education for its pupils. Achievement by the majority of pupils is satisfactory, although a significant minority of pupils have poor attendance. Teaching is good, overall, particularly at Key Stage 3. The school is aware that much remains to be done to improve the school. However, the new leadership team is clear how it wants to develop and has the capacity to improve the school. As such, the leadership and management of the school is satisfactory and provides satisfactory value for money.

#### **What the school does well**

- The residential provision contributes significantly to pupils' personal and social skills.
- Teaching is good, particularly at Key Stage 3.
- The governors are very clear how they want the school to develop.
- Teachers, support staff and care staff develop good relationships with pupils that encourages their personal development.
- The range of activities offered in outdoor education.

#### **What could be improved**

- The development of a full curriculum to include all aspects of Information and Communications Technology (ICT), music and physical education, and greater opportunities for vocational education at Key Stage 4.
- Pupils' key skills in communication, use of number and ICT across the curriculum.
- The attendance at the school of a significant number of pupils.
- Ways in which the school assesses and monitors pupils' achievement.
- The preciseness of academic targets to help pupils to achieve better.
- The quality of information to parents about pupils' progress and behaviour.

*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 was last inspected in June 1996. It took the issues for development seriously and altered the timetabling of some subjects to avoid clashes with sporting activities, improved planning for pupils' cultural development, included costings and timescales in its development planning and involved the governing body more in oversight of the curriculum. Residential provision is now very good, teaching has improved and pupils' achievement is slightly better. However, in curriculum planning, assessment of pupils' attainment, detailed knowledge of pupils' progress and the consistent use of Individual Education Plans (IEPs) to ensure that all pupils are taught at exactly the right level, taking into account their individual needs, development has been insufficient. Because of these important areas that have not been developed sufficiently, overall improvement since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.

## 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 16 | Key            |   |
|---|-----------|----------------|---|
| Speaking and listening  | C         | very good      | A |
| Reading   | C         | good           | B |
| Writing   | C         | satisfactory   | C |
| Mathematics   | B         | unsatisfactory | D |
| Personal, social and health education   | B         | poor           | E |
| Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in Individual Education Plans | B         |                |   |

The school is realistic about setting its statutory targets and the targets for those pupils with IEPs and care plans are good. Its results compare favourably with other similar schools in GCSE examinations but not in National Tests at the age of 14 years. However, this is more to do with pupils' absence from school and others not being put in for the tests, rather than pupils' low levels of achievement. Achievement by the majority of pupils is satisfactory and the same as it was at the time of the last inspection in English, science and design and technology. It has improved in mathematics and art, where it is now good, and in humanities where it is now satisfactory. Good achievement has been maintained in pupils' personal development and in physical education in the areas of the subject taught. At the current time, the school has insufficient information to judge achievement in information and communications technology, religious education and music.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect                                 | Comment   |
|--|---|
| Attitudes to the school                | The attitudes of those pupils who go to school are satisfactory. Pupils try hard with their work, particularly at Years 7 and 8. Pupils are positive about the school's new reward system.  |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms    | Behaviour in classrooms and around school is good. Any incidents of inappropriate behaviour generally happen when there is reduced supervision such as at break times and for residential pupils, immediately after the end of the school day.          |
| Personal development and relationships | Relationships between pupils and staff are good. Pupils exchange ideas, mostly respect one another's opinions and work together well when given the opportunity, such as on the school council or during Youth Award Scheme courses during the evening. |
| Attendance                             | Attendance is poor and below that for similar schools. Unauthorised absence is high and appears to have become 'a way of life' for some pupils who have started at the school late in their school life.  |

Most pupils concentrate and show interest, particularly when teaching is exciting, and behaviour is managed well. Many pupils recognise that their teachers work hard for them. Pupils, particularly at Key Stage 3, settle to work quickly and their helpful attitudes to learning enable lessons to proceed at a good pace. In discussion, they frequently exchange ideas and respect one another's opinions. In some lessons, but more often in less supervised situations, behaviour can be boisterous, anti-social and disrespectful. Insolent, racist and sexist comments happen and some pupils report concerns about bullying and drug abuse. Although staff deal with

these concerns effectively, some worries continue to affect 'one or two' pupils. The number of pupils who have been excluded permanently and for a fixed period has increased since the last inspection. However, the school now admits day pupils, and exclusions, whilst high, are similar to other schools with day pupils.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

|                            |                   |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| <b>Teaching of pupils:</b> | <b>Aged 11-16</b> |
| Lessons seen overall       | 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.*

During the inspection, teaching was good overall. Throughout the school, it was satisfactory or better in 94 per cent of lessons and good or better in 51 per cent. At Key Stage 3, teaching was very good in religious education and good in English, mathematics, science, personal, social and health education (PSHE), art, design and technology, humanities and physical education. It was satisfactory in modern foreign languages and the very limited teaching inspected in ICT. At Key Stage 4, teaching was good in mathematics, art, history and physical education and satisfactory in all other subjects taught. Frequently, individual lessons are well planned and pupils' behaviour is managed very well by good teamwork between the teacher and support assistants. At Key Stage 3, fun and excitement are frequently introduced into lessons by 'games type activities', whilst at Key Stage 4 very interesting GCSE coursework quickly 'grabs' most pupils' imagination. In the minority of lessons that are less than satisfactory, approaches restrict opportunities for both higher and lower attainers to learn and on occasions, to record their work more appropriately. On occasions, for higher attainers the content is insufficiently demanding. At other times, the same approach is used both with higher attainers and lower attainers. As a result, the pace of lesson and expectations of their reading, understanding and writing is too high for lower attainers. This causes pupils to be very unclear about what they are supposed to learn. Teaching of literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum, including key skills in communication and the use of number, is unsatisfactory and the use of ICT is poor.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect  | Comment  |
|---|--|
| The quality and range of the curriculum   | The appropriate statutory curriculum is not fully in place at both key stages. Despite this, the school makes such good use of outdoor education facilities and use of the local and wider community to support the curriculum, particularly at Key Stage 3, that overall, the curriculum is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4.  |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | The provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory and personal development, including moral, social and cultural development, is good. Whilst the school gives good support to all aspects of pupils' social development, especially for those who stay in the evenings, the development of pupils' spiritual development is not consistently planned in lessons during the day.   |
| How well the school cares for its pupils  | A satisfactory level of care is provided for the pupils, although the departure of those using school transport is not controlled sufficiently. Procedures for health and safety and child protection are in place. Good quality individual care plans are used well to monitor and support residential pupils. However, Individual Education Plans (IEPs) to support pupils' learning in lessons are only working fully in Years 7 and 8. |

The impact of the school's relationship with parents is satisfactory. All subjects in the National Curriculum are covered except gymnastics and aspects of music provision at Key Stage 3 and aspects of information and communication technology at both key stages. The provision for outdoor education is good and includes activities outside of the school day, which make a significant contribution to the whole curriculum. The Youth Award Scheme is co-ordinated by a member of the care staff and this makes a valuable contribution, especially to pupils' social development. Although there have been improvements in teachers' use of assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic achievements and experiences, the procedures for this are still not fully



developed and are inconsistent across the curriculum. Care, teaching and support staff work together as a team to ensure a supportive and positive environment in which the pupils can develop as fully as possible.

### HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect   | Comment   |
|--|---|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | Leadership and management of the school is satisfactory. The governing body and senior management team have only been in place for less than fifteen months. Changes have been introduced that have improved the residential provision and the co-ordination of subjects across the curriculum. The school is aware that much remains to be done. Whilst overall development since the last inspection is unsatisfactory, the school now has the capacity to succeed. |
| How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities  | The governing body has a very good understanding of the school's strengths and a clear commitment to improving the school. Whilst they issue an annual report to parents, this does not wholly fulfil statutory requirements as no reference is made to pupils' attendance and the success of the school's special educational needs policy. Also, they have not yet ensured that a full curriculum is in place.  |
| The school's evaluation of its performance                       | The school is putting in place systems to evaluate its methods, such as the assessment of pupils' learning in subjects. The school has already recognised other areas for development and in one crucial area has already introduced a new 'credit system' for supporting improvements in pupils' behaviour.  |
| The strategic use of resources                                   | The school's current development plan is an audit of all areas for development. Finances have been identified to meet the demands of the plan. Strategic funding and specific grants are used for their intended purposes. Financial management and control are satisfactory.   |

The adequacy of staffing, accommodation and learning resources is satisfactory. Services that can be supplied by a number of providers are compared on the grounds of cost and quality to ensure value for money. Whilst the school suffered from difficulties with the introduction of its computer system, this has now been resolved. The school's administrator ensures that value for money is achieved by close monitoring of the ordering of equipment and resources. However, the school does not yet collect and use information sufficiently to challenge itself to ensure that it is clear about why it is following certain approaches and whether better approaches might be introduced.

### PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most   | What parents would like to see improved   |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The teaching in the school is good;</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed;</li> <li>• The school expects pupils to work hard;</li> <li>• The school provides an interesting range of activities outside of lessons.</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The progress some pupils make;</li> <li>• The amount of work pupils do at home;</li> </ul> |

Inspectors agree with parents' perceptive views about the school. Homework is not formally used to support work undertaken in class. On occasions, staff encourage pupils to carry out extra work but those who are not residential often do not return work to school. This can be a cause for friction with other pupils, and parents who attended the meeting with inspectors supported this viewpoint.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

### **HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?**

#### **The school's results and achievements**

1. The last inspection of the school was in June 1996. The school has information since then to compare its GCSE results with those of other schools. However, it only has information for the last two years to draw comparisons in its National Assessment results at the end of Key Stage 3, and even then, only in mathematics and science. Many pupils did not take the English assessments and even in mathematics and science, approximately 35 per cent of pupils absented themselves. In 1998, 29 per cent of pupils achieved Level 3 or higher in mathematics and 12 per cent achieved Level 4. The success rate fell slightly in 1999 at Level 3 but increased to 18 per cent at Level 4. In both years, these results were very poor in comparison with other similar schools. Whilst science results showed a distinct improvement between 1998 and 1999, they were still unsatisfactory when compared with other similar schools for those pupils gaining Level 3 and above but comparable at Level 4. Teacher assessments for this year indicate that pupils' achievement will be in advance of national comparative results but the overall results are not yet known. During the same period, pupils' achievement at the end of Key Stage 4 in GCSE examinations has been consistently at least equal to and frequently higher than national comparative results. In 1999, 64 per cent of pupils entered gained at least one grade A\* – G and 44 per cent of pupils passed five subjects. Over this period, pupils with additional learning difficulties have started at the school and absenteeism has been high. These factors, together with reasonably small year groups where the admission of even one pupil with learning difficulties can have a significant overall effect on the percentage figures for success, have all contributed to the fluctuation in results.
2. The school is realistic about setting its statutory targets and the targets for those pupils with IEPs and care plans are good. During the inspection, achievement by the majority of pupils was judged to be satisfactory and the same as it was at the time of the last inspection in English, science and design and technology. It has improved in mathematics and art, where it is now good, and in humanities where it is now satisfactory. Good achievement has been maintained in pupils' personal development and in physical education in the areas of the subject taught. At present, the school has insufficient information to judge achievement in information and communications technology, religious education and music and comparisons cannot be drawn with the last inspection.
3. In English, overall achievement by the majority of pupils is satisfactory in their speaking, listening and comprehension skills, and in reading and writing. Most pupils enter the school with limited literacy skills, although some pupils' word reading skills are beyond their chronological age. Their emotional and behavioural needs frequently result in difficulties with their willingness to communicate fully. By the age of 14, pupils discuss how newspaper headlines are used to gain public attention, and by 16 years they use video conferencing facilities at a local college to speak to and interview prison inmates. They use 'brainstorming' techniques to share ideas as well as reminding themselves of previously learned work. In reading, some pupils start school using pictures to help them work out the words. They do not know if they have read a word incorrectly. They do not read with expression or leave pauses at significant moments in the story. Higher attainers explain a story and predict how it might finish. By Year 9, fluent readers enjoy poems and use expression well to give feel and meaning. They choose to read magazines or books and have particular favourites. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils read their GCSE coursework poems fluently and with expression. They understand and explain the meanings of words and understand how the style of writing can reflect the author's cultural background. Writing, overall, is less well-developed as pupils start at the school but they still progress satisfactorily. Initially, some pupils find free writing difficult and can only complete simple words on worksheets. They have little knowledge of punctuation and their writing is not properly formed. By the end of Key Stage 4, higher attainers have good dictionary skills. They carry out some research and plan and draft pages for the 'school newspaper'. They write short paragraphs for news reports based on specific headlines.
4. Achievement in mathematics is good at both key stages. On entry to school, some pupils order numbers to 100 and carry out simple addition of single numbers. By the end of Key Stage 3, they have progressed to ordering numbers to 1000, adding decimals and carrying out subtraction using decomposition. They identify and name triangles such as isosceles, equilateral and right-angled. Higher attainers recognise pentagons, hexagons, octagons and cuboids. Pupils at the end of Key

Stage 4 are entered for GCSE or Certificate of Achievement with improving success. They interpret data from bar charts and, conversely, draw bar charts from data. Other pupils work on rotation, reflection and translation.

5. In science, pupils' achievement is satisfactory at both key stages. Those who start the school at 11 years of age are not fully clear about what is a fair test when comparing variables. By the age of 14 years, pupils know that light is reflected by shiny surfaces and that it is refracted when it passes through a solid glass block or water. They know that white light is made up of coloured light and can be split into its constituent parts by passing it through a prism. They learn about healthy diets, carry out food tests to determine the presence of glucose and understand the principle of a fair test. By the age of 16 years, higher attainers sit for GCSE examinations and other pupils take the Certificate of Achievement. Some pupils carry out practical work safely, such as obtaining copper from malachite, whilst others learn about enzyme reactions and the differences in pH as food passes through the alimentary canal.
6. In information and communication technology (ICT), the school has little recorded evidence of pupils' progress and there is insufficient information upon which to make a judgement on pupils' achievement. However, from observations during the week of the inspection, pupils' learning is now satisfactory on a limited curriculum. Pupils enter the school with varying levels of achievement and experience. After very limited experience, pupils by the age of 14 explore new programs and practise their skills with the mouse and cursor keys. Because of their inexperience, they sometimes achieve by chance rather than by design. Pupils by the age of 16 select different fonts, work in a variety of print styles and add a border to their work. Others design a birthday card using 'Clip-Art'. They save, edit and print their work.
7. In religious education, assessment has not yet been introduced and therefore, the school has little recorded evidence of pupils' progress. Evidence of pupils' written work is also very limited and, as such, there is insufficient information upon which to make a judgement on pupils' achievement. However, from observations during the week of the inspection, the majority of pupils' learning is at least satisfactory at Key Stage 4 and good or better at Key Stage 3. Pupils at Year 7 who have not been in the school very long have some basic knowledge about the 'church' and that the Bible is a holy book that comes in two sections. By Year 9, pupils know how beliefs can 'shape people's behaviour'. They consider different types of punishment and what they think about the possibility of miscarriages of justice. They reflect upon 'equal rights for men and women', although at times struggle to accept this in relation to themselves. By Years 10 and 11, pupils place religion in a historical context and try to explore how they would have reacted in the past to events such as the birth of Christianity in a strongly Roman world.
8. Pupils' achievement in art and on a restricted physical education curriculum, which does not include gymnastics, is good at both key stages. In art, pupils' standards on entry in Year 7 are low. Drawing skills are underdeveloped and their knowledge and use of colour is limited and variable. By the end of Year 9, pupils make good use of the visual elements of line and tone, pattern, colour and shape. They are aware of the work of other artists and other cultures, including Aboriginal and Indian art. By the age of 16 years, pupils achieve across a wide range of media including three-dimensional work. Pupils use and explore two and three-dimensional media, working on different scales. They modify their work and use the advice of staff when evaluating with a view to developing their own style of work. In physical education, pupils start the school with varying skills and some with little 'team spirit'. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils have followed a range of options, such as outdoor education, athletics, swimming and a variety of games. They understand the need to warm up before participating in any physical activity and carry out a range of 'warm-up' activities. They learn the skills of bowling, fielding and batting in cricket, and learn to play more together in what is a team game. Pupils at Key Stage 4 strive hard in athletics and improve upon their personal best performances.
9. In design and technology and humanities pupils' achievement is satisfactory, overall, and it is good in design and technology at Key Stage 3. On entry to the school, pupils' drawing and design skills are low. By the end of the key stage, pupils use a good range of technical vocabulary to describe what they are making, measure accurately, mark and cut their materials and adapt and modify models to improve performance. When using food, progress is unsatisfactory because of the emphasis on cooking that is not linked to designing and making and food technology. By the end of Key Stage 4, standards are satisfactory but have not built sufficiently on the standards achieved in the previous key stage. They continue to make good progress in their construction skills but design skills are unsatisfactory. Food work is mundane and does not address the issues of food production. Pupils lack the skills to investigate familiar food products and to design for manufacturing in quantity using techniques to ensure

consistency. In humanities, pupils who start at the school at the age of 11 years have a basic understanding of the differences between the natural and man-made world. They categorise correctly rivers, hills and forests on the one hand and boats, bridges and churches on the other. During their first year's work, they put simple historical information into sequence and make a start on understanding maps, atlases and globes, including discovering the value to their work of CD-ROMs. By Year 9, pupils have progressed to discussing and understanding the causes and results of a volcanic eruption and famous times in the past when this has happened. They know about Mount Etna and understand concepts such as evacuation. During Key Stage 4, in their GCSE history course, pupils compare sources of information and the differences in accounts of interesting events in the past about 'law and order'. They read aloud clearly and mostly accurately events leading up to the 'gunfight at the OK Corral'. They compare these with a 'movie' about the shootings before giving reasons as to which version might be nearer to the truth. Pupils become more able, as they get older, to decide for themselves which are the key points in their work that they need to remember.

10. Music has recently been re-introduced to the curriculum with Years 7 and 8. A brief policy is in place, but as yet there are no full schemes of work or assessment procedures and the school has little knowledge of the pupils' understanding of music on entry to the school and no recorded evidence of pupils' progress. There is insufficient information upon which to make a judgement on pupils' achievement. However, from limited observations during the week of the inspection, at Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils' learning is at least satisfactory. At Year 7, pupils both conduct and accompany a song in 'quadruple time' with percussion instruments. They compare a clock with a metronome and come to understand how sound can be associated with something like a steam engine. At Year 8, some pupils experience 'duple time' and, although reluctantly at first, eventually join in both by singing and playing percussion instruments with a song about 'weaving'. Achievement in literacy and numeracy skills across the curriculum, including key skills in communication and use of number, is unsatisfactory and the use of ICT is poor. National Literacy Strategy approaches have been introduced but are insufficiently developed throughout the school. They have yet to have an effect on the pupils' knowledge and use of basic literacy skills. All teachers of mathematics with a permanent contract have trained for the National Numeracy Strategy and this is reflected in the organisation of mathematics lessons. However, this has not yet been discussed with all of the staff about planning for numeracy across the curriculum and there is little evidence of numeracy in other subject areas. In ICT, the school now has a new system which has suffered from initial problems. During the inspection, it was in its first week of use and whilst there is limited use of CD-ROMs for research in humanities, and word processing is used to support other areas of the curriculum, the breadth of planning and use across the curriculum is currently poor.

### **Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development**

11. Overall, the majority of pupils in most lessons and across both key stages display a generally good attitude to learning. Behaviour, particularly in the classroom, and relationships between students and teachers are both good.
12. Pupils' attitudes to learning are mostly positive. Most pupils sustain appropriate levels of concentration and interest, particularly when teaching is exciting and behaviour is managed well. In personal, social and health education lessons (PSHE), for example, they enjoy their lessons and recognise that their teachers work hard for them. Pupils settle to work quickly and their helpful attitudes to learning enable lessons to proceed at a good pace. Opportunities for discussion enable pupils to share information, exchange ideas, respect one another's opinions and work collaboratively to enhance their learning. This happens frequently in careers and history lessons in particular.
13. Most pupils approach their learning constructively and take a positive interest in their school life. They undertake a range of curricular and extra-curricular activities. In lessons, pupils now enjoy computer lessons and participate very effectively as members of the school council. Both activities enable pupils to improve their learning and raise their confidence and self-esteem.
14. Through informal interviews, pupils share a positive perception about themselves and are generally positive about the school and staff. They speak positively about the school's new reward system and are particularly impressed by the fair and equal manner in which it is implemented. During humanities and religious education lessons, it is evident that the pupils have some respect and tolerance for other faiths and cultures. This evidently supports pupils' personal development and encourages good relationships across racial boundaries.

15. In relation to their emotional and behavioural difficulties most pupils behave appropriately around the school and to a generally good standard in lessons. Pupils are polite, respectful and show a willingness to share information about themselves and the school. Most incidents of inappropriate behaviour are evident when there is reduced adult supervision, such as at break times or immediately at the end of the school day for residential pupils. Here, behaviour can be lively, boisterous and occasionally anti-social and disrespectful. During the inspection, at times, aggressive, insolent, racist and sexist behaviour was observed and some pupils reported concerns about bullying. Although staff deal with these concerns effectively, some pupils state that they are unsure what action has been taken and incidents continue to affect the learning of a small minority of pupils. The school made three permanent exclusions of pupils in the last school year and the number of fixed term exclusions has risen since the last inspection. However, the school now admits day pupils and exclusions, whilst high, are similar to other schools with day pupils.
16. Relationships between pupils and staff are good. They are constructive, purposeful and create opportunities for pupils' personal development. On the school council, pupils work collaboratively with staff in improving relationships, developing pupils' communication skills and empowering them to make informed choices and decisions about themselves and the school. Pupils actively take up opportunities to serve the community through work experience, which enhances their confidence and self-esteem, and enables many to become responsible and mature members of the school and wider community. The overall experience very effectively supports social and personal development.
17. The school attendance of pupils in the last school year was well below the national average for similar schools. The declining attendance and the extremely high levels of unauthorised absence are primarily a consequence of parentally condoned absences. Absence appears to have become 'a way of life' for some pupils who have started at the school late in their school life. However, the school is working closely with the Educational Welfare Officer and has strategies in place to raise the existing low levels of attendance, but the existing action requires more rigorous and consistent application.
18. Since the last inspection, the school has sustained the level of progress on pupils' attitudes, behaviour and relationships. However, levels of attendance have drastically fallen and consequently affect the learning, progress and personal development of some individuals.

### **HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?**

19. During the week of the inspection, five classes were taught at Key Stage 3 and three classes at Key Stage 4. All Year 11 pupils were out of school on study leave or on work experience. Overall, the quality of teaching is good with the five classes at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory with the three classes at Key Stage 4. Overall, it is good. Throughout the school, it was satisfactory or better in 94 per cent of lessons and good or better in 51 per cent. Six per cent of lessons were unsatisfactory.
20. At Key Stage 3, teaching was good or better in 58 per cent of lessons and very good or better in 28 per cent. It was very good in religious education and good in all other subjects apart from modern foreign languages and very limited teaching inspected in ICT, where it was satisfactory. At Key Stage 4, teaching was good or better in 36 per cent of lessons and very good in 9 per cent. It was good in mathematics, art, history and physical education and satisfactory in all of other subjects taught.
21. At the last inspection, only 87 per cent of teaching was satisfactory or better and 2 per cent was very good or better. Both the percentage of teaching that is satisfactory or better, and the percentage that is very good or better has improved since then. Previously, work was not well matched to pupils' different abilities. It did not sufficiently stretch the higher attainers and was too difficult at times for the lower attainers. This has improved, but more obviously at Key Stage 3, where Individual Education Plans are used as 'working documents' to support planning and pupils' learning, than at Key Stage 4, where they have yet to have an impact.
22. In those lessons that are good or better, individual lessons are well planned and pupils' behaviour is managed very well by good teamwork between the teacher and support assistants. Fun and excitement are frequently introduced into Key Stage 3 lessons by 'games type activities', such as in a Year 8 lesson on autobiographies and a Year 7 geography lesson where individual and paired 'timed' activities added a keen and pleasantly competitive approach to comparing their own country with France. At Year 7, in

particular, very good relationships with the pupils and gentle reminders of individual targets that are mostly in place at Key Stage 3 encourage pupils to keep concentrating even late in the afternoon. In one religious education lesson, a very careful balance between questions needing a specific answer and those encouraging discussion kept a lesson about baptism moving at a good speed and kept track of pupils' learning. The good use of voice tone and other non-verbal signs clearly set high expectations of behaviour and the amount of response and work that the teacher considers acceptable. Overall, lessons are well linked to everyday experiences, and at Year 9, cultural issues raised by pupils in their humanities and religious education lessons on how belief shapes people's behaviour is set very well by the teacher within a historical setting. At Year 10, many pupils are reasonably new to the school. Some pupils behave in a way that is deliberately designed to disrupt lessons. However, good or better teaching shows a good knowledge of the subject which pupils appreciate and links what is known of pupils' interests to maintain their concentration in subjects that at times are not one of their favourites, such as religious education. Very interesting GCSE coursework linking problems of law and order to issues in the American 'Wild West' quickly 'grabs' most pupils' imagination. Changes in activity from role-play, to comparing written and 'movie' versions of an event, to discussion and recording of work, frequently maintains learning.

23. In the minority of lessons that are less than satisfactory, teaching approaches restrict opportunities for both higher and lower attainers to learn and, on occasions, to record their work more appropriately. On occasions, such as in religious education at Key Stage 4, the same approach is used both with higher attainers and lower attainers and the pace of the lesson and expectations of their reading, understanding and writing are too high. This causes pupils to be very unclear about what they are supposed to be learning. In some food lessons at Key Stage 4, planning has not progressed sufficiently from the activities planned for at Key Stage 3. Despite the pupils being encouraged to make informed choices, and to work independently and responsibly, the content is not demanding enough. In all aspects of design and technology at Key Stage 4, teachers' knowledge of the subject, and aspects regarding the materials and making skills are at least satisfactory, but are unsatisfactory regarding products and applications, and designing for manufacturing.
24. Although there have been improvements in teachers' use of assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic achievements and experiences since the previous report, the procedures for this are still not fully developed and are inconsistent across the curriculum. Assessment procedures have been introduced in mathematics and a method of recording is used across the whole school ensuring that teachers know better what pupils know and understand and can better plan for their learning. The school has also introduced a placement test on entry, but as yet no further mathematical 'age' is recorded after this test. In humanities, new approaches do not yet include formally finding out what the pupils know before the start of a particular topic so that learning can be clearly assessed once the topic is finished. The school appreciates that this will let them report pupils' progress more easily to parents and plan better for the next set of lessons.
25. Whilst teaching in literacy and numeracy is satisfactory or better within English and mathematics lessons, planned approaches to teach skills through other subjects is not yet happening across the school and is not yet satisfactory. In line with school approaches, homework is not used consistently at the moment to support work undertaken in class. Pupils request it at times and, on occasions, particularly in support of accredited courses, staff encourage pupils to carry out extra work. However, pupils who are not residential often do not return work to school and this is a cause for friction with other pupils. Teachers' informal approaches work appropriately at the moment but a small number of parents would like more homework to be set and this currently is not happening.

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

26. Overall, the school provides a satisfactory range of opportunities for learning for all pupils relevant to their needs. The subjects include religious education using the Cheshire Agreed Syllabus. However, statutory requirements are not being met. The full curriculums in music and gymnastics are not offered at Key Stage 3, and information and communication technology is not fully taught across both key

stages. Whilst the weekly teaching time of around 24 hours is just satisfactory, there is some imbalance of time for history and geography in Year 8. The organisation of the school day does not always make effective use of time for geography and mathematics.

27. Curricular planning and organisation across the school is unsatisfactory. They are not monitored to ensure that all requirements are consistently met in both key stages. Whilst there are subject policies, except for information and communication technology, schemes of work are not consistently addressing the issues of continuity and progression in all subjects. Short-term planning is satisfactory. Curriculum planning and organisation for the lower school is good and the provision is closely monitored by the lower school co-ordinator. Teachers and subject co-ordinators are not always deployed efficiently to make best use of their subject skills and expertise and there is no co-ordinator for science. The curriculum is socially inclusive and ensures equal opportunity and access for all pupils.
28. Core subjects are planned for in both key stages and the National Strategy for Literacy has been adapted satisfactorily to suit the needs and abilities of pupils in Years 7 and 8. For all other years the adaptation is unsatisfactory. The National Strategy for Numeracy has not yet been adapted across the curriculum and, therefore, strategies for both literacy and numeracy are not yet effective. Standards of key skills are unsatisfactory. Speaking and listening skills are encouraged, for example, in humanities and religious education. However, not enough is being done to develop pupils' reading and writing skills, application of number and use of information technology across the whole curriculum. A high priority is given to pupils' behaviour and personal relationships and the provision for personal, social and health education is good. The sex education policy is too brief and lacks detail, and the school recognises that it is in need of updating. Drugs education, emphasising the need for a healthy life style, is appropriate and part of the personal, social and health education programme.
29. The provision for outdoor education is good and includes activities outside the school day, which make a significant contribution to the whole curriculum. The range of opportunities includes outdoor pursuits, mountain walking, abseiling and sailing to develop skills of teamwork and confidence building. The Youth Award Scheme, co-ordinated by a member of the care staff, is part of the education programme for evening activities and makes a valuable contribution, especially to pupils' social development.
30. Effective strategies are used to prepare pupils for the next stage of education or for employment. Certificate of Achievement courses have been developed for pupils for whom the full range of GCSE courses is less appropriate. The introduction of vocational courses is being considered to broaden the range of opportunities at Key Stage 4. Careers and work experience are well co-ordinated and the school works closely with the local careers service, using good links with the local community and industry to provide well-informed advice and worthwhile work experience. Recently, pupils so impressed their employers on work experience they were offered full time employment. The careers staff are developing new initiatives for Year 11 pupils to attend college courses and to take advantage of further training and college schemes. The school has recently been commended by the careers service for the quality of the career's library.
31. The school makes good use of the local and wider community to support the curriculum, particularly at Key Stage 3. There are visits to local churches and the City of Chester linked to history and to the salt mines to support the science curriculum. Liverpool museum is a popular venue because it is very child orientated. Visits to local food production factories inform pupils about the world of work and a local supermarket supplied French food to support work in geography. Visits abroad to France also feature, and a thriving link has been established with a school in Kenya to which the pupils send gifts earned through the school's credit system.
32. Since the last inspection, improvements to the curriculum have been generally satisfactory. Music is still not established fully and there is still an imbalance between history and geography. The range of vocational options at Key Stage 4 has not been sufficiently widened.
33. The provision for spiritual development is just satisfactory. Assemblies are not daily but they are well designed to encourage pupils to appreciate other people's views and beliefs and to develop their own. Teaching in religious education lessons enhances such opportunities. Other subjects, however, do not provide a sufficient range of experiences. While there are pockets of good practice, such as in the personal and social education provision, these are limited.

34. Promotion of pupils' moral development is good. Teachers constantly identify the issues of right and wrong, especially when referring to standards of behaviour. The school tries hard to promote and foster moral values, especially through the residential provision. The attitudes and behaviour expected of pupils is made abundantly clear. This is expressed in summaries of aims and conduct rules on display. The rules are supported by a good system for rewards and sanctions which is valued by the pupils.
35. The school council enables pupils to play a more active role in the running of the school and provides opportunities for pupils' social and moral development. Social development is particularly well served by the way the staff show respect to the pupils. Whilst pupils respond well when given opportunities to make choices in lessons and to work in pairs and groups, there are insufficient opportunities for this during the teaching day. However, this is compensated for by the good opportunities in the residential provision, where they make decisions for their evening options, including those in the extra-curricular activities. In addition, preparation for the world of work and life in the community is handled well by the school to enable them to gain in confidence and develop the inter-personal skills needed in the work place.
36. Cultural development in the school is good. There are well-developed links with a school in Kenya that give pupils one type of experience of another culture. Other cultural avenues include visits to France and residential and day visits within the region, visits to local and national museums and places of interest, as well as benefiting from a theatre group's visit to the school to support the English curriculum. The school goes some way to promoting a full understanding of Afro-Caribbean, Asian and other cultures of non-European origin. There are aspects of food work, art, geography and religious education that make some provision, but it is insufficiently extensive or prominent in the pupils' overall experience.
37. Since the last inspection there has been a satisfactory improvement in the provision for pupils' cultural development from satisfactory to good and the overall provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has been maintained as good.

#### **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?**

38. The school provides a satisfactory level of care for its pupils and the procedures for health and safety and child protection are all satisfactory. Care, teaching and support staff work together as a team to ensure a supportive and positive environment in which the pupils can develop as fully as possible.
39. The school has worked hard since the last inspection to improve its liaison between care and teaching staff. All residential pupils now have individual care plans and these are developing well. Staff meet twice a day to exchange information on the boarders' achievements and progress. A number of pupils have Individual Education Plans, which reflect the recommendations of their annual reviews. However, personal targets are often linked to behaviour, and the plans are not always used as working documents within the classroom. Where Individual Education Plans exist and where they are used well in the classroom, the pupils make satisfactory and sometimes good progress. Where they are not used, the pupils' personal progress is not always well monitored.
40. Although there have been improvements in assessing and monitoring the pupils' personal and academic achievements and experiences since the previous report, the procedures for those are still not fully developed and are inconsistent across the curriculum. They are better developed within the residential setting, where the pupils' personal likes and dislikes are well recorded. Poor behaviour is recorded on incident sheets, which are kept in the pupils' personal files. More serious incidents are recorded in a hardbound record book by residential staff but this does not yet happen with school staff. Annual reports to parents vary in quality and, in some subject areas, do not always specify what the pupils know and understand. On occasions, staff comments about the pupils' behaviour are totally inappropriate. For the residential pupils, there is an expectation that all pupils follow courses in the evening that are accredited with the Youth Award Scheme. Good assessment and recording of these support pupils' further personal development in life skills. A system of reward points operates during the school day that encourages improvements in pupils' behaviour, although some pupils do not always respond well to this and argue over the number of points awarded at the end of lessons.
41. Procedures for the monitoring of attendance are satisfactory, overall, and parents are contacted during the morning if a pupil fails to attend. Arrangements for child protection procedures are satisfactory, overall. Staff know whom to contact in the event of child protection issues arising, with the named person



being responsible for both residential and school incidents. Where restraint procedures are necessary this is safely achieved and gives due regard to the respect and dignity of the pupil. All pupils have access to a trained counsellor through an appointment system on two days of the week, and the service is well used. The school has procedures for dealing with bullying. However, a number of younger pupils feel that their complaints are not always dealt with effectively.

42. Within the day and evening curriculum, pupils benefit from off-site recreational and cultural visits to theatres, leisure centres and sporting venues, which strongly supports their personal, social and moral development. Their cultural awareness is further enhanced through day and residential visits to France. New pupils are invited to spend taster days, participating in activities and meeting staff prior to formally attending the school. All pupils enjoy the opportunity of equal access to the curriculum and day pupils are also encouraged to join in with evening activities.
43. The quality of care and supervision is good, overall, although where medication is issued to the pupils at mealtimes, staff are not always vigilant in ensuring that tablets have been taken and swallowed before moving on to the next pupil. Visiting specialists support those pupils with specific needs such as hearing impairment. Health and safety arrangements are satisfactory, overall, with risk assessments and regular fire drills recorded appropriately. However, transport arrangements for the departure of pupils from the school are unsatisfactory due to the lack of orderly organisation and incidents are sometimes potentially dangerous. During the inspection, one pupil tried to open the door of a moving vehicle, some left the school without their seat belts secure, and other pupils helped to push-start a vehicle, with one pupil eventually riding on the vehicle's rear bumper for a short distance.
44. The previous report highlighted the school's need to develop Individual Education Plans covering all aspects of the pupils' development and special needs to enable a consistent approach to be adopted within the day and residential settings. This issue has been addressed, and although currently not all pupils in Year 9 and at Key Stage 4 have Individual Education Plans, in Years 7 and 8, these are well developed and used as working documents in the classroom. Residential staff and the pupils' key workers have developed good quality individual care plans, and these are used well to monitor and support residential pupils. Liaison between the residential and school staff has improved, and exchange briefings take place at the beginning and end of each day.
45. The pupils with additional needs, such as impaired hearing, sometimes refuse to wear their hearing aids and are not always well considered in lesson planning. However, they do receive support from the hearing advisory service on a regular basis. In care plans and where the pupils have Individual Education Plans, the pupils' targets reflect the recommendations of their Annual Reviews. In Years 7 and 8, the pupils are also involved with setting their own personal targets, which they monitor carefully throughout the school day. However, although some support staff work with individual pupils during lessons, there is no evidence that the teachers use graded worksheets matched to specific ability levels.
46. The school has recently designated a member of staff as the Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator, but the post holder has not yet received training for this role. The co-ordination of additional special needs across the site is in the early stages of development. The policy for special educational needs is satisfactory, but planning for specific needs is not fully included in subject schemes of work or lesson plans. Annual Reviews and Transition Plan procedures are well established and the pupils' records are up to date and carefully documented. Residential and teaching staff contribute to the pupils' Annual Reviews, Transition Plans and annual reports, although the quality of the latter is inconsistent. The system of target setting is not yet linked to a whole-school approach, but is developing well. The school is built on different levels and is not yet sufficiently accessible to staff or adults with physical disabilities.

## **HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?**

47. Parents who responded to the parents' questionnaires and attended the parents' meeting with inspectors have a positive perception of the school's provision. All these parents are pleased with how the school is led and managed. Most parents are happy with their involvement with the school, but a significant minority is concerned about the level of communication between them and school. The school makes a serious attempt to involve parents in the education of their children but this is not always successful. A significant number of parents who responded to the questionnaires also expressed concern about the school's policy on homework. The school does not ensure that all pupils are provided with homework and there was no evidence of homework being set during the week of the inspection. In line with school

approaches, homework is not formally used to support work undertaken in class. Pupils request it at times and on occasions, particularly in support of accredited courses, staff encourage pupils to carry out extra work. However, pupils who are not residential often do not return work to school and this is a cause for friction with other pupils. Teachers' informal approaches work appropriately at the moment and the parents who attended the meeting with inspectors supported this.

48. There is generally a sound and improving relationship between the school and parents. The school actively encourages parents to support their children's learning by attending review meetings. Two parents' evenings are held which provide an opportunity for parents to discuss their children's progress and exchange information. Parents are regularly invited to the school's social events to develop a more constructive relationship between staff and parents. The headteacher regularly consults with parents by telephone and this is contributing to improved levels of communication between school and home. The head of care has introduced strategies to enable care staff to make more home visits and build more purposeful links between home and the school. However, a significant number of parents do not attend parents' evenings review meetings and these missed opportunities are having a negative effect on their children's learning and progress.
49. The overall quality of information provided is unsatisfactory. The school provides user-friendly information to parents through the governors' annual report, school prospectus, correspondence, and by telephone and newsletters. All of this is appreciated by parents. However, the school does not fully comply with its statutory obligations to parents, because it fails to provide information about levels of attendance in the annual report from governors and omits information about National Curriculum results achieved by the school, and national comparisons. All parents are provided with an end of year pupils' report, which informs parents and carers about the children's attitude to work and information about their personal and academic development. However, the report does not clearly and consistently report on children's progress in both the core and foundation subjects nor in a positive way about pupils' improvements (or not) in their behaviour. The omission of this information affects the overall quality of information provided.
50. Inspection evidence indicates that all parents have received a home-school agreement and are regularly consulted about their children's individual targets. However, many aspects of the home-school agreement are not being implemented consistently because existing relationships between a significant number of parents and the school are at an embryonic stage. For example, the school must improve and develop a more purposeful relationship with all parents to ensure much higher and regular levels of pupils' attendance.
51. Since the last report, parents continue to support the school, but the school has not made a significant improvement in reporting academic progress through end-of-year pupils' reports. There are still vacancies for parents on the governing body although the school has worked hard to improve this.

## **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

52. Leadership and management of the school is satisfactory. The school was last inspected in June 1996. It took the issues for development seriously and has since then altered the timetabling of some subjects to avoid clashes with sporting activities, improved planning for pupils' cultural development, included costings and timescales in its development planning and, more recently, involved the governing body more in oversight of the curriculum. Residential provision is now very good, teaching has improved, and pupils' achievement is better in mathematics and art, where it is now good, and in humanities, where it is now satisfactory. However, in curriculum planning, assessment of pupils' attainment, detailed knowledge of pupils' progress and the consistent use of Individual Education Plans to ensure that all pupils are taught at exactly the right level, taking into account their individual needs, development has been insufficient. Because of these important areas that have not been sufficiently developed, overall improvement since the last inspection has been unsatisfactory. However, both the governing body and the senior management team have been in permanent post for less than two years. Both the headteacher and the head of care have been in post for less than fourteen months. The two senior teachers have only recently been appointed either on a permanent basis or to the senior management team. The new leadership and management team are clear about the strengths of the school and areas that need development and give every indication of having the capacity to move the school forward.
53. The headteacher quickly put in place a School Development Plan that was an audit of all areas in the school. Whilst recognised by the school as being over-ambitious for a one-year plan, it highlighted

certain priorities, some which have been introduced successfully and others that are still being addressed positively. The two main areas identified initially were curriculum development and the management of pupils' behaviour.

54. Curriculum leaders were appointed to a number of core and foundation subjects but owing to unforeseen staffing absences and illness, the school still has no permanent specialist teacher for science, design and technology, music and modern foreign languages. There is no specialist co-ordinator for several areas of the curriculum. Procedures are in place, and the headteacher has monitored the quality of subject planning and teaching in lessons across the school. As a result, staff development is a priority. The Local Education Authority (LEA) has supported the school and some additional temporary teachers and support staff have been appointed to the school. These appointments have allowed some permanent staff to attend courses, work with LEA advisers and visit other establishments. For example, this led to the mathematics co-ordinator introducing the National Numeracy Strategy into the school, the humanities co-ordinator reviewing and now introducing a more appropriate scheme of work, and a senior teacher beginning work on an alternative curriculum at Key Stage 4. The school recognises that the curriculum does not yet contain sufficient vocational accreditation for the pupils, although there is an appropriately trained teacher on the staff. The head of care has made a vital contribution to the positive changes in the residential aspect of the school.
55. To improve the management of pupils' behaviour, the school organised a two-day training course for all staff on introducing new strategies, including the implementation of a new credit system that appears to be having a positive effect on the school. The system has only been operating for one term and will need to be monitored and evaluated. The role of curriculum co-ordinator is filled by non-specialists in many areas. The commitment of the governors and headteacher, and a large financial investment to develop these areas, has begun to make significant improvements.
56. Although the governing body has little specific information available on the overall success of the school, it has a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school. This comes about partly through the Chair of Governor's weekly visits to the school and other governors' visits and working knowledge. Those governors in post work very hard and have a very strong commitment to their role of shaping the direction of the school. The governors produce an annual report for parents, and intend to make it comply fully with statutory requirements. It does not at the moment make reference to pupils' levels of attendance and to the success of the school's special educational needs policy.
57. The school has an action plan rising from the original development plan. Finances have been identified to meet the demands of the plan. Strategic funding and specific grants are used for their intended purposes. Regular information is available about budget spending and this is monitored closely by the governing body. Financial management and control appear to be satisfactory, although the school has not benefited from an audit of its budget since 1993. The governing body has reliable procedures for monitoring spending. The higher than average carry forward of £80,177 from the financial year 1999 – 2000 was a deliberate policy to fund the development plan, based upon the headteacher's initial audit of what needed improving. Some of the principles of best value are applied. Services that can be supplied by a number of providers are compared on the grounds of cost and quality to ensure value for money. Whilst the school suffered from difficulties with the introduction of its computer system, this has now been resolved. On a day-to-day basis, the school's administrator ensures that value for money is achieved by close monitoring of the ordering of equipment and resources by staff. However, the school does not yet collect and use information sufficiently to challenge itself to ensure that it is clear about why it is following certain approaches and whether better approaches could be introduced.
58. The school has a good level of both teaching and support staff for the teaching day, and a satisfactory level of care staff for the number of resident pupils. However, the high percentage of temporary teaching staff creates instability, and as few subjects are currently taught by specialists, the overall match of teachers to the demands of the curriculum is unsatisfactory. Support staff are all committed to the work of the school and add a great deal to the quality of education and care provided.
59. Accommodation in the school is very good, and specialist rooms are available in most subjects, apart from music. Overall, resources for learning are satisfactory but shortages in some aspects of subjects, such as gymnastics, inhibit the curriculum. The use of new technology in the education of the pupils is only just developing and is not yet satisfactory but the administrative staff use ICT effectively.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

60. Overall, whilst development since the last inspection is unsatisfactory, in the last twelve months the new headteacher, governing body and senior management team have shown clear signs of improving the school and should introduce an action plan based on the following key issues to develop the school further.
- Ensure that all subjects of the National Curriculum are taught fully to pupils and that they have greater opportunities for vocational education at Key Stage 4;  
(Paragraphs 2, 6, 8, 10, 26, 32, 54, 90, 95, 103-104)\*
  - Ensure that the key skills of communication, use of number and information and communication technology are planned and taught appropriately in all subjects;  
(Paragraphs 25, 59, 75, 79, 97)\*
  - Put in place procedures that work successfully to improve the level of attendance of pupils at the school, including greater involvement of parents in their children's education;  
(Paragraphs 1, 17, 50, 91)
  - Ensure that pupils' work is regularly assessed in all subjects so that the school can monitor and evaluate pupils' progress and decide if changes need to be made to the teaching to further improve pupils' achievement;  
(Paragraphs 40, 52, 93, 109)\*
  - Set more precise learning targets in all pupils' Individual Education Plans to enable progress to be measured and analysed to inform planning further;  
(Paragraphs 44, 45, 52)\*
  - Ensure that each pupil's school report to parents or carers contains factual and positive information both about the child's academic progress and improvements in behaviour.  
(Paragraphs 40, 46, 49, 93)
61. In addition to the Key Issues above, the following less important issues for development should be considered for inclusion in the school action plan:
- Improve the procedures for the safe departure of those pupils who travel by school transport;  
(Paragraph 43)
  - Ensure that the good procedures are in place to deal with incidents of bullying work fully in respect of pupils knowing what is being done to help them.  
(Paragraph 41)
- (\* Indicates key issues which are already recognised in the school's planning.)

## RESIDENTIAL

62. The residential provision is a strength of the school. The recently appointed and appropriately qualified head of care is very clear about areas for development, and these are being introduced effectively. Care staff are being encouraged to follow accredited courses such as the National Vocational Qualifications for their own development. The school also runs its own training, which is proving beneficial. A 'key worker' system has been introduced so that every residential pupil has one member of staff to whom he relates and staff are now deployed so that their work schedules are more appropriate to the needs of the pupils. Each key worker maintains links with the pupils' homes, telephoning when there is positive news to relay, as well as when there are difficulties.
63. There is excellent understanding of the needs of the pupils and this is reflected in the care plans. The high quality of the care planning supports the staff and pupils in meeting the pupils' individual needs. The head of care has made positive changes to the care planning for the pupils and is encouraging the staff who know pupils best, to make appropriate decisions for their development providing they are within the school's overall philosophy. The care plans focus on seven different areas in the residential curriculum. Although pupils are not currently involved in their own target setting, the school already recognises this as an area for development.
64. There is a very good 'Induction Booklet' for the pupils, which has been produced as a result of a recommendation from the school's Social Services Inspection. It has been well thought out and produced and is effective in ensuring that pupils are introduced appropriately into the boarding aspect of school life. In addition to the good meals for breakfast and tea in the main school dining room, pupils have their own facilities in their 'houses' to make a drink for supper. The residential accommodation has recently been refurbished to a good standard. The pupils' accommodation is primarily single study bedrooms. Some have en suite facilities. However, if pupils prefer to share a room there are some double rooms and some multi-bedded rooms that are divided effectively to provide some privacy. The school considers choice for pupils is important in this.
65. A wide range of extra-curricular activities is offered to the pupils. These activities offer a rich variety of experience and are typical of activities which pupils could carry on into adulthood as leisure time pursuits. The pursuits include gardening, kite-making, first aid and outdoor education activities such as sailing. In the sailing activities the pupils study for Royal Yachting Association awards. Many activities are well linked to the Youth Award Scheme, and four of the current pupils have achieved both Bronze and Silver awards.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

### Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

65

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

69

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 2         | 20        | 29   | 94           | 6              |      |           |

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                     | 65           |
| Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals | 58*          |

\* This figure is affected by residential provision.

| 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 | 33           |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving           | 9            |

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

|             | %   |
|-------------|-----|
| School data | 6.5 |

#### Unauthorised absence

|             | %    |
|-------------|------|
| School data | 20.8 |

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

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

|  | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year | 1999 | 22   | 0     | 22    |

| National Curriculum Test/Task Results        |       | English           | Mathematics | Science |
|--|-------|-------------------|-------------|---------|
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 3 and above | Total | No pupils entered | 27 (29)     | 36 (24) |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above  | Total | No pupils entered | 18 (12)     | 32 (6)  |

| Teachers' Assessments                        |       | English      | Mathematics  | Science      |
|--|-------|--------------|--------------|--------------|
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 3 and above | Total | Not reported | Not reported | Not reported |
| Percentage of pupils at NC level 4 or above  | Total | Not reported | Not reported | Not reported |

Percentages in brackets refer to the year before the latest reporting year.

### Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

| Year   | Boys         | Girls | Total                    |
|--|--------------|-------|--------------------------|
| 1999   | 9<br>entered | 0     | 9                        |
| GCSE results   |              |       |                          |
|  |              |       | 5 or more grades<br>A*-G |
|  |              |       | 1 or more grades<br>A*-G |
| Percentage of pupils achieving<br>the standard specified |              | Total | 44                       |
|  |              |       | 89                       |

### Ethnic background of pupils

|                                 | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage      |              |
| Black – African heritage        |              |
| Black – other                   | 1            |
| Indian                          |              |
| Pakistani                       |              |
| Bangladeshi                     |              |
| Chinese                         |              |
| White                           | 64           |
| Any other minority ethnic group |              |

### Exclusions in the last school year

|                              | Fixed<br>period* | Permanent |
|------------------------------|------------------|-----------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage   |                  |           |
| Black – African heritage     |                  |           |
| Black – other                |                  | 1         |
| Indian                       |                  |           |
| Pakistani                    |                  |           |
| Bangladeshi                  |                  |           |
| Chinese                      |                  |           |
| White                        |                  | 2         |
| Other minority ethnic groups |                  |           |

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

\* Not recorded and reported prior to this academic year.

### Teachers and classes

#### Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

|  |     |
|--|-----|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 17  |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher   | 3.8 |
| Average class size                       | 6.7 |

#### Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

|   |       |
|---|-------|
| Total number of education support staff | 6     |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week   | 182.5 |

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### Financial information

| Financial year                             | 1999/2000 |
|--|-----------|
|  | £         |
| Total income                               | 1,057,621 |
| Total expenditure                          | 1,058,645 |
| Expenditure per pupil                      | 14,306    |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 81,201    |
| Balance carried forward to next year       | 80,177    |

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

|                                   |    |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 65 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 14 |

### Percentage of responses in each category

|  | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school.   | 29             | 50            | 7                | 7                 | 7          |
| My child is making good progress in school.  | 36             | 29            | 14               | 7                 | 14         |
| Behaviour in the school is good.   | 0              | 64            | 7                | 0                 | 29         |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.                              | 0              | 7             | 36               | 29                | 29         |
| The teaching is good.  | 50             | 50            | 0                | 0                 | 0          |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.                          | 64             | 21            | 7                | 7                 | 0          |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 64             | 21            | 14               | 0                 | 0          |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.              | 64             | 29            | 0                | 0                 | 7          |
| The school works closely with parents.   | 43             | 50            | 0                | 0                 | 7          |
| The school is well led and managed.  | 43             | 57            | 0                | 0                 | 0          |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.                      | 43             | 50            | 7                | 0                 | 0          |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.            | 57             | 36            | 0                | 0                 | 7          |



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

### ENGLISH

66. Achievement, overall, by the majority of pupils is satisfactory in their speaking, listening and comprehension skills, and in reading and writing. Most pupils enter the school with limited literacy skills, although some pupils' word reading skills are beyond their chronological age. Their emotional and behavioural needs frequently result in difficulties with their willingness to communicate fully. The pupils' improvement in speaking and listening is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. It is satisfactory, overall. At Key Stage 3, pupils listen well to stories and poems, showing a good level of comprehension. For example, in the teacher's very expressive poetry reading, the pupils identify how word sounds match the rhythm and beat of the poem's theme. They asked relevant questions when watching videos of *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and demonstrated a clear understanding of the plot. In Year 9, they use well-prepared examples of newspaper texts to discuss how headlines are used to gain public attention. At Key Stage 4, achievement is satisfactory. Pupils are pleased to explain how previous work was completed on a particularly interesting 'prison' project. They have used video conferencing facilities at a local college to speak to and interview prison inmates. In 'brainstorming' sessions pupils share their ideas as well as consolidating earlier learning, and some respond with enthusiasm.
67. Reading is satisfactory at both key stages. Some pupils start school using pictures to help them work out the words. They do not know if they have read a word correctly. They read with little expression and are unsure about leaving pauses at significant moments in the story. Higher attainers explain a story and predict how it might finish. On admission, all pupils are assessed to determine their reading, spelling, comprehension abilities, and further testing is completed to monitor progress. Records show an average increase of three months in reading ages over a year although higher achieving pupils make greater gains. By Year 9, fluent readers enjoy poems and use expression well to give feel and meaning. They choose to read magazines or books and have particular favourites. The school has not entered pupils for National Assessments in English at the end of Key Stage 3 over the last three years, although by the end of Key Stage 4, pupils read their GCSE coursework poems fluently and with expression. They understand and explain the meanings of words and understand how the style of writing can reflect the author's cultural background. Between 1997 to 1999, Key Stage 4 pupils have been successful in GCSE English examinations with increasing success. Additionally, and for the first time, the lower achieving pupils are now entered for the Certificate of Achievement awards.
68. At both key stages, insufficient attention is paid to the development of handwriting skills. At Key Stage 3, in Years 7 and 8, pupils practise their handwriting by copying or tracing letters and sentences accurately but these skills are not always used in other written work. In Year 9, and at Key Stage 4, although the higher achieving pupils are beginning to develop fluent handwriting styles and regularly formed letters, other pupils continue to complete worksheets with badly written single-word responses. Pupils can write imaginative letters and stories, although this is not always expected of them, such as when they used 'cut and paste techniques' instead of writing the main points in sequencing events in the plot of *Macbeth*.
69. The quality of teaching and learning in English is good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4. Overall, it is satisfactory. In the best lessons, the teachers' promote learning through interesting and challenging demands, and there is little inappropriate behaviour. The teachers have a good knowledge of their subject, and lessons are well prepared and structured. However, with the exception of Years 7 and 8, the individual needs of the pupils are not always well catered for, and Individual Education Plans are not used as working documents within the classroom. Where lessons are less challenging or insufficiently structured, or where the teachers have low expectations, the pupils lose interest and present challenging behaviour. However, the teachers' classroom controls are enhanced by the good relationships with the pupils and this encourages satisfactory levels of learning. Although drama is still not offered within the curriculum, the pupils enjoy regular theatre trips, and take part in drama workshops in school, which enrich the curriculum. These activities strongly support the pupils' social and cultural development.
70. In Years 7 and 8, well-balanced and structured lessons are based on the National Literacy Strategy and the pupils make steady gains in developing their reading skills through daily individual reading sessions.

In Year 9, and at Key Stage 4, there is no planned system of daily reading, and opportunities for individual reading are limited. There is no evidence that reading is encouraged through use of the school library, which is kept permanently locked. Whilst the National Literacy Strategy has been introduced it has had insufficient effect as yet throughout the school, and has made little impact on the pupils' knowledge and use of basic literacy skills in subjects other than English.

71. At the time of the last inspection, the majority of pupils' achievements were below national expectations, but they made satisfactory progress at both key stages. The quality of teaching was satisfactory in Key Stage 3 and better at Key Stage 4. It was less good when tasks lacked challenge and lessons did not cater for individual learning needs. The marking of the pupils' work lacked constructive comments and there was no drama within the curriculum. The overall management of English was satisfactory. Satisfactory progress has been made since then. At Key Stage 3, in Years 7 and 8, procedures for monitoring and assessing the pupils' progress are good. Work is marked with encouraging comments and achievements are monitored against National Curriculum target levels. This is used to inform subsequent lesson planning and individual work. The pupils have an awareness of their own learning through their personal target sheets, which they use to monitor their own behaviour and academic progress. Although the teachers keep records of the progress of the pupils in Year 9, and at Key Stage 4, the procedures for compiling them and for their use are less well developed. The English co-ordinator is responsible for the overall management of English throughout the school, although the day-to-day management of English in Years 7 and 8 is organised by a lower school co-ordinator. Policy documentation is in place, and includes planning for examinations; departmental documentation is linked appropriately to the School Development Plan. Schemes of work are satisfactory, overall, although the use of ICT is limited and not planned for sufficiently. Year 9 planning is linked to the expectations of National Assessment Tests, and is satisfactory in meeting National Curriculum requirements. At Key Stage 4, curriculum planning is dictated largely through examination syllabuses, with progress monitored through completed assignments and deadline dates. Homework is sometimes set, but this is inconsistent. At both key stages, the range and quality of resources is adequate to support the curriculum, and very good wall displays of posters and the pupils' work provide good support for the subject as well as improving the pupils' self esteem. Although the provision of English meets statutory requirements and is satisfactory, overall, the school recognises that literacy is still an area for much development.

## **MATHEMATICS**

72. Achievement in mathematics is good at both key stages. National Assessment results at the end of Key Stage 3 are showing signs of improvement and pupils, at the end of Key Stage 4, are entered for GCSE or Certificate of Achievement with improving success. Those who enter school at Year 7 order numbers to 100 and carry out simple addition of single numbers. Before the end of Key Stage 3, they have progressed to ordering numbers to 1000, add decimals, carry out subtraction using decomposition and divide three-figure numbers by a single number. Pupils work with two-dimensional and three-dimensional shapes and identify and name triangles, such as isosceles, equilateral, scalene, and right-angled. Some recognise pentagons, hexagons, and octagons. In three-dimensional objects all pupils recognise cube and cuboids, whilst one pupil recognises and builds pyramids and tetrahedrons. At Key Stage 4, pupils can interpret data from bar charts and conversely can draw bar charts from data. Other pupils work on rotation, reflection and translation and this work is at a higher standard than at the last inspection.
73. Teaching and learning in mathematics during the inspection was never less than satisfactory. Teaching at Key Stage 3 ranges from satisfactory to very good and at Key Stage 4, it is consistently good. Overall, it is good across the school. Lessons are well planned in line with the school's scheme of work and have clear targets for pupils to learn. Lessons are taught following the style of the National Numeracy Strategy. Pupils are allowed to explore and develop mathematical ideas, such as when working on two-dimensional shapes, one pupil turned the square and was allowed to develop the 'symmetry' of a diamond. During three-dimensional work a pupil thought he knew how to build a pyramid and was allowed to try, with great success -which was then shared with the whole class. At Key Stage 4, when non-specialists or new teachers teach lessons, whilst the lessons carefully and appropriately follow the scheme of work, they are not fully planned for pupils with differing abilities and lack some imagination and exploration.

74. All permanent teachers have National Numeracy Strategy training, and this is reflected in the organisation of lessons. The whole school staff have not yet discussed numeracy across the curriculum and there is little evidence of numeracy in other subject areas. The subject co-ordinator is not a specialist, but is an enthusiast who has had some recent relevant training. With Local Education Authority support, visits have been made to research how other schools work and this helping to develop the curriculum at the school. Assessment procedures have been introduced and a method of recording is used across the whole school, thus ensuring continuity and progress. The school has also introduced a placement test on entry, although no further relevant information for comparison is yet recorded after this test. There are regular departmental meetings to establish consistency and the subject is well led.
75. There is a subject policy, scheme of work and a recent action plan for developing the subject. The length of lessons, at fifty-five minutes, and the timetabling of mathematics twice a day with some classes causes difficulties, which, whilst they are generally overcome by staff, can adversely affect the attitudes and learning of pupils in some lessons. Whilst the subject is adequately resourced, ICT is insufficiently used.

## **SCIENCE**

76. Achievement in science is satisfactory, overall, but has varied from time to time in recent years. In National Assessments at the end of Key Stage 3, whilst the number of pupils who have achieved both Levels 3 and 4 has increased significantly from 1998 to 1999, these levels are still below that expected of pupils in similar schools. This is partly due to nearly 35 per cent of pupils absenting themselves from the assessments rather than pupils' low attainment. The school's predictions for this year show further improvement. Those who start the school at 11 years of age are not fully clear about what is a fair test when comparing variables. By the age of 14, pupils know that light is reflected by shiny surfaces and that it is refracted when it passes through a solid glass block, or through water. Pupils know that white light is made up of coloured light and can be split into its constituent parts by passing it through a prism. Pupils have an understanding of the differences between living and non-living things and use a 'key' to distinguish between different animals and plants. They also construct a 'key' to distinguish between different people. They learn about healthy diets, carry out food tests to determine the presence of glucose and become far clearer about the principles of a fair test. By the age of 16, higher attainers attempt GCSE examinations whilst other pupils take the Certificate of Achievement. The percentage of pupils passing their GCSE examination between Grades A\* – G has been increasing slowly over the last three years. Pupils carry out practical work safely such as when attempting to obtain copper from malachite. Other pupils learn about enzyme reactions and the differences in pH as food passes through the alimentary canal.
77. Teaching and learning in science were never less than satisfactory during the inspection. They were predominantly good at Key Stage 3, and satisfactory with some very good teaching in one lesson at Key Stage 4. Overall, it was satisfactory. The characteristics of good teaching seen include secure subject knowledge and experience in the practical aspects of the subject, so that if experiments do not work, there is a convincing explanation. Overall, the pace of lessons is satisfactory and good teaching occurs, particularly when pupils are challenged to discover facts for themselves. Pupils join in fully and learn well in lessons. There is a scheme of work in place and lessons are well planned. The schemes of work are linked to the National Curriculum. Good practice is not yet shared fully throughout the school among teachers who teach the subject.
78. Whilst the standards in science are equivalent to those observed at the last inspection, the co-ordination of the subject has been inadequate since then because of a chequered history of staffing difficulties. However, the staff responsible for science teaching during the week of the inspection gave a confident feel for the future of the subject. The school has a specialist laboratory, although, at times, difficulties with gas supply and equipment mean that some pupils do not always carry out practical work. There is a shortage of some equipment, such as ray-boxes. There is good support from the learning support assistants who remember key words and encourage the pupils to use them in appropriate contexts. There is very little use of ICT in science and this is unsatisfactory.

## **ART**

79. Achievement in art is good at both key stages. From limited evidence, pupils' standards on entry in Year 7 are low. Drawing skills are underdeveloped and the knowledge and use of colour using different media is limited and variable. By the end of the Key Stage 3, pupils make good progress in using materials, tools and techniques. Progress in the visual elements of line and tone, pattern, colour and shape is good and pupils are introduced to the work of other artists of their own and other cultures, including Australian Aboriginal and Indian art.
80. At Key Stage 4, pupils build on the standards established in the previous key stage and are even more enthusiastic about the subject. Pupils recall significant features of artists' work and use these in their own pattern work. Achievements are across a wide range of media, including three-dimensional work. Attainment in the GCSE art examination, which the school entered for the first time last year, was very good. Work for this year's accreditation shows that the same high standard is being maintained. Pupils use and explore two-dimensional and three-dimensional media, working on different scales. They modify their work and use the advice of staff when evaluating it with a view to developing their own style of work.
81. The quality of teaching and learning at both key stages is good. At Key Stage 3, some teaching is very good where all pupils, regardless of ability, come to understand and use relevant art vocabulary. Good use is made of unplanned opportunities, such as when a pupil suddenly remarks that red, blue and yellow make brown in response to the teacher's question about what those colours are called. The knowledge of colour mixing is then taken beyond that originally planned and to good effect. Planning is linked to the National Curriculum and includes very good systems for assessment, which both help the teacher plan to build on what pupils already know and to measure how they are doing in comparison with other pupils. At Key Stage 4, teaching is good. It sets high standards and challenges pupils to do as well as or even better than the teacher's own examples. Good use is made of visits to local and national galleries to inform pupils' work. Work is planned to make the best use of artists who visit the school and to extend the range of media experiences. Pupils' levels of ability are considered and the content and pace of lessons adjusted to meet needs. Artwork is valued, and good use is made at the end of each lesson for whole group evaluation and to monitor individual progress. The teacher's management of challenging behaviours is very good and is respected by pupils.
82. In both key stages the quality of planning and schemes for assessment are very good and make a positive impact on pupils' attainment and progress. Pupils' attitudes to art are good and for some pupils very good. They enjoy their artwork and are proud to show and discuss what they are achieving. They describe clearly to visitors how their individual pieces of work evolve. They show respect for staff, value the support and advice they receive and are motivated to do well. Many in Year 10 want to enter for the GCSE examination. Pupils' work is celebrated in displays and appreciated by other pupils.
83. Since the last inspection, the improvement in the subject has been very good. Attainment has gone from below expectations to good and schemes of work are exemplary. The subject is now firmly established in the curriculum.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

84. Overall, achievement in design and technology is satisfactory, although it is good at Key Stage 3. From limited evidence, pupils' standards on entry in Year 7 are low. By the end of the key stage pupils make good progress, using a range of materials and components to design and make. In a project on movement, pupils plan how to make a propeller driven car. They draw simple design plans, construct their own models in a range of different materials and test them in practice. They use a good range of technical vocabulary to describe what they are making, choose appropriately which materials and tools to use and work well for the whole of the lesson. They measure, mark and cut materials precisely and adapt and modify their models to improve performance. This work is of a standard similar to what is expected nationally for pupils of the same age. However, when pupils are using food, progress can be unsatisfactory because of the emphasis on 'cooking' that is not linked to designing and to food technology.

85. At Key Stage 4, the standards are satisfactory but do not build on the standards achieved in the previous key stage. Pupils work on individual projects and over time make good progress with construction skills but designing skills are unsatisfactory. Food work is mundane and does not address the issues of food production. Pupils lack the skills to investigate familiar food products and to design for manufacturing in quantity using techniques to ensure consistency.
86. The quality of teaching and learning at Key Stage 3 is good. Teaching focuses on constructing pupils' designs and modifying these where necessary. The teacher sets high expectations for class work and health and safety, including the possible reasons for their batteries over-heating on their propeller cars. The pupils have to work accurately to achieve the best results and improve the performance of their cars. There is some unsatisfactory teaching when pupils are using food. In a Year 9 lesson on sandwich making the content was too low for the abilities in the group and without clear aims that build on previous learning, attainment was unsatisfactory. Opportunities are missed to increase pupils' knowledge of food handling and the intended purpose of the product. All lessons are planned but the quality of planning for both key stages varies and does not consistently identify the learning objectives, how the lessons build on previous learning or the scheme for assessment.
87. At Key Stage 4, the quality of teaching is satisfactory, overall. When using construction materials for individual projects pupils are encouraged to be proud of their work and to make independent decisions about how to proceed. Pupils work well with support assistants, seeking help and approval for the work as it progresses. Simple construction techniques are used for most projects, but the teaching identifies appropriately more advanced skills for higher attainers to use. For example, when making a large planter, a pupil used dowel joints to increase the overall strength and attached 'turned' knobs to individualise the work. Teaching has clear aims and the pace of lessons motivates pupils to do well. However, in food lessons at Key Stage 4, planning does not progress from the activities planned for at Key Stage 3. Pupils with challenging behaviours are very well managed and time is made for them to make informed choices, and to work independently and responsibly: but frequently the content is not demanding enough and concentration is short. In both material areas the teachers' knowledge of the subject and their aspects regarding the materials and making skills is satisfactory but unsatisfactory regarding products and applications and designing for manufacturing. Pupils' attitudes to the subject in both key stages are good. They enjoy working with materials and, when given the opportunity, they solve problems and make decisions independently. They show respect for staff and use materials carefully and selectively.
88. Since the last inspection, standards of work have improved and are now good at Key Stage 3. They have remained satisfactory at Key Stage 4, where progression, assessment procedures and the development of current schemes of work are still issues to be addressed. The improvement as a whole since the last inspection is unsatisfactory.
89. The subject has gone through a great deal of instability regarding staffing for Key Stage 4 construction materials and currently does not have a subject co-ordinator. There is a subject policy, but the scheme of work is unsatisfactory in ensuring that the pupils build on their knowledge as they progress through the school, particularly in their approaches to design. Planning is not linked clearly to the National Curriculum and is not clear enough as to how pupils' progress will be assessed. Accreditation in the subject includes Certificate of Achievement and GCSE but does not include sufficient opportunities for vocational accreditation.

## **HUMANITIES (Geography and History)**

90. Geography is taught at Key Stage 3 and history at both Key Stages 3 and 4. Given the evidence from the limited amount of pupils' written work, very limited amount of information in teachers' records and from observations of pupils' learning during the inspection, achievement in humanities by the majority of pupils is satisfactory at both key stages. This is the same as at the time of the last inspection in geography and a slight improvement in history, given the opportunities now to study the subject to GCSE level, where three out of a group of nine pupils were successful in 1999. However, poor attendance at school leads to some pupils missing significant amounts of work and, clearly, achievement for these pupils is very poor. Those pupils who start at the school at the age of 11 years have a basic understanding of the differences between the natural and man-made world. They categorise correctly rivers, hills and forests on the one hand and boats, bridges and churches on the other. They know that history is the past and that their past is history. They begin to understand why people took certain

actions, such as William of Poitiers marching on Dover. During their first year's work, they put simple historical information into sequence and make a start on understanding maps, atlases and globes, including discovering the value to their work of CD-ROMs. They describe basic facts about another country, such as France. This includes where to find the Eiffel Tower, driving on the right hand side of the road and knowledge of a variety of foods experienced at first hand during a visit to the local supermarket. By Year 9, pupils have progressed to discussing and understanding the causes and results of a volcanic eruption and famous times in the past when this has happened. They know about Mount Etna and understand concepts such as evacuation. During their GCSE history course, pupils compare sources of information and the differences in accounts of interesting events in the past about 'law and order'. They read aloud clearly and mostly accurately events leading up to the 'gunfight at the OK Corral'. They compared these with a 'movie' about the shootings before giving reasons as to which version might be nearer to the truth. Pupils become more able as they get older to decide for themselves which are the key points they need to remember in their work.

91. During the inspection, the quality of teaching and learning ranged between very good, good and satisfactory in equal proportions. Overall, it was good, although lessons do not yet follow a clear scheme of work that is fully in place. During very good lessons, teachers' knowledge of their subjects, their ideas for helping all pupils to learn in an interesting way and their drive to ensure that the pupils learn some difficult concepts, are obvious. Good use of different types of questioning either helps pupils to give a correct answer, which enables the teacher to assess their knowledge or understanding of a point, or leads the pupil to think of something he had not previously considered. At these times, pupils are clearly stretched in their learning. Interesting topics and approaches are used that enthuse the pupils. Activities that are timed to add a little fun and keenness to the learning were used well with younger pupils in recording their understanding of the differences between life in Britain and France. Older pupils benefit from re-enacting scenes from history, which are well controlled on most occasions. Lessons are mostly planned to ensure that pupils of different abilities have the same opportunities to learn, although this is not yet sufficiently based on pupils' known and recorded individual learning needs. Sometimes they receive good extra support from support assistants who work in most of the lessons, or the amount they are expected to learn is taken into account. The preparation of a different level of work within the same topic is not yet fully in use as an approach and some pupils struggle to read work sheets without adult help. On occasions, whilst lessons are satisfactory, overall, the amount that has been planned for the lessons is just too much, such as when a teacher had to finish by reading out the answers to questions without first asking the pupils for their own thoughts. Whilst homework has been used in the past, it was frequently not returned to school by the non-residential pupils and, therefore, is not currently planned for to increase pupils' learning.
92. Whilst improvements have been made in humanities since the last inspection, overall development is unsatisfactory. The school now has a good overall plan for the areas that will be taught to the different ages of pupil, although the more detailed scheme of work is still being built up. This approach does not yet include finding out formally what the pupils know before the start of a particular topic so that learning can be clearly assessed once the topic is finished. The school appreciates that this will let them report pupils' progress more easily to parents and plan better for the next set of lessons. Although both Year 8 classes have been taught geography and history this year, this was not happening during the inspection. To compensate for not being taught history, one class was receiving two lessons of geography, but timetabled immediately one after the other. These difficulties are connected with a lack of subject expertise in history by temporary staff, who are currently employed to help the school at a time of staffing absence amongst permanent staff. Whilst this is unsatisfactory, the school hopes to deal with this imbalance as soon as possible. Frequently, pupils' work is not dated, marked or annotated with comments that would help both pupils and staff to see progress and for pupils to understand how well they are doing with their work. The co-ordinator has taken advice recently from the Local Education Authority and is planning ways to improve this and the assessment of pupils' work. These areas still restrict the development of the subject, together with the need to improve pupils' behaviour at Key Stage 4, so that independent research and fieldwork can begin to stretch pupils' learning. The school has started formally to monitor the quality of teaching in general, but this has not yet been focused on subject teaching in the humanities and it is unclear when this will take place. The way in which teaching consistently reminds pupils of their responsibilities encourages pupils to work in pairs or groups and relates learning to social and cultural issues; it contributes significantly to pupils learning. Resources have improved but still limit pupils' work at times, such as when insufficient atlases are available for Year 8 pupils to have one each, which impedes their concentration. The co-ordinator now has a development plan for the subject, including the purchase of resources, that is built formally into the school's overall

planning procedures. This is in the early stages of being formally monitored by senior staff and the governing body.

## **INFORMATION and COMMUNICATIONS TECHNOLOGY**

93. In information and communication technology (ICT), the school has little recorded evidence of pupils' progress and there is insufficient information upon which to make a judgement on pupils' achievement. However, from observations during the week of the inspection, pupils' learning is now satisfactory on a limited curriculum. Pupils enter the school with varying levels of achievement and experience. After very limited experience, pupils, by the age of 14, explore new programs and practise their skills with the mouse and cursor keys. Because of their inexperience, they sometimes achieve by chance rather than by design. Pupils, by the age of 16, select different fonts, work in a variety of print styles and add a border to their work. Others design a birthday card using 'Clip-Art'. They save, edit and print their work.
94. During the inspection, teaching and learning were satisfactory at Key Stage 3, and ranged from satisfactory to good at Key Stage 4. Overall, it was satisfactory. Good teaching is characterised by confidence and knowledge of the new equipment and by encouraging older pupils, such as the Year 10 group working on desk-top publishing, to co-operate with one another and to learn together so that they also learn from each other. The school recognises that there is much 'lost time' to be made up and for pupils to progress now as quickly as possible.
95. There have been difficulties with the ICT equipment, and the school now has a managed system, which was installed very recently and was in its first week of use during the week of the inspection. There is no scheme of work, and at present the curriculum that is taught depends upon the software that is available, rather than matching the software to the planned curriculum. The subject was inspected as part of design and technology at the last inspection and improvements since then have been unsatisfactory. There is some limited evidence of word processing being used to support other areas of the curriculum and of pupils discovering the value to their research work of CD-ROMs in the humanities at Key Stage 3. However, the school appreciates that they do not yet plan sufficient use of ICT throughout the curriculum.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **French**

96. French is taught at Key Stage 3 as European Studies and is satisfactory, overall. It is not taught at Key Stage 4. The recently appointed temporary specialist teacher has good subject knowledge and provides stability to the subject, to which the pupils respond with enthusiasm. They make satisfactory gains in their knowledge and understanding of France and its language. Pupils who start school in Year 7 have little knowledge of the subject. However, current pupils in Years 7 and 8, regardless of differences in their abilities, have developed a basic everyday vocabulary and correctly identify and name school objects, such as books, erasers and pens. Most know colours and count to twenty and respond appropriately to simple phrases and instructions given in French. They try hard to perfect their accents. By the end of Key Stage 3, they engage in role-play; for example, they enact a restaurant scene to order food and drink. This encouragement to work together as a group also improves their social development. They conduct simple conversations in French, responding without hesitation to "Bonjour, comment ca va?" with the reply "Ca va bien," and they give their names with some personal details in French. They show a clear understanding of the teacher's commands, such as 'écoutez' or 'regardez', by reacting appropriately. Their written work consolidates oral exercises through correctly copied words and phrases in progressive topics, ranging from self and family through to days of the week, the seasons and weather, plus aspects of everyday life.
97. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory, particularly with regard to the gains pupils make in their speaking and listening skills. The teacher has a good knowledge of the subject, and has developed a good relationship with the pupils. This, together with well-structured lessons and the effective use of a classroom assistant, creates a working environment that gives the pupils confidence and improves their self-esteem.
98. During the previous inspection, French was in the early stages of development, but pupils' achievement was affected through the cancellation of some lessons for other activities. This had a poor effect on the pupils' progress and interest. However, the need to review and monitor French within the curriculum has

now been met, and the subject profile has been raised and improved to meet statutory requirements. This has taken longer than it should have done.

99. Although the overall profile of French has been raised and the subject policy is satisfactory, schemes of work are insufficiently developed, as are the procedures for monitoring and assessing the pupils' progress. Lesson planning is based on National Curriculum Programmes of Study, and the pupils' achievements are matched against national target levels. However, although the school keeps informal records of the pupils' gains, there is no evidence that these are used to help plan the subject development. Resources are poor. There is no computer software and, with the exception of some cassette tapes, the pupils do not use modern technology to support their learning. There are very few French artefacts to support the curriculum. However, the subject is enhanced through day trips and links with teaching in the humanities where pupils compare their own country with France. The annual residential visit to France offers some pupils good additional opportunities for social, spiritual and cultural development. There is no modern language co-ordinator in the school, which, with the lack of a permanent subject teacher, threatens the continuity and development of the subject.

## **MUSIC**

100. The subject has recently been re-introduced to the curriculum with Years 7 and 8. A brief policy is in place, but as yet there are no full schemes of work or assessment procedures and, therefore, the school has little knowledge of the pupils' understanding of music on entry to the school and no recorded evidence of pupils' progress. There is not enough information upon which to make a judgement on pupils' achievement. However, from limited observations during the week of the inspection at Key Stage 3, the majority of pupils' learning is at least satisfactory. At Year 7, pupils both conduct and accompany a song in 'quadruple time' with percussion instruments. They compare a clock with a metronome and come to understand how sound can be associated with something like a steam engine. At Year 8, some pupils experience 'duple time' and, although reluctantly at first, eventually join in both by singing and playing percussion instruments with a song about 'weaving'.
101. The subject is currently taught by a temporary teacher who is an enthusiast and who is well supported by permanent members of staff. During the inspection, teaching was good to small classes that had good staffing levels. This, together with a good use of tone and intensity of voice, much enthusiasm for the subject and an approach that ensured all pupils were fully involved, achieved good learning with the pupils in the individual lessons. However, whilst pupils currently 'experience' some music, the subject is not secure within the overall curriculum and does not comply with statutory requirements. This is the same as at the time of the last inspection, and it is unsatisfactory. No appropriate accommodation has yet been made available for specialist music provision, despite this being considered at the time of building the new part of school.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

102. Pupils' achievement in physical education is good, but on a limited curriculum that does not yet include gymnastics at Key Stage 3. They participate well and are keen to improve upon their standards. Many pupils start the school with varying skills and little 'team spirit'. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils follow a range of options, such as outdoor education, athletics, swimming and a variety of games. Pupils understand the need to warm up before participating in any physical activity and carry out a range of 'warm-up' activities. They try hard to improve their times for running 100 metres, practise 'standing' long jumps and learn how to throw the discus. Pupils develop their skills in bowling, fielding and batting when playing cricket, and learn to play more together in what is a team game. Pupils at Key Stage 4 strive hard in athletics and improve upon their personal best performances.
103. Teaching and learning ranges from satisfactory to very good at Key Stage 3, and is consistently good at Key Stage 4. Overall, it is good and the same as at the time of the last inspection. When teaching is good or better, teachers know exactly how to improve the skills and performance of the pupils in the activities being practised, and plan accordingly. They use a range of activities that keep pupils



interested and teachers' enthusiasm ensures that pupils put maximum effort into their lessons, such as cricket and athletics, observed during the inspection. Pupils without appropriate footwear often want to run without shoes so that they can join in.

104. The school has extensive grounds that are used for 'net' games and athletics. Unfortunately, the sandpits for the long jump and high jump have been affected by new building work and the school is committed to ensuring that a new sandpit is available. The new sports hall is well equipped with a climbing wall, and weight training is available for physical fitness. A good range of canoes, kayaks and sailing dinghies is in regular use. A good outdoor education programme includes a wide range of outdoor activities, including sailing, canoeing, kayaking, rock climbing, mountaineering, mountain biking and abseiling. The current curriculum does not comply fully with the National Curriculum. The school indicates that low-level gymnastics is planned for inclusion at Key Stage 3 in the autumn term, but this is not reflected in the current School Development Plan. However, overall, this subject has remained a strength of the school, particularly in outdoor education.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

105. Assessment has not yet been introduced in this subject and, therefore, the school has little recorded evidence of pupils' progress. Evidence of pupils' written work is also very limited and, as such, there is insufficient information upon which to make a judgement on pupils' achievement. However, from observations during the week of the inspection, the majority of pupils' learning is very good at Key Stage 3 and at least satisfactory at Key Stage 4. This is consistent with the last inspection. Pupils at Year 7 who have not been in the school very long have some basic knowledge about the 'church' and that the Bible is a holy book that comes in two sections. One section called the Old Testament about life before Jesus was born and the New Testament about afterwards. During the inspection, in an excellent lesson on 'celebrations', pupils discussed the importance of water to baptism. They understand the term 'symbolic' and link this to other symbols and signs, such as in mathematics lessons. They come to appreciate that baptism involves making promises to the baby and consider the type of promise they could make, such as 'always being loving no matter what'. Their knowledge is matched by respect for the subject and for other peoples' views and feelings. They relate their work well to a range of religions and appreciate the differences. By Year 9, pupils know how beliefs can 'shape people's behaviour'. They consider different types of punishment and what they think about the possibility of miscarriages of justice. They reflect upon 'equal rights for men and women', although at times they struggle to accept this in relation to themselves. By Years 10 and 11, pupils place religion in an historical context and try to explore how they would have reacted in the past to events such as the birth of Christianity in a strongly Roman world. If they had been the Roman Emperor, what would they have done?
106. During the inspection, teaching and learning were very good at Key Stage 3 and satisfactory at Key Stage 4, although lessons do not yet fully follow the programme of work agreed locally with schools and religious groups. Standards of teaching have been maintained since the last inspection. Where teaching is very good or excellent, individual lessons are well planned and pupils' behaviour is managed very well by good teamwork between the teacher and support assistants. At Year 7 in particular, very good relationships with the pupils and gentle reminders of individual targets that are mostly in place at Key Stage 3 encourage pupils to keep concentrating even late in the afternoon. A very careful balance between questions needing a specific answer and those encouraging discussion keeps lessons moving at a good speed and keeps track of pupils' learning. The good use of voice tone and other non-verbal signs clearly sets high expectations of behaviour and the amount of response and work that the teacher considers acceptable. Lessons are well linked to everyday experiences and, at Year 9, cultural issues raised by pupils in their lesson on how belief shapes people's behaviour is set very well by the teacher in an historical setting. At Year 10, many pupils are reasonably new to the school. Teaching shows a good knowledge of the subject, which pupils appreciate, and links what is known of pupils' interests to maintain their concentration in a subject that is not one of their favourites. Appropriate pieces from a chess set, such as the king, bishop and knight, are linked well to learning on the 'growth and spread of Christianity'. Worksheets are frequently used as a record of pupils' learning, which restricts opportunities for higher attainers to record their work more fully. On occasions, the same approach is used with lower attainers and the pace of lesson and expectations of their reading, understanding and writing are too high, even with worksheets, and both teaching and learning are unsatisfactory.
107. Whilst improvements have been made to the subject since the last inspection, particularly in timetabling the subject at times when pupils are not regularly involved in sporting activities, the overall development

is unsatisfactory. Teachers' planning cannot yet be set within any long-term planning across the school and assessment of pupils' understanding and progress is missing. The co-ordinator does not yet have a subject plan to show how it is going to improve and this is poor. Whilst resources for religious education have improved very recently, multi-faith artefacts are still sparse. Monitoring of subject planning or of teaching and learning in religious education is not currently carried out, and this affects the senior management's knowledge of how the subject is progressing and, as a result, how it could be improved.