

# INSPECTION REPORT

## HILLSIDE SPECIAL SCHOOL

Sudbury

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124903

Headteacher: Miss J Freeman

Reporting inspector: Miss Averil R. Anderson  
23733

Dates of inspection: 6<sup>th</sup> – 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2000

Inspection Number: 189580

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	County
Age range of pupils:	3 to 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Hitchcock Place Sudbury Suffolk
Postcode:	CO10 1NN
Telephone number:	01787 372808
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Pauline Lucas
Date of previous inspection:	17 <sup>th</sup> – 21 <sup>st</sup> June 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

TEAM MEMBERS		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Miss Averil Anderson	Registered inspector	Humanities Religious education	Pupils' achievements Teaching and learning Leadership, management and efficiency
Mr John Brasier	Lay inspector	Equal opportunities	Attitudes, values & personal development Links with the community Personal support and guidance Links with parents. Integration
Mr Peter Hill	Team inspector	Mathematics Design and technology Physical education Under-fives	Assessment and monitoring of academic progress.
Mrs Margaret Smith	Team inspector	English Information technology Modern foreign languages	Curriculum Staffing Resources
Mr Norman Watling	Team inspector	Science Art Music Personal, social and health education Special educational needs	Spiritual, moral, social & cultural development Accommodation

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## REPORT CONTENTS

	Page
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>6</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>12</b>
The school's results and achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>20</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES</b>	<b>26</b>

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Hillside is a mixed special school with 61 pupils on roll, 40 boys and 21 girls. Pupils have severe learning difficulties and profound and multiple difficulties. Some have additional physical, sensory, emotional or behavioural difficulties. Children usually join the school in the assessment nursery department at the age of three years. 80 per cent of pupils are in Year 6 or below. At the time of the last inspection there was only 36 per cent in this age group. Since the last inspection the pupil population has virtually doubled. The spread of pupils across the school is uneven. In three year groups there is only one pupil per year whilst there are only two in two year groups. Children in the assessment nursery attend on a part-time basis. Pupils are white and there are no minority ethnic groups.

The school is situated on the edge of Sudbury with a very wide catchment area covering many villages and small hamlets in Suffolk. One pupil comes from Essex. Pupils travel by mini-bus and taxi, many have long journeys from home to school.

The aims of the school are published in its mission statement, they are:-

- To provide high quality education to meet the needs of individual pupils.
- To provide a stimulating, creative, secure and challenging environment in which pupils can learn.
- To prepare pupils to meet the challenges and responsibilities of adult life.
- To work together with parents as equal partners in the education of their children.
- To promote a culture of equal opportunities for all.
- To support staff so that they are able to develop their skills in the education of the pupils.

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

**Throughout the school teaching is very good with an exceptionally high proportion of excellent and very good teaching.**

- Pupils make very good progress against the targets in their individual education plans, especially in communication, numeracy and physical education. Achievement in relation to pupils' prior attainment is very good and they make very good progress.
- Pupils' attitudes to school are very good, there is a strong work ethic and personal development and relationships are excellent.
- Excellent provision is made for older pupils, giving them opportunities for taking initiative and responsibility, thus preparing them for the next stage of education or life.
- Provision for pupils' social development is excellent, as are the relationships between adults and pupils and pupils with their peers.
- Teachers know their pupils very well, they monitor pupils academic performance and personal development excellently. Procedures for promoting good behaviour in an extremely calm and supportive manner are very good.
- The school is very welcoming to parents and is very ready to share information with them, especially in the excellent home/school books.
- Use of teaching and support staff to ensure that all pupils have access to a broad and balanced curriculum is very good.

- The school is very well led and managed. The headteacher has a very effective style of leadership, quietly leading by excellent example as a teacher and as a manager.
- Monitoring and evaluation of pupils' achievements is clearly in place and has considerable effect on achievement.

*Given the socio-economic character and the attainment of pupils on entry, the school gives very good value for money.*

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

- Management, including monitoring, evaluation and assessment.
- Raising pupils' achievements in relation to prior achievement.
- Implementation of National Curriculum and Early Learning Outcomes.
- Extra curricular activities for all.
- Promoting very good relationships and communication skills.
- Implementation of national strategies for literacy and numeracy.

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

- There are no significant areas for improvement.

### **HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION**

The school was last inspected in June 1996. Since then it has made very good improvement in all areas. It has very successfully addressed all the key issues for action and made very good improvements over all. The school has especially made very good improvement in leadership, assessment, spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils and in raising the levels of teaching and learning in English, mathematics, science, art, personal, social and health education, religious education, humanities, music and art. The quality of teaching has improved and is good or better in 94 per cent of lessons and never less than satisfactory. Literacy and numeracy hours are in place and used effectively. New provision has been made for art and food technology/life skills, this is used very effectively and has a very good effect on pupils' progress. Staff and governors are working together effectively to continue to raise standards. The marked improvement in pupils' progress since the last inspection is due to very good teaching and the emphasis the school places upon pupils' personal and academic development.

## 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 5	by age 11	by age 16	Key
Speaking and listening	A	A	A	very good A
Reading	B	A	A	Good B
Writing	B	A	A	Satisfactory C
Mathematics	B	B	B	Unsatisfactory D
Personal, social and health education	A	A	A	Poor E
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	A	A	

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

Pupils' progress in relation to their individually designed targets is very good. Progress in 94 per cent of lessons is good or better. Very good or better progress is seen in 47 per cent and excellent progress in 17 per cent. There is no unsatisfactory progress anywhere in the school. This is exceptionally good.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good
Personal development and relationships	Excellent
Attendance	Good compared with similar schools.

Attitudes, values and personal development are one of the many strengths of the school. This represents a substantial improvement since the last inspection, and it has had a beneficial effect on pupils' achievements. Pupils enjoy school and their positive attitudes are the result of the calm but firm application of the agreed behaviour policy and the excellent example set by all the adults working in the school. The excellent personal development is particularly noteworthy in the upper class, where the oldest pupils take on the responsibility for organising their day.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 5	aged 5-11	aged 11-16
Lessons seen overall	Very Good	Good	Very Good

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



Teaching is good in English, mathematics and science. It is very good in personal, social and health education. Teaching has many strengths, these include very good and often excellent planning, well organised lessons, good subject knowledge, very detailed knowledge of children and pupils' abilities and needs, very good relationships with children and pupils and high expectations of performance, effort and behaviour. There are no significant weaknesses in teaching. Communication skills are taught well, the teaching of literacy is very good and that of numeracy is good. The needs of all children and pupils are met very well, all are included in every activity and none are disapplied from the National Curriculum. Tasks and activities are effectively designed to ensure suitability for each individual. 100 per cent of teaching is satisfactory or better and 47 per cent is very good or better. The links between the targets identified in individual education plans and targets for academic progress are very clear and make a very good contribution to children and pupils' learning. Pupils' progress is always satisfactory, is good or better in 94 per cent of lessons and in 47 per cent it is very good or better.

#### **OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good overall with excellent and very good features, especially in the provision for extra curricular activities and equality of access and opportunity.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Very good in spiritual, moral and cultural development. Excellent in social development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very well, especially through the meticulous assessment of its pupils academic and personal progress.

The school's partnership with parents is very good. Parents are very pleased with the education their children receive.

The adaptation of the National Curriculum for pupils with additional special needs, to enable all pupils to achieve at an appropriate level, is a strength. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum, assisted by this imaginative adaptation of the curriculum and the valuable contributions of the physiotherapist and speech therapist. The support assistants make a significant contribution in enabling all pupils, but especially those with additional special needs, to participate in all activities. Provision for extra-curricular activities is excellent, enriching the learning opportunities for all pupils. Hillside has very good links with other schools. Inclusion is arranged for individual pupils in primary and secondary schools.

There are no areas of the curriculum which do not meet statutory requirements.

The school cares extremely well for its pupils with an outstanding performance in respect of the monitoring of pupils' academic performance and personal development and its use to guide subsequent action. Teachers know their pupils exceptionally well. Child protection and the observance of health and safety are good.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. Excellent leadership by the headteacher, with the full support of all staff.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Very well. The governing body plays a supportive and effective role. It has a clear understanding of the school's many strengths and its very few minor weaknesses.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good
The strategic use of resources	Very good

There is a sufficient number of qualified and experienced teaching and support staff to deliver the curriculum. The match of teachers and support staff to the demands of the curriculum is very good. Overall the quality of accommodation for the number of pupils and the curriculum is barely satisfactory. The school makes very good use of the accommodation available. The inadequate size of the school hall means teaching time is wasted as older pupils have to travel to the local secondary school for physical education. The necessity of two sittings for lunch has an adverse effect on the independence training for the less able and more disabled pupils who cannot comfortably finish their meal before the start of the afternoon lessons. The lack of a staffroom means staff have nowhere to work nor a place to relax in their breaks. The provision of learning resources overall is very good. It is especially good in English, history, geography, religious education and art. It is good, and improving, in the rest. Provision of resources to give pupils with additional special needs access to the whole of the curriculum is excellent.

There is a shared commitment at all levels of management to improve and succeed. The selection and induction of new staff is excellent. The school has excellent potential as a provider of initial teacher training; it could provide a wonderful example, particularly in planning and the staff would provide superb role models. Monitoring and evaluation of pupils' achievements are clearly in place and have a considerable positive effect on achievement.

The school applies the principles of best value well. The management compare their school's performance with other similar schools in Suffolk and on the Internet. They frequently consult with parents, staff and visiting professionals to ensure the school is providing what pupils really need. The school has proper financial administration procedures and always compare prices of services available by Suffolk County Council with outside agencies before deciding where to give their custom.

## 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>• Good teaching</li><li>• Good information about progress</li><li>• Comfortable in approaching the school</li><li>• School management</li><li>• Working closely with parents</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• All pupils accommodated in purpose built classrooms which are an integral part of the main building</li></ul>

The inspection team agreed fully with the parents' comments. The mobile classrooms are poorly heated and ventilated and necessitate physically vulnerable pupils having to cross the playground, whatever the weather, to reach their classrooms.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The characteristics of the pupils for whom the school caters make it inappropriate to judge attainment against age-related national expectations and averages. The report does, however give examples of what pupils know, understand and can do at the age of eleven and sixteen. Judgements about progress and references to attainment take account of information contained in pupils' statements and annual reviews.
2. Achievement in relation to pupils' prior attainment is very good and they make very good progress. Pupils make very good progress against the targets in their individual education plans, especially in communication, numeracy and physical education, including horse riding.
3. Progress is excellent in almost one fifth of lessons, it is very good in almost half and is good or better in more than nine tenths of lessons. There is no unsatisfactory progress. Pupils' work and records show that they make similar progress over time. There has been a significant improvement in all subjects since the last inspection. In English, mathematics and science it has improved from satisfactory to good. Children and pupils' achievements on admission are very low, but by the time they leave school they have made great progress in all areas of academic and personal development. They are very well prepared for the next stage of their life.
4. In English progress is at least good throughout the school and in Key Stages 3 and 4 it is often good and sometimes excellent. The skilful introduction of the national strategy for literacy has had a positive effect across the school. During Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils are learning to listen carefully and to respond appropriately. Pupils are improving their communication skills across all key stages, because teachers take every opportunity to encourage their use in all areas of the curriculum. Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 make very good progress in speaking and listening skills, because of the very effective planning and very high expectations of teachers. They are growing in confidence in speaking, in and out of lessons, to staff, fellow pupils and to other adults. During Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils make good progress towards reading. All show increasing interest in books and enjoy stories. Increasingly during Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils read for a purpose, either text or, more often, text supported by symbols. Writing has improved since the last inspection, in all key stages. Pupils are increasingly accurate in their formation of letters, because of frequent practice, beginning with mark making, through writing patterns, writing over, or tracing words to copying sentences. The more able are improving in their ability to produce written work on the computer. Pupils make very good use of their increasing skills in all subjects of the curriculum.
5. In mathematics progress is good across the school and sometimes very good at Key Stages 3 and 4. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The introduction of the national strategy for numeracy is having a positive effect on learning. By the age of 11 most pupils can order numbers up to 10 and some to 20. More able pupils count and read and write numbers up to 100. Estimation forms an important part of numeracy sessions and most pupils are developing a clear

understanding of the concept. By the time they are 16 pupils can find numbers that are “more than” and “less than”. Pupils using dice combine the two numbers shown, are able to subtract the smaller number shown on one dice from the larger shown on the other.

6. Progress in science is good in lessons and sometimes excellent at Key Stage 4. Pupils of all abilities make very good progress over time in relation to their prior attainment. At Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils accurately detect the difference between rough and smooth materials. They understand that different materials have different properties. They carry out simple tests, for example, in determining whether paper takes ink and whether it can be erased. At Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils know that materials exist as solids, liquids and gases. They know that drinks cool in the refrigerator and that milk sours if left in a cupboard.
7. Progress in religious education is very good overall and very often excellent. At Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils begin to understand that what we do and how we behave affects others. At Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils have developed a basic understanding of emotions and how to help others when they are feeling sad. They know what is in a Christingle and some pupils understand the significance of its parts. Pupils know the story of the Nativity and have participated in the excellent school Nativity Play.
8. Progress in information technology is satisfactory at Key Stages 1, 3 and 4 and good at Key Stage 2. Pupils enjoy using computers, they show understanding of what the computer can do and, when with confident staff, learn to use it well.
9. Progress is very good in humanities, physical education and personal, social and health education at all key stages. It is good in art, design technology and music at all key stages.

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

10. Attitudes, values and personal development are one of the many strengths of the school, with attitudes and behaviour being very good and personal development and relationships excellent. This represents a substantial improvement since the last inspection, and it has had a beneficial effect on pupils' achievements.
11. Pupils enjoy school. One parent with an autistic child, said that it is often difficult to get a reaction from his child, but when he knows that he is coming to school his features show great enjoyment. They enter into lessons with enthusiasm, for example when painting 'a splash' with real splashes or when horse-riding. They love and admire their teachers as shown by their responses in many situations throughout the day. These very positive attitudes are the result of the calm but firm application of the agreed behaviour policy, the brisk and appropriate pace and challenge in everything that takes place in the school and the excellent relationships between staff and pupils and the excellent example set by staff.
12. Behaviour is very good. There are often deviations that need to be corrected, as to be expected with pupils with such special needs, but this is done so wisely and so calmly that there is often only a slight interruption to the learning of the class. For example, while a teacher was reading a story a pupil decided to crawl under a desk. She decided to continue with the story. When a classroom assistant appeared, she whispered quietly to the pupil and led him gently by the hand to his seat. Such co-ordinated co-operation between teachers and assistants occurs frequently and is

another factor contributing to the good attitudes in the school.

13. Relationships are excellent. Teachers know their pupils so well that they know the precise limits to which they can be extended. For instance, in a joint lesson in a local first school a diffident pupil took part in one of the exercises for the first time. He did so with his head averted and his eyes almost closed, but nevertheless it was a big step forward for him, one the teacher had been planning for. Pupils also get on well with each other, admiring each other's work or giving a helping hand.
14. Personal development is also excellent. It is particularly noteworthy in the upper class, where the oldest pupils in the school take on the responsibility for organising their day. They get their room ready and put out appropriate equipment. They are encouraged to buy their lunch at the local secondary school canteen, and if they have insufficient money have to return items. Two pupils who are starting at the local college next year are attending one day a week now to prepare for the big change.
15. Attendance is slightly lower than at the last inspection but it is still good compared with similar schools. Considering the effect of hospital treatment on figures, it is a creditable performance. Any lateness is due to the vagaries of local traffic and is only a slight problem. Registers are maintained efficiently.

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

16. The quality of teaching and learning is a strength of the school. Teaching is always satisfactory. It is good or better in over nine tenths of lessons, very good or better in almost half and excellent in almost two fifths of all lessons. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Teaching is of consistently high quality across the whole school. It is very good in mathematics, design technology, humanities, music, physical education, religious education and in the assessment nursery. It is good in English, science, art, music and personal, social and health education. Again this represents an improvement since the previous inspection. Strategies for effectively teaching literacy are very good and good for the teaching of numeracy.
17. The effectiveness of the teaching results from many factors. Teachers' planning is invariably very good and often excellent, for example at Key Stage 4. Lessons are well organised and prepared. Teachers have good subject knowledge and a very detailed knowledge of pupils' abilities and needs. They use this knowledge very effectively when designing tasks and activities suitable for the individual. Teachers record the achievements of pupils effectively and make good use of this information to make assessments of their progress and to prepare individual education plans. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils and high expectations of performance, effort and behaviour. This factor, together with skilful redirection of any inappropriate behaviour and good use of praise and encouragement, leads to very good management, control and ultimately to the overall good behaviour of pupils across the school. This has a very positive effect on pupils' learning. There is excellent liaison and close working with learning support assistants, who accept responsibility very well, teaching with groups and individuals. They make a vital contribution to the success of lessons and to the very good progress of pupils.
18. Where teaching is at its most effective, in the excellent and many very good lessons

observed, there is great enthusiasm by the teacher for what is being taught. Teaching motivates and challenges through the depth of the teacher's subject knowledge and organisational skills, and from the meticulous attention to detail and to the individual needs of pupils. Teachers inspire the trust and confidence of children and pupils so that self-esteem is cultivated amongst them to work hard and to succeed. There are many examples of these attributes, particularly in English, physical education, religious education, personal, social and health education and humanities.

19. In lessons which have satisfactory teaching fewer of the factors above are present, the delivery is not as sharp and learning objectives of the lesson are not concentrated upon as effectively.
20. Assessment and its immediate use within lessons and in planning is very good. The excellent use of home/school books as a continuous daily link with parents ensures parents as well as teachers are aware of pupils' progress. Parents frequently use the information in these books as a way of providing homework where none is specifically set. One parent summed this up thus, "I get a lot of good ideas from his home/school book of things he has done at school and I can do at home with him".

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

21. Hillside school offers a good, broad, balanced and relevant curriculum with many very good and some excellent features. It meets statutory curricular requirements, including provision of religious education. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection.
22. Core subjects are covered very well in all key stages. The national strategies for literacy and numeracy have been adapted well to suit the needs and abilities of the pupils, ranging from a multi-sensory approach to more formal lessons. The promotion of good communication skills has a high priority and is supported well by the use of signing and symbols. Literacy, numeracy, religious education and the foundation subjects are taught cross-curricular, as well as in discrete lessons. Long, medium, and short-term planning is very good in all subjects. French is taught at an appropriate level to pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4. The use of a two year topic cycle in mathematics, science, humanities and personal, social and health education, works very well and the increasing depth of the provision results in clear progression within and between key stages. Curricular provision is good in all subjects and especially good in English, physical education and art. Though the planning of the information technology curriculum is excellent, it has not yet been fully embedded in cross-curricular teaching on a daily basis, although some examples of very good practice were seen during the inspection.
23. Provision for personal, social and health education is very good, with opportunities for sex education, on an individual basis, according to the needs of the pupils.
24. The excellent curricular provision for older pupils, giving them opportunities for taking initiative and responsibility, preparing them very well for the next stage of education, or life in the wider community, is a strength of the school. The adaptation of the National Curriculum for pupils with additional special needs, to enable all pupils to achieve at an appropriate level, is also a strength. All pupils have equal

access to the curriculum, assisted by this imaginative adaptation of the curriculum, the valuable contributions of the physiotherapist and speech therapist, and the provision of special seating and other aids, such as touch screens, communication aids, and control switches. The support assistants make a significant contribution in enabling pupils, with additional special needs, to participate in all activities.

25. Provision for extra-curricular activities is excellent, enriching the learning opportunities for all pupils. They have travelled by minibus, train, plane, and boat, to visit places of local interest, pen friends in Scotland, educational residential ventures and to experience life in France. They try out a variety of sports including archery, take part in a music festival and a local carnival, visit local churches, and take part in fund raising for charities. Links with the community are good, and the school has benefited from donations. There is a flourishing Friends of Hillside group.
26. Hillside has very good links with other schools. Inclusion is arranged for individual pupils, where appropriate, in their local primary schools. One pupil joins the local upper school for physical education and games and has achieved a certificate in cross-country running. Some Hillside pupils join partners in Cornard Upper School for music and movement sessions, and facilities in Sudbury Upper School are used for gymnastics, dance and games. Older pupils go for lunch, regularly, in Sudbury upper school canteen, making choices, handling their own money, and learning valuable lessons in independence.
27. The careers service is satisfactorily involved in the pupils' preparation for the next stage of their life. Pupils visit local factories, and have limited work experience, such as one hour a week in local supermarkets. Older pupils visit the Courtyard Cafe, run by a group of adults with learning difficulties. Contact is maintained with two colleges of further education, and two boys are presently attending one day a week, in preparation for full time education there next year.

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

28. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good. This continues the very high standard identified in the previous inspection. In assemblies and end-of-day meetings, pupils are given ample opportunities to reflect upon their experiences and develop an understanding of spiritual awareness. Pupils perform drama presentations to illustrate stories from the Bible, for example the story of Joshua and the battle of Jericho as well as the school Nativity Play. The school celebrates the major festivals of other religions, for example Diwali. The library contains a range of books describing the beliefs of a range of religions, for example Sikhism and Judaism. Spiritual development is further successfully addressed in religious education lessons.
29. Provision for pupils' moral development is also very good, again in line with the findings of the previous inspection. The school promotes most successfully the understanding of the principles of right and wrong. Pupils of all ages are encouraged to adopt a very high standard of behaviour towards each other and to respect each others' strengths and weaknesses.
30. The quality of provision for pupils' social development is excellent. This is an improvement on the previous inspection. Relationships throughout the school are excellent. The school is most successful in encouraging an ethos in which all are



valued and treated with the highest standard of respect and dignity. Pupils celebrate the successes of their peers both in assemblies and in class. Spontaneous applause is common when celebrating success, for example in one assembly a pupil who was going to hospital received a merit certificate in the middle of the week and was applauded by the other pupils. In lessons and around the school signing and the use of Makaton symbols is very well used to enhance communication. Throughout the school, pupils are encouraged to take responsibility and show initiative, for example in clearing away at the end of lessons and clearing the hall after lunchtime. In Key Stage 4, the pupils are encouraged to develop an excellent standard of independence, for example arranging the timetable for the day, taking details for school meals and making drinks for themselves and others. All pupils are proud of their school and offer a genuine welcome to visitors.

31. Provision for cultural development is very good and in line with the previous inspection. Around the school displays include the work of modern artists, for example Degas. Posters celebrate the musical traditions of other countries. The library contains a range of books describing the lifestyles of other cultures, for example, Rastafarians. Celebrations of their own culture include visits to a local sculpture park and the planning of a music workshop.
32. The school cares extremely well for its pupils with an outstanding performance in the monitoring of pupils' academic performance and personal development and its use to guide subsequent action. This compares favourably with the report from the last inspection, especially for assessment procedures, which are greatly improved.
33. The links made between the targets identified in individual education plans and targets for academic progress are very clear and the school's overall assessment of pupils' needs and progress is very good and a strength of the school.
34. There are very effective arrangements for the assessment of pupils' attainment and progress and throughout the school exceptionally good use is made of this information to guide planning of the curriculum and of lessons.
35. The assessment of pupils' academic and personal development is closely linked with very effective systems and practices enabling teachers to identify and track how well pupils are making progress in all subjects and areas of development. There is detailed and well-organised diagnosis and monitoring of what individuals do well and how they might improve. Throughout the school, teachers very successfully track pupils' progress in mathematics and English. The school has developed a school profile for mathematics, breaking down areas of learning into very small steps, thus enabling progress or regression to be accurately and effectively measured. In all classes assessment is an ongoing process and records pupils' responses and reactions to the work undertaken.
36. The school uses a local education authority devised system for baseline assessment. This is linked to a dependency assessment, devised by staff in Suffolk Severe Learning Difficulty schools, and provides an overall numerical Dependency and Baseline Assessment score.
37. Teacher assessment and National Curriculum tests are carried out for Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 and records are available for the last three years.
38. The school has a comprehensive policy for assessment and has introduced pupil

profiles for some subjects, including mathematics. Overall the school has made considerable improvements in assessment procedures since the time of the last report and it is now an integral part of the school. There are clear and very good links between the assessment of performance in relation to targets and statutory requirements and the overall assessment of pupils' attainment and development, including meeting pupils' individual needs.

39. The school is a safe environment with very good supervision throughout the school day. All the expected safety measures are in place and regular safety reviews are accompanied once per term by a written report from each teacher on the safety of their area. Staff administer medicines with rigorous care and pupils who need to be carefully monitored are watched intently.
40. The headteacher is the designated person for child protection. She has been trained, knows the appropriate authorities and local procedures, and trains her staff during in-service training sessions. There are no pupils on the 'at risk' register, although the school has experience from earlier years. The school is alive to the need to help pupils to look after themselves. The local policeman visits the school as a symbol of someone to turn to in times of trouble and pupils are taught to remember their name, address and telephone number. All teachers know their pupils very well and there are frequent discussions, both formal and informal, to discuss best strategies to meet pupils' needs.
41. There are very good procedures for monitoring and modifying behaviour which are consistently applied throughout the school. Persistence, patience and calm are the crucial features. No reports of oppressive behaviour were mentioned by parents and none were observed. Teachers and other staff are extremely vigilant and oppressive behaviour is unlikely to go undetected. There are good procedures for achieving maximum attendance, the most important of which are getting in touch with parents if pupils do not arrive and no reason has been received and making school a place where pupils want to be.
42. The assessment co-ordinator has only recently taken over the role and the school has identified the further development of assessment systems as an area within the school development plan. The school is aware of the need to review the current use of, and procedures for, assessment in order to ensure that there is not an unnecessary duplication of information and effort.
43. Pupils' achievements are acknowledged through praise, certificates and having their work displayed. Achievements are reported to parents through the homes/school books.

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

44. Partnership with parents is very good. It is one of the many strengths of the school. It is better than it was at the last inspection. Parents believe that their children are receiving a good education through the skills of the teachers, the good management of the school and the good behaviour of the pupils. They commend the school for its friendly welcome. They criticise the poor heating and ventilation of the mobile classrooms and the need for pupils to cross the playground, whatever the weather, to reach their classrooms. There were also some adverse comments about homework. The inspection team supports the parents' views on these points, except

for homework. Specific homework is given in some classes and most other parents use the information found in the home/school book to consolidate learning.

45. As pupils are bussed in, parents do not often come into school, but they are encouraged to use the phone to keep in touch and many do so. Some parents were seen in school during the inspection and the friendly and helpful approach of the staff was good to see. There are open evenings once a term and occasional meetings about curriculum subjects. School reports coincide with annual reviews, which are attended by all parents. The quality of information provided in the reports is very good. Parents' views are recorded and taken into account during the reviews, but reports do not yet contain information about how parents can help their children. Parents are, however, involved in the setting of individual targets.

## **SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS**

46. The school has a nominated special educational needs co-ordinator who is the head teacher. There is a comprehensive special educational needs policy in place. All pupils attending the main school have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. All of the statements name Hillside School. Children in the assessment nursery do not, in general, have Statements of Special Educational Needs.
47. Annual and transitional reviews of Statements are very well planned yearly in advance and are held on time. Parents, carers, social workers, medical staff and all professionals involved with the children and pupils are invited. Representatives from the Local Education Authority are invited to all reviews. The attendance rate of parents/carers at reviews is extremely high. Parents are very pleased with the process and participate actively.
48. The quality of annual reports for parents, which are sent to them before the reviews, is very good. Where possible, pupils are asked to contribute in writing to the review. Targets for the previous year are reviewed and new ones set in discussion with the parents. The quality of targets is very good overall. The needs of pupils with extra special educational needs are well identified and well met. The current practice of reporting only teachers' assessment of National Curriculum levels does little justice to the very good progress made by pupils and is of little value to parents. The school very effectively uses other methods to record progress including Performance Indicator (P) levels, baseline and dependency scores which are not currently included in the report of the annual and transition reviews.
49. The quality of the individual education plans (IEPs) is very good. Overall, the targets set are specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time limited. They are set annually and reviewed at least termly. Targets are regularly reviewed and progress evaluated and assessed. The IEPs are used very effectively to inform curriculum planning and are very well used in day-to-day lesson planning.
50. The Governors' Annual Report to Parents is accessible and interesting about the role of the governor, but omits some of the statutory material. The prospectus and newsletters provide good information but do not convey the friendliness of the school. Induction procedures vary with the child, as the parents' views are regarded as crucial and the parents make the eventual decision. Parents are able to borrow the school's resources when they are not being used. All in all the quality of information for parents is very good and the school often consults parents, using

questionnaires when appropriate.

51. Parental help for the school is limited but good, and contributes to pupils' learning. Some parents help in the school and some help raise funds for improvements. Some help with school trips. Considering their difficulties parents are very supportive.

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

52. The school is very well led and managed. There is a shared commitment at all levels of management to improve and succeed. Leadership at all levels, especially that by the headteacher, is a strength of the school. This is a very good improvement since the last inspection. That there are no major key issues for action in this report is indicative of the high level of leadership and management. The headteacher, ably supported by the chair of governors and the new senior management team, is a very effective leader and has a detailed knowledge of the day-to-day activities of the school and of all the pupils. She has a very effective style of leadership, quietly leading by excellent example both as a teacher and as a manager. They have all worked closely to ensure the continuing improvement of pupils' academic progress and achievement. Excellent aims underpin the whole ethos of the school and are truly reflected throughout the whole school at all times. The provision of equal opportunities for all pupils, whatever their difficulties, is of paramount importance; all are included in all activities, including flying to Edinburgh to meet their pen pals.
53. The new governing body is very supportive and has an agreed perspective and purpose for the overall direction of the school. They play an important part in its life and most are well known, both to pupils and staff. The chair of governors has a particularly good in depth knowledge and understanding of pupils' needs and parent governors, especially, make frequent informal visits to the school. Governors discharge their responsibilities rigorously and conscientiously. They are actively involved with the future development of the school and have a clear understanding of the school's many strengths and few weaknesses. The governors meet statutory requirements in all areas except for some omissions in the annual report to parents and the prospectus.
54. Although in practice, monitoring and evaluation of teaching is very good, it is not fully formalised and therefore can only be judged as good. It has a considerable and positive effect on achievement. Plans are in place for formal monitoring by both headteacher and subject co-ordinators to commence in the new financial year (less than 4 weeks away). The reasons why it has not yet been fully formalised are perfectly valid in the light of the school's staffing difficulties over recent years. New arrangements for appraisal of staff are at present under discussion and due to commence in the next academic year.
55. The school development plan is an effective planning document. All staff contribute to the formation of the plan. It makes clear those who are responsible for carrying out actions and suitable ways of measuring their successful completion.
56. There is a sufficient number of qualified and experienced teaching and support staff to deliver the curriculum. There have been a number of staff changes in the last two years, caused mainly through illness, creating the possibility of instability. However, the school has coped with this extremely well: excellent relationships and very good

collaboration and leadership have resulted in a staff that functions as a well integrated team. Support staff make a significant contribution to this team. Therapy staff work well with teachers and support staff, as well as with the pupils, providing advice and in-service training. Teachers and support staff are employed very effectively, understand their roles and those of others, and share a strong commitment to serve the needs of the pupils.

57. Staff development is very good, with opportunities for teachers to improve their expertise, both in the field of special needs, and in the subjects they co-ordinate. In-house courses include Makaton training, assessment, first aid, shallow water certificate training, aromatherapy, physiotherapy and speech therapy input, and information technology training. Several staff are pursuing external courses from short to degree courses, and the school is very supportive. Consultants and advisors are used to improve the already good practice and staff are encouraged to visit other schools to observe good practice elsewhere. The school has a manager for staff development, and there is a costed, timed, development plan in place.
58. The provision of learning resources, overall, is very good. It is especially good in English, history, geography, religious education and art. Resources in mathematics are adequate. In other subjects they are good, and improving. Provision of hardware for information technology is adequate and the range of software is very good, well chosen to meet the wide range of needs in the school. Equal access is ensured by the provision of special switches and touch screens. Provision of resources to give pupils, with additional special needs, access to the whole of the curriculum, is excellent. The hydrotherapy pool is small but used well. Hydrotherapy and aromatherapy enable relaxation leading to more efficient learning, for pupils with complex learning difficulties. Resources are well organised and easily accessed.
59. Staff make good use of external resources, such as design technology and physical education facilities at the local comprehensive school. Visits to local places of interest, for example to Kentwell Manor, as well as more adventurous trips, in England and abroad, enrich the pupils' experience.
60. Overall the adequacy of the accommodation for the number of pupils, their specific needs and the curriculum is barely satisfactory with some poor features. There are specialist teaching areas for art and food technology, which are both of a good standard. The school makes good use of the accommodation available. The school keeper and his staff maintain the premises to a very high standard. This has a positive effect on the self-esteem of pupils. There is no damage or graffiti to be seen. Classrooms are bright, well organised and provide a stimulating environment. An area in the grounds is being developed as a play area designed by pupils from a local upper school.
61. The two mobile classrooms are poorly heated and ventilated, this has a negative impact upon learning since pupils are often uncomfortable in them and unable to concentrate fully. The necessity for physically vulnerable pupils to have to cross the playground in all weathers is undesirable.
62. The size of the school hall is inadequate for the delivery of physical education for the older pupils. Teaching time is wasted having to travel to the local secondary school. Lunchtimes have to be organised in two sittings because of the restricted space in the hall. This has an adverse effect on the independence training for the less able and more disabled pupils who cannot comfortably finish their meal before

the start of the afternoon lessons.

63. There is no specialist teaching area for design and technology which takes place in the local secondary school. Again this leads to a loss of teaching time. Likewise, there is no specialist teaching area for science. With the increased emphasis on practical investigations in Curriculum 2000, the school will not be able to deliver science as effectively as it could.
64. The previous inspection report commented that there were no changing facilities for older pupils. This remains the case. There has been no improvement in this area.
65. The school has only one purpose built disabled toilet, which has to be shared by pupils and adults. This is inadequate for the number of non-ambulant pupils since it leads to unnecessary loss of teaching time in taking pupils to and from it.
66. The standard of display around the school is excellent which reflects the very high regard all the staff have for the pupils and their work. This is a good improvement on the previous inspection report.
67. The school is very efficient and effective in its use of funds and staff, all are managed to the greatest benefit of children and pupils. Day-to-day administration of the budget is very efficiently maintained by the office staff. Planning for the future is difficult because of the uncertainty of future numbers and the back payment for new additions to the school roll. The headteacher and the chair of governors have a good understanding of the principles of best value and consistently apply them in the school's management and use of services and resources.
68. As is apparent throughout this report there is an excellent shared commitment of all those working at Hillside School, both staff and volunteers, for improvement in all aspects of the school. Their capacity to succeed is apparent in the progress made by the school since the last inspection. The selection and induction of new staff has been excellent. The school has excellent potential for initial teacher training, it would provide a wonderful example particularly in planning and staff would provide superb role models.
69. The school provides very good value for money.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

70. There are no significant areas for improvement. The following minor areas are already a part of the school development plan:
- i) Additional staff training in the classroom use of information technology;  
*(paragraph 123)*
  - ii) Simplification of assessment; *(paragraph 42)*
  - iii) Addition of baseline scores and Performance Indicator levels in reporting to parents for Annual and Transitional Reviews; *(paragraph 48)*
  - iv) With the Local Education Authority improve the accommodation.  
*(paragraphs 61 – 65)*

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	66
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	30

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
17	30	47	6	0	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	61
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	14

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	0
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	1

### Attendance

Authorised absence	%
School data	7.8

Unauthorised absence	%
School data	0.2

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



### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	61
Any other minority ethnic group	0

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y[ ] – Y[ ]**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	7.9
Average class size	8.7

#### **Education support staff: Y[ ] – Y[ ]**

Total number of education support staff	18
Total aggregate hours worked per week	400

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	0	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1998'99
	£
Total income	411,086
Total expenditure	430,264
Expenditure per pupil	7,293
Balance brought forward from previous year	34,369
Balance carried forward to next year	15,191

## **Results of the survey of parents and carers**

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	61
Number of questionnaires returned	30

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	87	13	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	57	40	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	44	0	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	20	15	1	25
The teaching is good.	77	20	3	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	84	14	3	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	84	11	3	0	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	62	28	0	0	10
The school works closely with parents.	66	28	3	0	3
The school is well led and managed.	73	24	0	3	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	56	36	0	0	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	44	24	3	6	20

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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

71. The assessment nursery takes children, some of whom are well under five. Besides developing their learning in the areas outlined as Essential Learning Outcomes an assessment of their needs and progress is carefully carried out. Some of the children might well then be educated in provision within a mainstream school. Children attend the nursery for two or three days per week.
72. When children begin school in the assessment nursery, the vast majority have well below average levels of skill in language and number. During their time in the nursery the majority make good progress in relation to their individual needs in all the areas of learning expected for five-year-olds. By the time they enter Key Stage 1 classes in Hillside Special School, or another school, most children show significant improvement from their attainment on entry.
73. Considerable emphasis is placed on developing skills in language and literacy, as almost all children have under-developed skills in this area when they begin in the nursery. The early morning routine is well structured, with all singing hello song, which encourages individuals to make a response. During this time children listen to the staff and to each other with the range of involvement dependent on their confidence and desire to join in. Staff are exceptionally good at timing encouragement so as to involve children positively when they are ready.
74. Awareness of number and early mathematical skills are an integral part of all activities with children taking part in number rhymes, counting during the morning routine and sequencing the days activities. Children can identify the order that the days activities will be in. Many of the focused activities include matching and sorting items and identifying similar shapes.
75. Children's knowledge and understanding of the world is, as with other areas, developed throughout the day and through a range of activities. They are encouraged to talk about their day and the environment and to explore patterns and changes. From the time when they arrive in the assessment nursery in the morning they are encouraged to make decisions and choices and to select toys and activities.
76. Creative development is very well planned for with children being involved in a wide range of carefully planned activities. Children involved in cooking were given opportunity to watch materials being prepared, if appropriate, taste the ingredients, and be involved in mixing. At the end of this lesson pupils could confidently identify the ingredients.
77. Children make very good progress in their physical development. In a physical education lesson pupils learn to clap in time to music, moving in time and in a variety of ways. They make clear gains in the development of their awareness of space, of a variety of actions, they listen very well to their teacher and support staff, and they concentrate hard.
78. Personal and social development is very clearly planned for and very well

developed. Children have a clear understanding of the structure of the school day and what is expected of them. All staff encourage children to take an active part in lessons and group sessions and as a result children are developing confidence and recognise the need to listen to others and for safe play and actions.

79. The overall planning and running of the assessment nursery is very good with high levels of assessment and monitoring of children's needs and development. The curriculum has been very carefully planned and developed to ensure continuity of approach and content between the nursery and the primary classes. Relationships between adults and pupils are very good and have a considerable effect on children's desire to learn and the progress they make.
80. Teaching is very good with excellent teamwork and relationships between all staff. This ensures that children's needs are met. Lessons and activities are highly structured, but flexible, to meet individual needs and as a result there is room for children to make choices and for, when appropriate, free play. Staff all have a very complete knowledge of children's individual difficulties and needs and are able to tailor situations to suit, for example, children not ready to join into the circle time during the morning routine are carefully supported and encouraged until they are able to join in without disruption. The pace of activities is very good and appropriate to the situation and all staff have high expectations of what children can achieve. There is a very good and efficient system of communication between teachers and parents. The home-school book provides opportunities for a very meaningful and ongoing dialogue between parents and the teachers, much to the benefit of the children.
81. The accommodation and resources are well used and very efficiently organised. The room is bright and welcoming with good display. The computer is used frequently and very well.

## **ENGLISH**

82. Progress in English is at least good in all key stages. In Key Stages 3 and 4 it is often very good, and sometimes excellent.
83. During Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils are learning to listen carefully, to adults and to each other, and to respond appropriately. Teachers use a variety of strategies to encourage careful listening, including the identification of musical instruments played out of sight, and the use of taped material. Teachers encourage progress in communication by listening carefully and patiently to pupils, responding to all attempts at communication with interest and respect. Staff know the pupils very well and can understand and respond well to non-verbal communications from pupils with additional special needs. Pupils are improving their communication skills throughout the key stages, because teachers take every opportunity to encourage their use, in all areas of the curriculum, including registration. High expectations, good planning and good questioning by teachers, results in pupils improving in speaking and listening skills. Use of signs, symbols and objects of reference, ensure that all pupils are making maximum progress in understanding and making communications.
84. Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 are making very good progress in speaking and listening skills, because of the very effective planning and very high expectations of

teachers. They are growing in confidence in speaking, in and out of lessons, to staff, fellow pupils, and to other adults. The more able explain their work, for example, how they produced the pages of the class book on animals, or how they carried out their morning tasks. Pupils respond to a greeting in a rap rhythm, copying that rhythm in their response. They anticipate rhyme as well as rhythm in a rap poem. They identify the initial letter of their own name and the names of others. In one lesson observed, pupils recall a Bible story, heard the previous week, and help to re-tell it.

85. During Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils make good progress towards reading. All show increasing interest in books, and enjoy stories. They are developing understanding of how to handle books, turn pages appropriately, and look carefully. The ability to choose an appropriate book, and sit quietly looking at it, is growing, encouraged by the skilful use of the book corner sessions. The more able are beginning to recognise letters and simple words, and a few can read simple stories from the reading scheme. Reading is supported well by the use of symbols.
86. Increasingly, during Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils read for a purpose, either text or, more often, text supported by symbols. In one lesson observed, pupils were given a list of tasks to complete during the lesson, each one to be ticked as it was finished. One pupil read his list to me and explained what he had done and what remained to be done. The oldest pupils read their morning assignments, necessary classroom tasks, and carry them out, in pairs, monitored by a member of staff, who allows maximum independence. Pupils are improving both their knowledge of books and their ability to read them. One group are producing a book on animals, typing a sentence about their chosen animal, on the computer, adding, a picture and learning about the process of making a book, with a cover, list of contributors, and contents. Next week they plan to bind it in the office. The most able read from the reading scheme using phonics, and self correct. Most anticipate what will happen next in the story.
87. Writing has improved since the previous inspection, in all key stages. Pupils are increasingly accurate in their formation of letters, because of the frequent practice, beginning with mark making, through writing patterns, writing over, or tracing words, to copying sentences. They order words in increasingly complex sentences, using symbol support, for example in news lessons, then write the sentence in a news book. The more able are improving in their ability to produce written work on the computer, using a symbols programme. The special schools in Suffolk have combined to produce a book of pupils' poems for publication, including the use of symbols. Four poems have been contributed by pupils at Hillside.
88. Pupils' attitudes are very good. They show interest and enthusiasm, and increasingly take initiative and responsibility, as they move through the key stages.
89. The teaching of English was good or better in almost all lessons, and very good or excellent in half the lessons observed during the inspection. This is a result of consistently effective planning, very high expectations and very good pupil management in all classes. The literacy strategy has been adapted imaginatively and appropriately, and introduced successfully for all pupils, whatever their ability. The multi-sensory approach for pupils with additional learning difficulties, is very effective.
90. The subject is very well co-ordinated, with very good long, medium and short term

plans, a good development plan, and the provision of very good resources. Planning is monitored by the co-ordinator, but classroom observations are not yet in place. However there is good evidence of progress through the key stages, and a consistent approach to the teaching of English, especially in the use of symbol and signing support.

91. The subject makes a significant impact on the spiritual, moral, social, and cultural development of pupils, through the content of schemes of work. More importantly it raises the pupils' self esteem through the success they experience, encourages collaborative work, and provides occasions of awe and wonder, because of the skill and expertise of the teachers.

## **MATHEMATICS**

92. There has been much development in mathematics over recent months. Numeracy is an important feature of the work of the school and is covered in all class timetables as well as being an important part of other aspects of school life. For example, registration, where pupils count the number of pupils present and work out how many are missing, and in circle time where numeracy plays a large part in the afternoons.
93. As a result, pupils make good progress in their learning. By the time they are eleven, some pupils count up to 100 and read and write numbers to 100. Most order numbers up to ten and some order numbers to 20. Estimation forms an important part of numeracy sessions and most pupils are developing a clear understanding of the concept. By the time they are sixteen, pupils find numbers that are 'more than' and 'less than'. Pupils engaged in a mathematical activity using dice combine the two numbers shown, subtract the smaller number shown on one dice from the larger shown on the other and read the sum when it is written on a white board. Pupils using computers are confident using the mouse and recognise numbers, putting them in order and follow the instructions provided by the computer activity.
94. The wide variation in, and complexity of, pupils' physical and learning difficulties results in teachers measuring progress and gains in learning in relation to individuals' ability. The development of the mathematics profile, which records what individual pupils attainment, has helped the school to measure what pupils can do and the speed with which they make gains in understanding. The combination of the mathematics profile, including the development of the identification of very small steps in attainment, combined with a detailed knowledge and assessment of pupils' individual needs, is a very good and strong feature of teaching throughout the school.
95. Teaching is very good. Teachers have an excellent in-depth knowledge of their pupils, their strengths and weakness and how to help them progress. As a result, lesson planning for mathematics is very good, with paired and individual activities being aimed clearly at ensuring individual pupils make progress. Teachers and support staff work exceptionally well together and there are excellent relationships between adults and pupils, thus ensuring very good learning overall. Teacher knowledge and expertise is good and they deliver mathematical concepts confidently.
96. Mathematics is very well co-ordinated across the school. There is a good scheme of

work clearly based on the Numeracy Strategy, and this together with the pupil profile, provides very good guidance for teachers. The co-ordinator provides teachers with a half-termly plan of what is to be taught to each class, sees teachers half-termly lesson planning and regularly observes lessons, as well as teaching mathematics. In this way she is able to monitor and evaluate progress of pupils and of the scheme of work very closely. All staff have been involved in training sessions, based on the numeracy strategy.

97. Resources for the teaching of mathematics are adequate, although they need to be updated. There is a lot of small counting and mathematics games equipment, with each class having its own 'everyday' resources. Larger and less frequently used equipment is centrally stored and well ordered. The school has some difficulty in finding resources which are suitable for older pupils and which meet their developmental needs. Good use is made of information technology with appropriate software running on modern computers.
98. Since the last inspection the school has made good progress in developing a scheme of work and overall planning. Co-ordination of the subject has been very successful in ensuring that the content is clearly in line with the numeracy strategy and the co-ordinator has a very good understanding of the progress of pupils gained from her monitoring of the curriculum and teaching.
99. The school has a number of developmental targets aimed at further strengthening mathematics. These include the continued monitoring of teaching to ensure a consistent approach, a review of the use of the pupils' mathematics record/profile to ensure a consistent approach and the improvement of the level of resource provision.

## **SCIENCE**

100. The quality of learning is good overall in all key stages and sometimes excellent in Key Stage 4. Pupils of all attainment levels make very good progress over time in relation to their prior attainment. At Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils accurately detect the difference between rough and smooth materials. They know that wrapping paper must not be transparent. They make correct choices of paper for wrapping different objects, for example beanbags. They understand that different materials have different properties. They carry out simple tests, for example in determining whether paper takes ink and whether it can be erased.
101. At Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils know that materials exist as solids, liquids and gases. They draw upon prior learning, for example, they know that drinks freeze in a freezer. They know that drinks cool in a refrigerator and that milk sours if left in a cupboard. In Key Stage 4, higher attaining pupils distinguish readily between liquids and solids. They know that most liquids are wet and that solids are dry. They know that substances can change state, for example jelly turning to liquid with hot water and poster paint also becoming liquid with water. They know that liquid jelly returns to solid when cold. All pupils make correct choices, sometimes with adult support.
102. The behaviour of children and pupils in all key stages is good overall with some excellent features in Key Stage 4. Pupils respond well to adult help. They respond to their own names, to a greater or lesser extent. They work well in small groups and often, with help, more independently. They take turns well, for example, when

guessing what a parcel contains. They are enthusiastic about the subject.

103. The quality of teaching is good overall with some excellent features. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject and organise activities appropriately to encourage all pupils to learn. Where teaching is excellent, the teacher has an in depth knowledge of the pupils, uses time very effectively and displays realistic and appropriate use of praise. Overall lessons are well planned with clear learning outcomes. Teachers allocate learning support appropriately to maximise opportunities for pupils' learning. Questions are well used to motivate pupils and to extend their learning. Teachers guide and encourage pupils towards making correct choices and to learning from incorrect answers. Lessons end with a good review of learning including effective use of signing.
104. The curriculum for science is well suited to the needs of pupils in the school. There is a policy in place and schemes of work closely follow the programmes of study of the National Curriculum. There is a very good system of recording and assessment and pupils have a science profile. The subject is delivered through a series of modules across the school, for example, this term the topic is materials. Learning activities are well informed by the targets in pupils' IEPs. All pupils have equality of access to the subject.
105. The co-ordinator is well qualified, experienced and enthusiastic about the subject. She has an oversight of medium-term and short-term planning through receiving copies of teachers' planning. There is an effective and realistic development policy for the subject. The subject is well resourced in terms of materials. Staff are well deployed. There is no specialist teaching area for the subject and no heating equipment, such as Bunsen burners. With the increased emphasis on the study of science through investigations and experiments, the school will not be able to deliver the subject in future in an effective manner as it could.
106. There has been very good improvement overall in science since the previous inspection.

## **ART**

107. The quality of teaching overall is good with some excellent features in the upper school. Teachers have a good knowledge of their pupils' needs, for example, encouraging one pupil always to look directly at the work when colouring in or painting. They have a high expectation of work and behaviour. Activities are well planned. There is some excellent use of classroom assistants, for example, encouraging them to experiment with paper and paint with the pupils. The planning and use of appropriate activities ensures those pupils who have profound and multiple learning difficulties actively participate and do not become spectators in spite of their extreme difficulties.
108. Pupils make good progress overall. At Key Stages 1 and 2 they experience a range of artistic materials including wet painting, hand painting and using pastels and crayons. At Key Stages 3 and 4 they produce their own interpretations of modern artists, for example drawing their own ideas of ballet dancers from Degas. Excellent displays include the use of colours to interpret the feelings of cold in wintry scenes. Pupils use wire to make three-dimensional models of stick people.



109. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils overall is good and sometimes excellent in the upper school. They relate excellently to the staff. They show enthusiasm for the subject.
110. Art is well developed across the school with well-planned schemes of work to meet the needs of all pupils. The quality of display around the school is excellent, highlighting the respect for the pupils and their work. The subject is well co-ordinated. It is very well resourced with a specialist teaching area. Resources and staff are very well used. Art has a high profile around the school and contributes well to pupils' social and cultural development.
111. There has been very good improvement in all areas since the previous inspection.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

112. The school makes good use of a range of facilities to ensure that design technology is an integral part of the curriculum. There is a new specialist room for teaching food technology and the school makes good use of the adjacent upper school for design and activities using resistant materials. Although only a few lessons were observed during the inspection, from these, and from a review of displays of pupils' work, the judgement is that pupils make good progress and the subject area is well taught.
113. Lessons are very well planned with a considerable amount of detail indicating pupils' individual needs and the way that these will be met during the session. Lesson content and what individual pupils are to learn are clearly outlined in plans. Relationships between teachers, support staff and pupils are excellent and this considerably enhances pupils learning and enjoyment of the lesson. Teachers are extremely caring and patient but at the same time ensure that pupils work hard and concentrate, as is appropriate to each individual need.
114. As a result, pupils make good progress in the development of relevant skills in designing and making. In a lesson using the facilities of the upper school, pupils make good progress in naming tools, selecting the correct tools for the work they are doing, and, with help where necessary, using the tools and small portable machinery to make their project.
115. The subject is well led and co-ordinated. There is a clear policy and good scheme of work that clearly guide teachers in their planning. New developments are discussed, for example, the use of the food technology area, and there has been training for all staff. The co-ordinator plans which units of the scheme of work will be covered by each class every term thus ensuring that a variety of work is covered, as are the programmes of study of the National Curriculum. The co-ordinator obtains an overview of the subject by seeing all colleagues' termly planning and a sample of plans for individual lessons.
116. The school, with its new food technology room, is well resourced for this area. There are also good resources for textile work and for making, involving the use of paper and card. There are limited resources for working in more resistant materials and, in order to provide pupils with experience in this area, the school uses the facilities at the adjacent upper school. This allows pupils access to skills and tools and materials unavailable in their own school. The use of the upper school facilities has many bonuses, but is time consuming even though it is only a short distance to

travel.

## HUMANITIES

117. Progress in humanities (history and geography) is very good overall and sometimes excellent. This is a great improvement since the last inspection. Even where progress is only satisfactory within a lesson it is obvious from the scrutiny of work, and listening to pupils' recall, that progress over time is very good. At Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils gradually build up a simple understanding of the family and some have a real concept of their own family tree. They understand the difference in style between clothes worn in Roman times and those that they wear. They understand the basics of sequencing of time both in their own daily life and in the use of a timeline, higher achievers knowing days of the week and months of the year. Through their visits to museums and places near and far, for example, Sudbury, Kentwell Manor, Braintree, Great Yarmouth and Greenwich, pupils begin to understand the concept of differing environments.
118. At Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils have an understanding of varying types of travel having visited France, flown to Edinburgh by plane, travelled to Bures by train and sailed by boat on the Thames. Many have a clear understanding of the difficulties of the Victorian washday as compared with the ease of using a washing machine. They have a clearer understanding of the concept of time, sequencing their own lives and those of past eras, for example stone age man, the Romans up to the Victorian era and present day. Pupils with profound and multiple needs participate in the same experiences as the rest of the school.
119. Humanities lessons are enjoyed by pupils. Their behaviour and participation in the many practical opportunities provided is very good. Pupils of all ages show remarkable co-operation and, especially among the oldest pupils, a willingness to work together and to help each other.
120. Overall teaching is very good, this is a very good improvement since the last inspection. All teaching is at least satisfactory, most is very good and it is occasionally excellent. The high quality of teaching has a very positive effect on pupils' learning, as does the good use of signing in many lessons. Short, medium and long-term planning is very good, with explicit and very relevant learning objectives noted. Assessment is also clear, accurate and used to inform future plans. Where teaching is excellent, planning is meticulous, full of attention-catching artefacts and activities and very skilful questioning ensures all pupils are involved, at their particular level, in the discussions that occur. Where teaching is satisfactory the level of planning is still very good but the delivery is not as sharp and pupils' interest is not captured so vividly.
121. There is no co-ordinator responsible for humanities, although the subject is very well co-ordinated with the headteacher working closely with all teachers. The rolling programme, good resources, both artefacts and places of interest between Sudbury, Edinburgh and France, and the excellent cross curricular links with all other subjects ensure that the National Curriculum areas of study are addressed well. Humanities make a very good contribution to pupils' speaking and listening skills and to their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
122. Very good progress has been made in all aspects of humanities since the last

inspection.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

123. Information technology is not taught as a discrete subject, and its use across the curriculum is inconsistent. Some very good practice was observed during the inspection, ranging from the use of cause and effect programmes, to the very good work with a symbols program. Overall progress is satisfactory with some good features at Key Stage 2. However, the computers are not used as effectively as they could be to enrich the curriculum. Occasionally pupils were not given the opportunity to become independent because staff intervened too readily. Teaching is good at Key Stage 2 and satisfactory elsewhere. More staff training is needed to give the confidence to fully utilise this valuable tool in the classroom.
124. Pupils show interest in the subject, and treat equipment with respect. They show understanding of what the computer can do and, where staff are confident, learn to use it well. For example, more able pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 can switch on, find a programme, using an icon on the desktop, and correctly close down, both the programme and the computer.
125. The co-ordinator has produced very good long, medium and short-term plans, a five year development plan, and an excellent handbook containing units of work in information technology. She is currently making progress towards the implementation of the government plans for teacher training in information technology. The provision of hardware is adequate, and improving, with the acquisition of input devices for those pupils with additional special needs. The software has been carefully chosen to meet the needs of all pupils, and is catalogued and stored well for easy access. Staff make excellent use of a symbols programme to produce work sheets, notices and labels, as well as other programmes for teaching materials.
126. The co-ordinator has made very good progress since she took up the post, and the potential for improvement in the development of information technology in the school is excellent.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **French**

127. It was not possible to observe any French lessons during the inspection, and there was no written work. There is therefore insufficient evidence to make a judgement on the teaching of French. However, the planning for the subject is good and at an appropriate level for these pupils. The co-ordinator is the sole teacher of French, and uses a modular approach.
128. Pupils benefit in many ways from the trips to France, using the phrases they have learned, and experiencing the culture, as well as increasing independence and social skills.

## **MUSIC**

129. Pupils at all key stages make good progress over time and within single lessons in developing knowledge and understanding of rhythm, sound patterns and social skills. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are encouraged to make simple choices of instruments using their sounds to identify them. They move to the sound of music with adult help. They make simple sounds with their chosen instruments. All pupils respond to musical stimulus. Higher attaining pupils in the lower school can produce a steady and regular beat when using a drum. In the upper school some higher attaining pupils show a natural affinity for the tempo of music and can clap accurately in time with the music.
130. The behaviour and attitude of pupils is good with some very good features. Pupils participate in lessons with enthusiasm. They demonstrate very good listening skills and take turns appropriately. They are very supportive of each other.
131. The quality of teaching overall is very good with some excellent teaching in the upper school. Lessons are very well introduced drawing upon materials from previous lessons. Lessons are very well planned with very good use of resources. Good use is made of reinforcement, for example repeating sections of Romeo and Juliet to emphasise tempo. All pupils are encouraged at all times to participate. Sessions are lively with frequent changes of activity. Teachers display enthusiasm and encourage pupils to reflect on what they have learned.
132. The music curriculum is well organised and co-ordinated. Music has an important role throughout the school. It is used most effectively in many cross-curricular activities, for example it is very well used in art to provide moods that pupils can then illustrate. It is used most effectively in literacy to aid the understanding of rhythm in rap poetry.
133. Music is well resourced with a wide range of instruments including tuned percussion instruments. Very good links exist with the community including the organisation of music workshops. Very good use is made of a music therapist from the local education authority.
134. There has been good progress in this subject since the previous inspection.

## **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION**

135. Pupils make very good progress both in lessons and over time. Pupils take turns and show ability to wait, for example, when tasting pancakes after a discussion. In the hall, pupils often spontaneously applaud the achievements of their peers. Higher attaining pupils can accurately explain the tasks they are undertaking. Pupils from Key Stages 3 and 4 have visited their pen pals in Edinburgh, a very enjoyable and successful trip according to the pupils involved. Behaviour is very good overall and sometimes excellent. Pupils work with enthusiasm.
136. The quality of teaching is good overall with some very good features. Teachers have good subject knowledge and at least a very good knowledge of the needs of all of their pupils. There are good introductions to lessons with clear learning objectives shared with pupils. Use of time is good. There is a high expectation of behaviour and work. Circle time is particularly well used. Pupils are provided with a suitable range of activities when they first arrive for registration. The home/school

books are checked by teachers. In the upper school activities are particularly well chosen to encourage independent learning, decision-making and task completion. All staff display an excellent level of respect for pupils

137. Co-ordination and management of the subject is very good. There is well-developed and effective policy for personal, social and health education. The schemes of work include sex education, drugs awareness and careers education. A wide range of issues are addressed including bullying, personal relationships and responsibility. There is a high commitment to the quality of the programme. The subject has been delivered through a series of modules. A new policy is already in place to meet the new demands of Curriculum 2000.
138. Assessment is very good and well used in planning future lessons. Teachers' recording of work covered in lessons is very good and pupils produce a valuable portfolio of work for their record of achievement. The subject is well resourced. The range of materials is suitable for the ages and range of ability of all pupils. Resources are well used. Teachers and support staff are very well deployed.
139. Personal, social and health education makes a very positive contribution to the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils. It contributes well to the school's success in preparing all pupils for the world beyond school.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

140. This area is an exceptionally positive, strong and important part of the life of the school. All pupils are engaged in some form of structured and well-defined physical activity every week. They are all actively involved in a wide range of activities, from those that develop personal awareness of body parts and of movement of limbs for those pupils with more profound and complex difficulties, through dance and games to swimming, in which the majority of pupils are proficient. One older pupil swims a mile. Every week some pupils from Year 3 to Year 11 go horse riding, travelling by coach to the riding centre for the disabled. Regular and good use is made of the facilities available in nearby schools, with the pupils using the sports centre of the adjacent secondary school for dance, indoor games and gymnastics. The school uses a multi-sensory movement programme, not only to develop physical and sensory skills, but to foster good relationships with others. Many of the activities associated with these programmes take place at local schools with Hillside pupils working alongside pupils from the mainstream schools.
141. There is a very high level of planning and organisation associated with all these activities, from the overall policy for physical education, through the scheme of work, to the lesson planning and practical organisation, for example, of the travel arrangements.
142. Overall teaching is very good, with some excellent teaching. Teachers plan lessons very thoroughly and in detail, ensuring that the individual needs of all pupils are carefully taken into account. What pupils are to learn is clearly identified and all adults are clear about the nature and purpose of the activities and lesson structure. The very high level of teamwork and the exceptionally good relationships between all adults and pupils are very good features of all lessons. In all the lessons observed during the inspection there was a total commitment to meeting the needs of all pupils. Not only do teachers and support staff know the individual pupils very

well, they also display a high level of confidence and have at least good levels of expertise in the lesson content.

143. As a result of this very good teaching and exceptional teamwork and relationships, all pupils make very good progress, appropriate to their difficulties and needs. Younger pupils are able to move in time with music, travel in a variety of ways, taking short quick steps, long, slow steps and rolling and crawling. By the age of eleven most can take a confident part in activities, being able to follow instructions and work safely. Those pupils with very complex difficulties, in one excellent physical education/physiotherapy session, make clear progress in relaxing and moving joints and in improving their posture. Higher attaining pupils are able to discuss the procedures with staff. By the time they are 16, pupils take an active part in a wide variety of activities and many are very confident. Older pupils using the facilities of the local secondary school confidently lead the rest of the group in dance sessions with the rest of the group copying the movement of the lead pupil. Movements are in time with the mood and tempo of the music and the rest of the class observed the lead pupils' actions and copied them accurately and with enjoyment.
144. The swimming provision is exceptionally good with close co-operation and excellent teamwork between the leisure centre staff and the school staff. Pupils are supported by a considerable number of adults from the school, the centre and from the over-fifties' swimming club. All teachers swim with their class. The sessions are very well planned with safety a very high priority. The leisure centre and the school staff have developed a safety code clearly outlining procedures and strategies, for example, pupils suffering from epilepsy wear yellow swimming hats enabling life guards to track them at all times as they move about the pool.
145. As a result pupils of all ages and with a wide range of difficulties, including complex, make very good progress and by the time they are in Year 9 the majority of pupils can swim 25 yards, with some being able to swim far further. Younger pupils clearly gain in confidence with each session, gradually increasing the distance that they move from adults. Pupils use a range of aids confidently and sensibly.
146. Behaviour is very good in all physical education lessons and in some lessons is excellent. There is a high level of participation and enjoyment and beside considerable physical gains, pupils make very good gains in personal and social development.
147. The school has a small hall and a hydrotherapy pool. The hall and on some occasions, when it is more suitable, classrooms are well used for physical education. However, the hall is small and, especially for older pupils, restricts the range and scope of the activities that can be undertaken. The school overcomes this very well through the use of neighbouring school facilities and the co-operation sharing and social aspects of this clearly benefit pupils. However the use of outside facilities is not always suitable for all pupils and is also very time consuming to organise and for classes to travel to. There are no designated changing rooms within the school. Small games resources are good, especially for younger pupils, and overall the school has adequate resources. However the resources suitable for activities undertaken by older pupils are inadequate overall.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

148. Progress in religious education is very good overall and excellent in half of lessons observed. In the last inspection there was insufficient evidence to make a discrete judgement. At Key Stages 1 and 2 pupils begin to understand, through stories such as Winnie the Wicked Witch and Wilbur the Cat, that what we do and how we behave affects others. They are beginning to understand that a happy smile, sharing turns on the swing and helping each other can have a really positive effect upon others.
149. At Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils remember what is in a Christingle and higher achieving pupils understand the significance of some of its parts. They have a basic understanding of emotions and feelings and how to help other pupils, and adults, when they are feeling sad. Pupils throughout the school celebrate Christian and other faiths' festivals, for example Christmas, Easter and Diwali. The whole school took part in a very successful nativity play.
150. Pupils take an active part in religious education lessons, their attitudes and behaviour are very good and at times excellent. Their enthusiasm and willingness to participate is as a direct result of some inspired teaching in this subject, both in lessons and during assemblies.
151. Teaching is very good overall and frequently excellent. It has a very positive effect on pupils' learning and understanding. The good standard of signing and its increasing use greatly aids pupils in their learning. Comparing this with the judgements about humanities, which included religious education in the previous inspection, this is a great improvement. Where teaching is excellent a real sense of 'awe and wonder' is achieved. Younger pupils are on the edge of their seats to see what is coming out of the box, whilst older pupils are fascinated by the reasons why they are eating pancakes during religious education. Planning is meticulous, the pace of the lesson is gauged exactly to the pupils' needs and the whole experience is positive. Lessons that are satisfactory do not have the same atmosphere about them, pupils' attention is not engaged as promptly and there is too great an emphasis on learning objectives that have little connection to the main aspect of the lesson.
152. The school follows the Suffolk Agreed Scheme for religious education. Planning is overseen by the headteacher as there is no co-ordinator at present. It is of good quality and very relevant to the needs of the pupils. Resources are good and plentiful. The school now has artefacts relevant to several faiths. Religious education makes a high quality contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
153. Very good progress has been made in religious education since the last inspection.