

INSPECTION REPORT

The Ashley School

Lowestoft

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124904

Headteacher: Mr. D. Field

Reporting inspector: Sue Etheridge
8810

Dates of inspection: 8th – 12th May 2000

Inspection number: 189581

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	7 - 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Ashley Downs Lowestoft Suffolk
Postcode:	NR32 4EU
Telephone number:	01502 574847 / 565439
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. Mark Warren
Date of previous inspection:	June 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
S. Etheridge	<i>Registered inspector</i>	Science; Modern foreign language.	Standards of achievement; Quality of teaching; How well the school is led and managed?
B. Gilbert	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development; How well the school works in partnership with parents.
L. Evans	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Music; Religious education.	
K. Hooper	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology; Information technology; Equal opportunities.	How good the curricular and other opportunities are; Residential provision.
C. Lewis	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography; History; Physical education; Special educational needs.	How well the school cares for its pupils.
J. Taylor	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics; Art.	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Ashley is a day and residential, community special school, providing for 115 pupils aged 7 to 16. Most pupils have moderate learning difficulties, some have emotional and behavioural difficulties and a few have speech or communication difficulties. All pupils have Statements of Special Educational Need. Most pupils are white; a small number are black, and there are a few travellers. None speak English as a second language. The attainment of pupils entering the school is below national expectations. Just under half the pupils are eligible for free school meals, indicating that socio-economic circumstances are not favourable.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Pupils achieve good standards of work in most subjects, and in art and physical education standards are very good. Pupils have very positive attitudes to their work and their behaviour is generally good. The quality of teaching is very good with particular strengths in art, physical education and music. Leadership by the headteacher and senior staff is very strong, and the school has made good improvement since the last inspection. The school has high quality residential provision. Parents have positive views of the school, which provides good value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Pupils achieve well. They make very good progress in speaking and listening, in art and physical education. Generally good progress is linked to the high quality of teaching.
- The school is very successful at encouraging pupils' personal development. Relationships between all groups in the school are very good.
- Leadership by the headteacher and key staff is very good. The school examines its work rigorously and uses the information to set suitable targets for development.
- Staff share a commitment to improving the school and are well supported with high quality training.
- There are high standards of pupil welfare and care. The residential setting makes an important contribution in this respect.
- Extra-curricular activities enrich the curriculum, so do productive links with the community.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Until recently there has been little co-ordination of the whole curriculum. As a result, there are weaknesses in learning opportunities for pupils' aged 11 to 16, and drugs education starts too late.
- There are weaknesses in the assessment of music and religious education. In design and technology and information technology in Key Stages 3 and 4, and in mathematics, history and geography at Key Stage 3, teachers do not use assessment information well enough to plan the next steps.
- The amount of reserves is far too high, especially when there is a shortage of resources for mathematics in Key Stage 3, and in history, geography and religious education.
- The governing body needs to further develop its role as critical friend, and members are aware of this.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

Since the last inspection in June 1996, there has been good improvement, including significant improvement in the way that staff with management responsibilities monitor the quality of the school's work. As a result, standards of achievement have improved, particularly in Key Stage 3, and so has the quality of teaching. In particular, higher standards have been achieved in reading, French, and information technology in Key Stage 3. The curriculum has improved, so have the school's accommodation and learning resources. Health and safety issues identified at the last inspection have been dealt with. Overall, the improvement since the last inspection is good, and the capacity for further improvement is very good.

STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by age 11	by age 16	Key	
Speaking and listening	A	A	<i>very good</i>	A
Reading	B	C	<i>good</i>	B
Writing	B	C	<i>satisfactory</i>	C
Mathematics	B	B	<i>unsatisfactory</i>	D
Personal, social and health education	B	B	<i>poor</i>	E
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B		

* *Individual education plans*

Over the past three years, the school has successfully developed whole school target setting as a means of raising standards of achievement. Since the last inspection, very high standards have been maintained in art and physical education. Pupils achieve well in English and information technology, and most achieve well in mathematics. Pupils make good progress against their personal and social targets, set in their individual education plans.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very positive attitudes to school. Most pupils enjoy coming to school and they appreciate the activities that are offered.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is generally good in classrooms, around school, in the residential houses and outside the school, such as at college, or on work experience.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils grow in confidence and self-esteem. They form friendships, become more independent and are pleased to take responsibility. The school is generally a harmonious place to be.
Attendance	Good. Attendance rates compare favourably with similar schools. Pupils generally arrive on time for school and lessons start punctually.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 7-11	aged 11-16
Lessons seen overall	Very good	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.

The quality of teaching and learning is very good in art, physical education and music. It is good overall in all other subjects except design and technology, where it is satisfactory. The skills of literacy and numeracy are well taught throughout the school and teachers provide good opportunities for pupils to practise these skills in other subjects. Teachers question pupils very well, helping them to think, to draw on their existing knowledge, and to learn from one another. Lessons are well structured and teachers share learning goals with pupils, then review these at the end of each lesson. This helps pupils to become involved in their learning. Good use is made of a wide range of resources, which motivate pupils and keeps them interested throughout lessons. During the inspection, seven out of every ten lessons seen was good or better, and in Key Stage 2, this rose to eight out of ten. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen.

Learning is good. Most pupils show interest, try hard to succeed, and work hard throughout lessons. Some can work on their own for short periods of time, and older pupils are keen to achieve external accreditation.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory. The curriculum meets requirements. It is best for primary aged pupils. For secondary pupils, careers education and work experience opportunities are strengths. There are some weaknesses in the curriculum provided for secondary aged pupils, and drugs education starts too late.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school makes very good provision for pupils' spiritual, social and moral development. Provision for cultural development is good. It could be further improved by providing more opportunities for raising pupils' awareness of the multi-cultural society in which they live.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The quality of care and welfare of pupils is a strong feature of the school. Learning is promoted well in the residential houses. There are still weaknesses in assessment, and this is formally recognised in the school development plan.

The school provides excellent learning opportunities for pupils in art and physical education. Careers education and work experience are strong features that prepare pupils well for life after school. There is a good range of extra curricular activities. Pupils have very good opportunities to participate in outdoor adventure activities through a programme of residential experiences, mostly away from school. There is a need to consider forms of

external accreditation in order to recognise the achievements of the highest attaining pupils. Most subjects have detailed schemes of work, but planning is not fully developed in geography, history, religious education, and personal, social and health education. The school very successfully promotes pupils' personal development.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and staff with management responsibilities provide very strong leadership. There is a strong, shared commitment to improving the school, and a clear view of how the school will develop in the future to best serve its pupils. The school is seeking to appoint co-ordinators for history, geography, religious education and personal, social and health education.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Satisfactory. Almost half of the governors are new to their roles. They are a skilled group, who support the school well, and are keen to develop further. They realise that they need to extend their role as critical friends.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The development of monitoring and evaluation, whole school target setting and the provision of effective support for all staff have contributed strongly to improved teaching and learning. The headteacher has led the school successfully towards becoming a self-evaluating school.
The strategic use of resources	Unsatisfactory. A very large reserve has accumulated, and there are plans for spending some of this. However, this will not systematically reduce the sum to a prudent level, and there are shortfalls in learning resources in some subjects.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The parents' meeting was attended by 19 parents, representing 11 pupils. A total of 36 completed parental questionnaires were returned to the inspection team.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • They feel comfortable approaching the school if they have a question or a problem. • They find that the school is well led and managed. • The school works closely with them. • The school helps their children to become mature and responsible. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The amount of homework their children get. • The range of activities outside lessons.

Inspectors support parents' positive views of the school. They find that teachers set a reasonable amount of homework, and that a good range of extra-curricular activities is provided, particularly in the residential setting. Annual review reports are very informative, and parents appreciate receiving copies of individual education plans. However, inspectors find that pupils' annual progress reports do not contain sufficient information on pupils' attainment and progress. The governors' annual report to parents omits some of the information it should contain.

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 their attainment against age related national expectations or averages. The report does, however, give examples of what pupils know, understand, and can do at the end of key stages. Judgements about progress and reference to attainment take account of information contained in pupils' statements and annual reviews. References to higher and lower attaining pupils and those with additional needs are made within the context of the school's population.
2. Pupils at the school achieve well. Many arrive at the school having experienced failure in other educational settings but they soon settle and start to make progress. Most parents are very satisfied with the progress that their children make, including academic and social gains, and developing greater independence. Whole school target setting is well established at the school, and many targets are successfully met. For example, a target set, in Key Stage 2, for an average increase in reading scores of 1.0 years was exceeded by 50 per cent. In Key Stage 3, 70 per cent of pupils increased their reading ages by 1.3 years. Target setting is playing an important part in raising standards in the school, and there has been a considerable improvement in standards since the last inspection.
3. Progress is most consistently good in Key Stage 2, and good overall in Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils across the school make very good progress in art and physical education. In both of these subjects pupils' achievements are promoted by high quality teaching, a very broad range of learning experiences, and effective assessment. Many pupils achieve in line with national expectations. For some individual pupils in Key Stage 4, achievement in physical education is outstanding, and the school is proud to have achieved championship successes in football, swimming, athletics and cross-country running.
4. Achievements in English are good overall. Pupils make very good progress in speaking and listening across the school. Discussion is encouraged in all subjects, and by eleven, pupils are clear and confident speakers and attentive listeners. As they approach school leaving age, they are comfortable when performing speaking parts in school drama productions, and talk easily about experiences such as their work placements. Progress in reading is good overall, although it is better in Key Stages 2 and 3, than in Key Stage 4, where it is satisfactory. Target setting, the effective use of approaches that form part of the literacy strategy, and good use of commercial programmes to develop reading and spelling skills, promote good progress in Key Stages 2 and 3. Pupils steadily acquire skills in decoding words and in the appreciation of different sorts of texts, including poetry. Reading skills are promoted well in subjects where textbooks have been selected that are age-appropriate, yet at a level of readability that ensures success. For example, in science, texts enable pupils to find information themselves, with little support. In Key Stage 4, a few pupils read fluently, but many do not have sufficient strategies to decode unfamiliar words, and read hesitantly as a result. Progress in writing is good in Key Stage 2 and satisfactory in Key Stages 3 and 4, where higher attaining pupils are not fully challenged. Younger pupils write

for a wider range of purposes than older ones, although older pupils do develop well their social writing skills. For example, they acquire important skills in completing application forms. A factor that limits the development of handwriting is the tendency to allow pupils to write in a mixture of print and cursive script, rather than insisting on one or the other, as the school's recent policy dictates.

5. Standards of achievement in mathematics are good overall. Progress in mathematics is good in Key Stages 2 and 4, and satisfactory in Key Stage 3. In Key Stage 2, teachers have high expectations, and they make good use of approaches that form part of the numeracy strategy. Progress slows in Key Stage 3, where weaknesses in assessment mean that teachers do not always provide work that is challenging enough. In some lessons the higher-attaining pupils do not make enough progress. However, in Key Stage 4, the pace and urgency of work increases as pupils work towards external accreditation. Pupils make good progress in class work, achieve well in tests, and acquire social mathematics skills. Numeracy skills are effectively practised and applied across the curriculum. For example, pupils learn about relative proportions and positions in art, co-ordinates in geography, and they acquire measuring skills in science. Many teachers identify opportunities to develop numeracy skills in their subject planning.

6. In science, standards of achievement are good, on the whole. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2, and satisfactory progress in Key Stage 3, where less time is allocated to the teaching of science than in the other key stages. Progress in Key Stage 4 is good; pupils now cover the modules of their accredited course at a quicker pace, and this is clearly accelerating progress. Most leave the school with a Science Plus certificate at Bronze or Silver level, and recently the school has awarded its first Gold certificates.

7. In music and geography in Key Stages 2 and 3, and in French in Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils make good progress. In all of these subjects, standards of achievement have improved since the last inspection. Music has a high profile in the life of the school, and pupils enjoy the wide range of high quality music equipment provided. Improvements in French and geography are clearly linked to improved teaching in these subjects.

8. Standards in information technology have improved across the school, and pupils now make good progress in this subject at each key stage. The most significant improvement has been at Key Stage 3, where progress in information technology was previously poor. Here, resources have improved, and teachers' expertise has increased so that information technology is now used more widely across all subjects. Many teachers now identify their intended use of information technology in medium term plans.

9. Standards in design and technology are satisfactory overall. Pupils make good progress in Key Stage 2, and satisfactory progress in Key Stages 3 and 4. In Key Stage 2, pupils design and make using a wide variety of materials. Expectations of older pupils are not always high enough, so some of the work set is not sufficiently demanding. Also, their achievement when working with resistant materials is better than when working with food, because the design element is not always emphasised enough when they are assembling food.

10. In history, pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stage 2, where there is less teacher expertise, and good progress in Key Stage 3. The lack of a co-ordinator in this subject has limited the opportunities for supporting teachers who do not have expertise.

11. In religious education, progress is satisfactory in each key stage. Planning for this subject is not fully developed, and assessment is weak. The practice of timetabling the subject in modules in Key Stages 3 and 4, narrows the curriculum, and does not support the continued development of pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject.

12. Pupils make good progress towards the personal and social targets set in their individual education plans. In personal, social and health education, pupils make good progress in lessons, but the planning for this subject is not yet fully developed, which limits the potential for pupils to continue to build on their knowledge, skills and understanding.

13. Across the school, there are no differences in the progress made by boys and girls, or between pupils with different types of special educational needs. There is clear evidence that the school is systematically improving standards of achievement.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

14. The attitudes of pupils towards the school, and its values, are very good. This has a positive impact on their learning. In almost all lessons observed during the inspection, pupils' attitudes and behaviour were judged to be good or better, and they were never less than satisfactory. Most pupils enjoy attending the school, which they see as addressing their particular needs, and they quote the many activities on offer, in and out of lessons, among their reasons. They usually answer questions posed in lessons in a sensible manner and allow others to have their say. Pupils show respect for one another's opinions, even when a view is not shared.

15. Pupils generally behave well in lessons, around the school, and during lunch and break times. This contributes positively to the normally calm and purposeful atmosphere in school. Visitors to the school are welcomed warmly by pupils, who willingly offer assistance to anyone looking lost. Other impromptu acts of kindness to visitors include holding doors open for them. On a visit to a local college of further education, a group of Year 11 pupils walked there on their own. Once there, they conducted themselves in a mature fashion in the tutor room, and in the refectory they mixed well with some of the other students. There have been four fixed term exclusions in the last year, and no permanent ones, which is an improvement since the last inspection.

16. The relationships between pupils and adults, and between the pupils themselves, are very good. This is also the case in the residential houses, where pupils appreciate being able to live together within a well ordered community. No incidents of bullying were recorded during the inspection. In a number of cases pupils were seen to be forming friendships, and boys and girls generally work and play together well. Staff provide good role models, and help to cultivate the mutual respect in evidence through the school.

17. The school takes all reasonable opportunities to promote pupils' personal development, and members of staff encourage pupils to show initiative and reward such instances when they occur. Pupils are given tasks, within and outside lessons, according to their own developmental needs. This is particularly evident in the residential houses, where pupils are expected to help out, as they might at home. Tasks vary from tidying away after a practical lesson, to the older pupils in residence shopping for ingredients for their meals. Pupils are keen to undertake the tasks and to receive the appropriate recognition.

18. With a few individual exceptions, attendance levels are good, and there has been some improvement in the overall absence rates since the last inspection. Attendance registers are maintained in accordance with the regulations and marked promptly at the beginning of each session. Most pupils are brought to school by taxis and minibuses and occasionally these are late due to traffic delays, but most lessons start punctually.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

19. There has been a significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the last inspection. At that time, 18 per cent of teaching was unsatisfactory, and 28 per cent was very good or better. During this inspection, a similar proportion of the teaching was judged to be very good or better, but no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Seven out of every ten lessons were found to be good or better, and teaching judged to be very good overall. The most consistently good teaching was seen in Key Stage 2, where eight out of every ten lessons were good or better. However, the greatest improvement in teaching has been achieved in Key Stage 3, and this has had a positive impact on standards of achievement.

20. In art, physical education and music, teaching is very good across the school. In French, teaching is very good. Teaching of religious education is very good in Key Stage 2. It is good overall in English, information technology, and geography. In mathematics in Key Stages 2 and 4, in science in Key Stages 2 and 3, in history in Key Stage 3, and in religious education in Key Stages 3 and 4, teaching is also good. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in design and technology and mathematics in Key Stage 3, and in history in Key Stage 2. In science at Key Stage 4, half the teaching seen was good, and half satisfactory. Although marking is a weakness at this key stage, teaching is good overall.

21. A very strong feature of teaching is the skilful questioning that teachers use. Particularly good examples were seen in mathematics during the mental arithmetic sessions, and in science. Teachers question pupils to check their understanding, but also to challenge them to think, and to enable them to draw on their own experiences. The most effective questioning is targeted at particular pupils, so that certain other pupils do not dominate the answering, and questions can be pitched at a level that suits each individual. Such is the skill of teachers that a video has been made showing good practice, for training purposes in other schools. Pupils respond well to teachers' questioning, they give questions serious thought, and try hard to work out answers. Occasionally, pupils will learn from one another's observations or comments.

22. Most lessons have a clear structure and are very well planned and prepared. Teachers' plans identify opportunities for reinforcing literacy and numeracy skills, as well as opportunities to use information and communication technology. Plans are implemented well. For example, there are good opportunities provided for reinforcement of literacy in science, design and technology, music and art. Numeracy is promoted well through art geography, science and physical education. An important feature of plans is the clear identification of learning outcomes at different levels. These are shared with pupils at the start of lessons and reviewed during plenary sessions. This involves pupils in their learning, and enables them to assess their own progress in lessons too. Self-assessment is used to good

effect in French, where pupils are encouraged to recognise their achievements, and to work out what they need to practise more. Most teachers give good verbal feedback, including indications of what pupils' need to do to improve their work, and marking is good on the whole. However, in Key Stage 4, there is insufficient marking of pupils' science work. Art lessons are well organised and research materials are provided so that pupils are able to exercise more independence in their learning.

23. On the whole, teachers know their subjects well, particularly in art, music and physical education, and are well informed about the special needs of the pupils they teach. Teachers make good use of methods that form part of the literacy and numeracy strategies, and these promote progress. They also use other approaches effectively for developing handwriting, reading and spelling skills. However, a weakness of teaching handwriting is the selective implementation of the school's handwriting policy. Skill in communicating effectively with pupils is a strong feature of physical education teaching, and the setting of personal targets for pupils in this subject motivates them, and they relish the challenge. As a result, pupils make great physical effort during physical education lessons.

24. In French, teaching skills have been steadily built up since the last inspection, and in information technology there has also been an improvement in staff skills. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good, and create a harmonious atmosphere in most lessons. Teachers have generally good skills in managing pupils' behaviour, and they give pupils responsibilities. For example, in physical education pupils carry equipment and record results.

25. Teachers use resources well, in particular the support assistants, many of whom make a very skilled contribution to teaching. In the best examples, support assistants are well briefed and take groups with great confidence. Teachers monitor the assistants' work carefully, and involve them, and the groups they have worked with, in the plenary session. This helps pupils to develop an awareness of their own learning. Very good use of stimulus material was seen in art. In a history topic on the Plains Indians, artefacts and photographs brought the subject alive for pupils. In French, a wide range of different resources, such as games, tapes and interactive CD ROM's, are used. These allow for constant reinforcement through variety, so that pupils' interest is maintained whilst they practise, and acquire vocabulary. In music, a brisk pace and timed activities promote progress well, because pupils are kept busy throughout lessons. Although computers are generally used well to support learning, there is scope for extending their use in enabling pupils to write.

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

26. The curriculum is satisfactory and meets statutory requirements. All pupils have equal access to the National Curriculum, religious education, and personal, social and health education. The school successfully meets pupils' needs, as outlined in their statements. The curriculum is, therefore, broad and relevant. The national literacy and numeracy strategies are in place and are promoting pupils' progress. The numeracy strategy has been implemented in Key Stage 3, and the literacy strategy is well established across the whole school. Information technology is taught to all classes as a discrete subject, as well as being

reinforced through other lessons; this is an improvement since the last inspection. Provision for art and physical education is excellent, and this promotes high achievement in both of these subjects. The curriculum for mathematics, science, music and modern foreign languages is good. The curriculum for secondary pupils is extended and enriched through a well planned, progressive programme of residential experiences.

27. The curriculum for Key Stage 2 pupils is broad, balanced and relevant although the amount of time for music is low. In Key Stage 3, the balance in the curriculum has improved, and the length of the school day extended since the last inspection. Time allocations have been increased for English, information technology, music, religious education and modern foreign languages. However, some weaknesses remain. The progress of pupils in science, mathematics and religious education is limited by the school's provision. Year 7 and 8 pupils have less science than pupils in either Key Stage 2 or 4, and this slows progress in the subject at the start of Key Stage 3. Continuity and progress in mathematics are more difficult to achieve, because there is not a daily lesson and because some groups are determined by attainment in physical education. Religious education is taught on a modular basis and, therefore, pupils may not have any lessons in the subject for a term at a time. This narrows the curriculum and slows progress.

28. The curriculum at Key Stage 4 is broad, balanced and relevant. It is enriched by vocational and pre-vocational courses and work experience. However, although the length of the school day has been extended since the last inspection, it is still shorter than that recommended. Pupils are able to take a range of work related courses but too many of them are similar, and there is little to acknowledge the achievements of the most able pupils. In English, the courses are narrower than the National Curriculum and this limits the progress of some pupils.

29. Provision for work experience and careers remain strong features of the school. Formal careers education begins in Year 9, as part of the personal, social and health education programme. From Year 7, pupils are encouraged to attend the annual *Pathways* evening held in school, and a very high proportion of pupils in Key Stage 4 do attend. A wide range of outside agencies assist the school in raising pupils' awareness of aspects of adult life, such as visiting speakers from training organisations, the Benefits Agency and the Citizens Advice Bureau. As they approach school leaving, pupils have advice from a specialist careers officer, and they benefit from substantial work experience placements, which are closely monitored by the school. Transition to adult life is further supported by good links with a local college, where pupils follow vocational courses.

30. There are good schemes of work in most subjects, but planning is not fully developed in geography, history, religious education and personal, social and health education. Although in a state of transition, the provision for personal, social and health education is good. This is partly due to consistent and effective informal processes within the school. There is, however, too little attention paid to drugs education in Key Stage 2 and 3. There is a sound sex education policy, which is in the process of being reviewed. The quality of links with the community remains very strong, and pupils benefit in many ways, such as through visitors to the school and links with mainstream schools.

31. The curriculum is enriched by a very good range of extra-curricular activities for both day and residential pupils, and parents appreciate these. The residential setting is used well to enable pupils, who would otherwise be unable to take advantage of clubs and activities, to participate in these, to socialise with their friends and to share in trips in the community. All pupils have opportunities to participate in residential activities away from the school site, and these become more demanding as the pupils get older. For example, older pupils may spend a week in Wales, during which they will canoe, mountain-climb, and experience problem solving activities. Some will face the challenge of a night in the mountains.

32. Termly performances are particularly valuable events. They allow a range of subjects to be applied to a worthwhile social and cultural event, and they encourage parents to visit the school and celebrate the pupils' achievements. Staff in the houses support the pupils very well in their reading, their homework and in reaching the social targets set for them in their individual education plans.

33. A strength of the school curriculum is the wide range of opportunities for promoting pupils' spiritual, moral, and social development, whilst opportunities for cultural development are also good. Teachers plan opportunities for developing children's awareness of events beyond the mundane, in music, art, literacy, religious education and humanities. There are moments of intense empathy, for example when pupils are listening to the diary of a survivor of the sinking of the Titanic, while music is played softly, and they look at a portrayal of a lifeboat jammed full of freezing people. In information technology, there are unplanned moments of amazement when pupils' learning of new skills leads to exclamations such as, 'Miss, I found Jesus!' or 'Oh, look! The plane's taken off!' There are good opportunities for reflection in assemblies, in circle time and through drama and poetry.

34. Pupils' social and moral development permeates everything that the school and residential houses do. The school successfully promotes pupils' self-esteem, confidence and care for others through personal achievement, links with other schools, and the wider community. Pupils take part in annual festivals and sporting events. Storytellers and drama groups make valuable contributions to spiritual and cultural development, such as The Plains Indians story. There is integration of mainstream pupils into the school, and three pupils at present integrate part time into a local school. In recent years, the school has had a Japanese assistant to come and work in school and raise awareness of a different culture. At Key Stage 4, pupils in residence have an opportunity to look after themselves independently, in a self-contained flat that forms part of the residential accommodation.

35. The teaching about world religions in religious education is not strong, partly because of limited resources, but also because of weaknesses in planning. The remoteness of the school to people and places of other cultures, and the lack of places of worship for world religions other than Christianity, do limit first hand opportunities to raise multicultural awareness.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

36. The school successfully provides for the welfare and care of pupils, and encourages high standards of behaviour and attendance. It also has good procedures for supporting pupils. However, there are some weaknesses in assessment, which detract from the generally good guidance given to pupils. Although teachers are able to identify the levels of attainment in most subjects, not all of them maintain records with sufficient detail, making it difficult both to plan the next steps in pupils' learning, and to check on pupils' progress.

37. The school's procedures for child protection and welfare are very good, and are expertly led by the headteacher who is the designated person. School staff, and a team of experts from medical, psychological and social services support him. All staff are aware of the procedures of the local area child protection committee, and have received appropriate training in the procedures. This very good practice extends to the residential facility.

38. The school is vigilant in monitoring and improving pupils' behaviour. A system of merits and records of achievement reward and celebrate pupils' success. A good range of measures also exists to ensure that pupils are deterred from anti-social behaviour such as bullying or fighting. The system, which has exclusion as its ultimate deterrent, works effectively to eliminate most forms of oppressive and anti-social behaviour. Appropriate records are kept of incidents and exclusions. On the rare occasions when there is a need to restrain a pupil, staff are aware of the procedures to follow. All such incidents are recorded. Staff have earned the respect and affection of pupils, who trust them to help at all times, and particularly when in difficulties. This is a strong feature of the school, and makes a considerable contribution to the progress pupils make.

39. The school keeps a close check on pupils' attendance and its monitoring procedures work well. Administrative staff contact parents or carers on the first morning of absence, whenever a pupil is away from school without a known reason. Registers are checked assiduously each week by a senior teacher and, when necessary, reference is made to the Educational Welfare Officer from the local education authority.

40. Since the school was last inspected, the setting of targets in pupils' individual education plans has improved. Each pupil has targets for English, mathematics, and personal and social development. These are now measurable, and have clear success criteria. Parents appreciate having copies of individual education plan's as this enables them to support their children's learning. However, for some pupils in Key Stage 4, the targets set for English are not challenging enough. Annual review reports are of a very high quality. Annual review meetings are held as required, and the school's educational psychologist chairs the transitional reviews. Monitoring of progress that pupils make towards their IEP targets is good.

41. Much work has gone into the further development of assessment, recording and reporting. The co-ordinator is developing a method of assessing achievement through questioning pupils against the targets identified in schemes of work recently published by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. Teachers have also developed interim targets, that

take account of the relatively small steps in pupils' learning. This good practice is beginning to extend into Key Stages 3 and 4, as the new schemes of work are published by Qualifications and Curriculum Authority. The co-ordinator is working with the local education authority on this project, and the school governors are well briefed on these developments.

42. The identification of attainment in art and physical education is excellent across the school. There are detailed portfolios that record pupils' achievements, and the pupils' are justifiably proud of these. The identification of pupils' attainment is underdeveloped in music and religious education across the school, although a start has been made with music to assess the work achieved in Key Stage 2.

43. The quality of assessment is good in Key Stage 2, but there are weaknesses in Key Stages 3 and 4. For all pupils entering the school, there is a detailed baseline assessment of literacy and social skills, and assessment information is used well to inform planning. The school has improved this aspect a great deal since the last inspection.

44. In Key Stage 3, there are weaknesses in the assessment of mathematics, and in both Key Stages 3 and 4, the assessment of design and technology and information technology is weak. The identification of attainment in geography and history in Key Stage 3 is not as well developed as it is in Key Stage 2, because detailed plans showing changes to the National Curriculum are not yet available. At this key stage, therefore, assessment is not informing planning as well as it does at Key Stage 2. Where there are weaknesses in the detail of teachers' records, this makes it more difficult to monitor the progress pupils make, and records are less useful as a means of establishing what aspects of their work need further reinforcement for individual pupils or classes. The co-ordinator is aware of the situation and is developing further methods for assessment in the core and foundation subjects. The assessment co-ordinator and staff have worked hard to introduce systems which support the school's target setting. The introduction of the video recording of pupils' performance in art, history, careers, literacy and numeracy, in Key Stages 2 and 3, is imaginative and helpful to staff in planning and recording pupils' progress.

45. At present, the school is not undertaking Standard Attainment Tests for eleven and fourteen year old pupils. At sixteen, pupils' achievements are recognised through some externally accredited courses. Given the abilities of some pupils, and the staff's teaching skills, further validation of pupils' achievements in a variety of subjects is possible.

46. The school pays particular attention to supporting pupils' independence and pastoral care. This is achieved through a tutor system that monitors closely pupil's wellbeing. This system is extended into the residential provision where pupils have relevant care plans, and close support from key workers. The standard of care and support from the staff in the residential provision is very good, with an 'independent visitor' visiting fortnightly, and regular intervention and support from educational welfare personnel.

47. Procedures for monitoring pupils' health are good. The school's nurse and medical officer hold regular clinics in the school. The security and administration of medicines is well ordered, secure, and in line with national recommendations both in the school and the residential houses. The requirements for confidentiality and security of records is well observed.

48. The school supports healthy eating programmes and meals at school offer a choice of well-cooked and nutritious food. A calm and civilised atmosphere, with the minimum of supervision, characterises lunchtimes. Pupils choose to sit where they want and talk in a friendly manner to their friends, staff and visitors. The kitchens are regularly inspected for cleanliness and present very well. They provide good quality food for pupils in residence, unless some of the older pupils are cooking for themselves as part of their independent living programmes.

49. Day to day procedures for monitoring and promoting health and safety across the school are very good. Staff appointments, including volunteer workers, are vetted appropriately according to local regulations. There are good arrangements for the safe setting down of pupils on arrival, and similar arrangements at departure. Gates and fencing separate the school from the road and there is a one way traffic system to ensure safety near the access road. Pupils are well supervised at break times. The school is vigilant with its security on the building with keypads installed in all buildings and identification tags for visitors.

50. There are good arrangements for accident and first aid procedures in the school and the residential houses. A large number of strategically placed staff have first aid qualifications. First aid boxes are placed appropriately and checked regularly. The school has completed risk assessments of the buildings and site and the governors make regular termly site visits and have the appropriate Health and Safety Committee. There is a comprehensive guide to safety in and out of school and when using the minibus. This is published in the school's handbook. All staff are made aware of these health and safety issues; they have slips to fill in and report issues to the headteacher, who is responsible for health and safety. This work is well organised and is of a high standard.

51. Fire drills are held regularly and logged appropriately. Recently, the school held specialist training on fire safety and intruders. The school ensures that all electrical equipment is checked annually. Systems are in place to check the cleanliness of the swimming pool three times a day. Since the last inspection the school has addressed the health and safety issues raised by the need for foot pedal switches in the design and technology teaching areas.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

52. About 37 per cent of parents responded to the pre-inspection questionnaire. The responses, together with comments made at the parents' meeting, demonstrate their mainly positive support for the school and what it sets out to do. Very few individual concerns were expressed. The 19 people attending the parents' meeting praised the school. They reported a number of areas where they felt the school had made improvements since the previous inspection. The Friends Association is now less active, being unable to attract a chairperson, although a small core of volunteers puts on events of a mainly social nature from time to time.

53. Most parents contribute to their children's learning by hearing them read at home, although the frequency of this shows much variation and is less evident for the older pupils. Carers in the residential houses, however, take this aspect very seriously and the pupils concerned react positively to the support they receive. While teachers are very conscientious in making supportive comments in the planners, which act as home/school diaries, parental

comments are few and far between. When parents do make entries, they almost invariably concern pupils' absence from school, or medical requirements, rather than their progress. In previous years, the school has hosted a family literacy project, and this has involved parents working with their children to improve literacy skills. Although always invited to do so, most parents do not take the opportunity to attend annual review meetings.

54. The school provides parents with a satisfactory range of information. Newsletters, which are well presented and very readable, are sent out each term. Pupils contribute to these and they assist with the production process. The school's prospectus is a very good publication. It is very informative, and a selection of colour photographs help to break up the formal text and make it more appealing. The governors' annual report to parents is similarly readable, but it omits some items of information that should be provided. There is not a full enough financial statement, and the names and addresses of the chair and the clerk to governors are not included.

55. Annual reports on pupils' progress are unsatisfactory as they contain very little information on what pupils know, understand and do in each subject, nor do they describe how pupils have progressed in the year at school. While parents do receive the annual review documentation, which provides more in-depth information and paints a good picture of the individual child, and what he or she can do, this can be months out of date at the time the reports are compiled.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

56. The headteacher and staff with management responsibilities provide very strong leadership. In particular, the headteacher has led the school successfully towards becoming a self-evaluating school. There is a strong, shared commitment to improving the school, and a clear view of how the school will develop in the future to best serve its pupils. The development of monitoring and evaluation, whole school target setting, and the provision of effective support for all staff have contributed strongly to improved teaching and learning.

57. Considerable improvement has been achieved in monitoring and evaluation of the school's work. Subject co-ordinators now provide effective leadership, with a clear focus on improving teaching and learning. Link groups, formed to take practice forward, have also been effective in curriculum development and the management of change. The local education authority has provided good support, and has helped by carrying out objective external evaluation. Good delegation of responsibilities has raised the profile of the senior child care staff, who now have suitable management responsibilities, which they carry out competently.

58. Good improvement has been secured since the last inspection in all those areas over which the school has control. Some difficulty has been experienced in appointing certain subject co-ordinators, as the school has been unable to attract applicants of sufficiently high quality. This has limited improvement in religious education, the humanities, and personal, social and health education. The newly appointed deputy headteacher has specific responsibility for monitoring the whole school curriculum. Hitherto, the lack of an overview of the curriculum has led to some weaknesses. However, the school's capacity to improve is now very good.

59. Almost half of the existing governors are new to the governing body, and at the time of the inspection had been in post for only two terms. Governors fulfil most of their responsibilities well. They are committed, willing to learn, very supportive, and have, between them, considerable skills that they are keen to use. They recognise that they need to develop further their role as critical friends of the school, and have made a start. For example, they make regular health and safety checks of the school site, they have received reports from co-ordinators of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology, and assigned members to the key stages and subjects, with a view to raising their own awareness of strengths and weaknesses. The governors' annual report to parents omitted some of the information it should have contained: there was not a full financial statement, and names and addresses of the chair and clerk to the governors were missing.

60. Staffing is satisfactory. There are still some deficits in staff skills across a full spectrum of subjects, but there are also some very good skills, for example in physical education and art. Members of support staff are skilled and highly trained, providing a major input to literacy and language provision, working closely and productively with teachers across the curriculum. Although they both provide a good quality service, one of the senior residential child-care officers is not yet qualified. Staff development is well linked to the identified needs of the school and covers a good balance of curriculum, special needs and management issues. Induction procedures are good and ensure that new staff and students on placements are thoroughly briefed and supported, particularly in issues of child protection and safe routines. Good communication amongst staff is achieved through frequent and regular meetings; this contributes to close and confident teamwork which adds to the school's positive and supportive ethos.

61. The school's accommodation is generous, housed in renovated older buildings, purpose built classrooms and well-appointed specialist areas, such as a science laboratory and art room. There are also good facilities for sports and games, including large playing fields and a swimming pool. The new information and communication technology suite is well equipped too, but requires a better ventilation system. These specialist facilities promote a positive and purposeful ethos for teaching and learning, and contribute to the good progress that pupils make. There have been substantial improvements to the residential houses since the last inspection, with new toilet and washing facilities allowing greater privacy, and attractive partitioning in the larger bedrooms so that each pupil has his or her own private space. All the accommodation is clean, and very well maintained and decorated. Pupils value this and respect their learning and living environment. Displays around the school are of very high quality. They act as a useful resource for learning and also provide models of very good work by pupils of all abilities, demonstrating the school's high expectations and motivating pupils to do their best. In general, the school uses new technology well enough, although use of computers to assist pupils who find handwriting difficult could be increased.

62. Resources overall are satisfactory but there are significant variations between subjects from very good to unsatisfactory. In physical education, art and science, resources are very good, with co-ordinators very clear about what is needed to support the programmes of work in each key stage. Resources are good in information and communication technology and music, with items such as digital cameras, electronic keyboards and temperature probes enriching pupils' learning experiences. There are too few artefacts and texts to support work in geography, history and religious education. More practical resources, to help pupils understand number concepts such as place value and multiplication, are needed for pupils in Key Stage 3. Resources for play and leisure activities in the residence are satisfactory. Good

use is made of the community for both day and evening activities, with well chosen educational outings to museums, churches and galleries, as well as regular attendance at youth clubs for some pupils. The school takes every opportunity to involve visiting artists and musicians in their work. There are frequent events, that are enthusiastically attended, such as the drama workshop during the inspection, and these contribute strongly to pupils' progress and motivation.

63. The school's development plan underpins planning for all expenditure and there is a clear recognition of priorities by the headteacher, the senior management team and the governing body. The management is also aware of the concept of best value and this is practised whenever relevant. However, although there are some very good elements to the school's financial planning, there is a significant weakness. In spite of considerable recent spending on refurbishing the residential houses and other areas, there is presently a large amount of money unallocated for educational use, which is held as reserves. This has arisen by the retention of donations and considerable sums from lettings in previous years. Final figures for the end of the financial year to March 2000 were not available at the time of the inspection but the school had estimated the unallocated amount to be £248,000, some 25 per cent of its total income. The budget for 2000/2001 indicates that expenditure should be about the same as income, and the school estimates additional spending which could reduce the reserves by £105,000. Even if this happens, the unallocated sum would be far higher than can be considered prudent, particularly as there are shortfalls in resources for learning in some subjects.

64. A financial audit has recently been carried out by the local education authority and the relatively few, minor points requiring rectification have already been addressed. Office administration is efficient and provides good support to the school community. Good use is made of up to date information and communications technology by administrative staff, who make a significant contribution to the smooth running of the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

65. The governors, headteacher and staff of the school should

- Improve the curriculum by:
 - * ensuring that mathematics groups in Key Stage 3 are organised according to attainment in mathematics, that lessons are more frequent, and build on one another;
(Paragraphs 27, 87)
 - * increasing the time allocated to science in Key Stage 3;
(Paragraphs 27, 89)
 - * providing a broader, better planned curriculum for religious education;
(Paragraphs 27, 30, 112)
 - * further developing curriculum planning for geography and history;
(Paragraphs 30, 116, 119)
 - * further developing curriculum planning for personal, social and health education, and introducing drugs education in Key Stages 2 and 3;
(Paragraph 30)
 - * further developing monitoring of the whole curriculum;
(Paragraph 58)
 - * reviewing the organisation of the school day, with a view to increasing the taught time in Key Stage 4;
(Paragraph 28)
 - * appointing co-ordinators for history, geography, religious education and personal, social and health education.
(Paragraphs 58, 116, 119, 142)
- Improve the quality of assessment by:
 - * establishing procedures for identifying attainment in music and religious education
(Paragraphs 42, 134, 142)
 - * ensuring that pupils' attainment in mathematics at Key Stage 3 is accurately identified, and is used to plan suitable work for pupils;
(Paragraphs 44, 85)
 - * ensuring that assessment information is used to plan the next steps in learning in geography, and history in Key Stage 3, and in design and technology and information technology in Key Stages 3 and 4.
(Paragraphs 36, 44, 110, 114, 118, 122)

- Improve the management of resources by:
 - * planning for the systematic reduction of the large reserves;
(*Paragraph 63*)
 - * improving resources in mathematics in Key Stage 3, history, geography and religious education.
(*Paragraphs 62, 88, 115, 119,146*)

- Ensure that governors continue to develop their role as critical friends.
(*paragraph 59*).

- The following minor points should be included in the school's action plan:
 - * improving the quality of pupils' annual progress reports to parents;
(*Paragraph 55*)
 - * extending accreditation to recognise the achievements of the highest attaining pupils;
(*Paragraph 28*)
 - * ensuring that the governors' annual report to parents contains a full financial statement, and the names and addresses of the chair of governors and the clerk to the governing body
(*Paragraph 59*).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	91
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	25

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
2	26	42	30	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	115
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	54

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	2
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	2.4

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 Summer 1999

ASDAN Youth Award Scheme

9 pupils achieved the Silver Award
8 pupils achieved the Bronze Award

AEB Achievement Tests in Literacy

6 pupils achieved Level 2
5 pupils achieved Level 1

AEB Achievement Tests in Numeracy

14 pupils achieved Level

SMP Mathematics

5 pupils achieved Amber 1
2 pupils achieved Amber 2
3 pupils achieved Foundation 1

OCR Certificate of Achievement in Science

8 pupils achieved Silver
6 pupils achieved Bronze

Other awards:

7 pupils were awarded the Essential Food Hygiene Certificate
8 pupils were awarded a Certificate of Attendance in the Basic Food Hygiene Certificate
7 pupils were awarded the Ashley School Horticulture Award

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	2
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	113
Any other minority ethnic group	0

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	4	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes:

Y3 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	12.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	9.1
Average class size	11.5

Education support staff:

Y3 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	19
Total aggregate hours worked per week	482

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1998/1999
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	£
Total income	970388.00
Total expenditure	975645.00
Expenditure per pupil	8484.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	297705.00
Balance carried forward to next year	292448.00

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	115
Number of questionnaires returned	37

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	73	24	0	0	3
My child is making good progress in school.	62	32	3	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	49	43	5	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	35	59	3	3	0
The teaching is good.	78	19	0	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	65	32	3	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	81	19	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	70	27	3	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	62	38	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	78	22	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	59	41	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	53	33	6	0	3

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

ENGLISH

66. Achievements in speaking and listening are very good for pupils of all abilities, in all key stages, and continue to be strength of the school. The school has been very successful in meeting the targets it has set for improving reading skills.

67. By the age of eleven, most pupils are clear and confident speakers and attentive listeners. Pupils with additional special needs make very good progress in speaking and listening skills. They retell stories and talk about their experiences. They develop an understanding of questioning words. They offer alternative endings to stories and give reasons for their ideas. By the age of fourteen, all pupils are accustomed to addressing and performing to an audience. This was seen clearly in their most recent production *Dream Stealer*. They listen carefully to each other and the teacher, ask questions and discuss issues to do with the literature, such as an excerpt from the *Ann Frank Diary* and the poem *Evacuees*. By the age of sixteen, they empathise with characters, talk about work experiences, act out scenes from stories, read aloud, and discuss their personal targets and preferred learning styles.

68. Following the introduction of the literacy hour, pupils' reading achievement has accelerated. Progress is good by the age of eleven and fourteen, and is satisfactory by the age of sixteen. Up to the age of eleven, pupils systematically build and acquire reading skills and strategies, they enjoy group reading of Big Books, but also practise reading skills individually. They also read poetry and traditional rhymes. Higher-attaining pupils are aware of the difference between fiction, and non-fiction books. Up to the age of fourteen, most pupils steadily consolidate phonic skills and reading strategies, and use simple dictionaries and reference books. There is an emphasis on developing literacy experiences and understanding of reading. All have some awareness of the nature of poetry, and higher attaining pupils know that rhyming words are not necessarily spelled the same. By the age of sixteen, pupils enjoy reading a shared text. Whilst a few are fluent readers, most read hesitantly. Reading strategies are not secure and a small number of pupils struggle with quite simple texts.

69. Achievements in writing skills are good by the age of eleven, and satisfactory by the ages of fourteen and sixteen. Pupils make a good start in Years 3, 4 and 5, but then progress levels off in Year 6, although for one pupil, recently from mainstream, progress has been rapid. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are developing story lines such as, *What happened to Kitty?* retelling stories in groups, writing news, descriptive prose and poems, and poetry in the style of Michael Rosen and Celia Warren. They word process some of their work. Higher attainers write with increasing accuracy in sentence punctuation, and use a small range of joining words, spelling the most common words accurately. Their handwriting is of uneven size, with some joining of letters. The least able pupils write legibly, with words mostly well separated.

70. By the age of 14, higher-attaining pupils write brief letters, lists, descriptive prose, diaries, and in journalistic style, using headlines such as '*Seven Fishermen Feared Dead*'. Higher-attaining pupils write using a wider range of vocabulary, whilst all continue to develop accuracy in sentence punctuation. There is an emphasis in this key stage on fostering understanding and encouraging empathy with characters' feelings.

71. For the oldest pupils, the main focus is on writing tasks required for the externally accredited courses. Writing is mainly directed towards skills for life, such as writing job application letters, and completing personal statements, and whilst this is highly relevant, it does not fully challenge the most able pupils. Higher- and average-attaining pupils write commentaries on aspects of the life of Ann Frank, whilst below-average attainers learn to write cheques and fill in membership forms, for example.

72. All teaching in English is at least satisfactory and most often good. The teaching of speaking and listening skills across the school is well done in all subjects. Teachers' questioning is very good, so that pupils learn to think ideas through and to reason independently. They are encouraged from the beginning to talk and to listen. In Key Stage 3, through speaking, singing and acting roles in drama productions, pupils develop further confidence in speaking, and develop a sense of self worth. The teaching of pupils with additional language difficulties is effectively targeted and taught by support staff under the direction of the speech and language therapist, so that these pupils make very good progress. The teaching of reading skills is particularly effective, because it ensures that pupils build phonic and word-recognition strategies, whilst enjoying the repetition which gives confidence. Where the teaching of writing is most successful, planning is based on the assessment of pupils' needs, and the pupils have a good awareness of what their personal learning objectives are. Reading homework is set each night for everyone, and a number of parents are co-operating in assisting learning. Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 also have a weekly homework in English.

73. The policy for handwriting, recently introduced, is not fully in place, with the result that pupils still write in a mixture of print and cursive script throughout the school. Pupils would improve the appearance of their handwriting if teachers insisted on either one or the other within a piece of writing, and if pupils had handwriting targets for each half term.

74. There is ample evidence of effective literacy teaching across the whole curriculum. In subjects such as mathematics, science and design and technology, pupils learn to use key vocabulary in their writing for the subjects, whilst in other subjects, such as music and art, they use subject specific vocabulary in class discussion. The use of information technology software across the curriculum is already having a positive impact on reading skills and information technology is beginning to be recognised as an alternative writing tool.

75. The attitudes of the vast majority of pupils throughout the school are very good. They learn to share and to work together in pairs and small groups. They help each other, sometimes without any prompting, and they are helpful in and around the class. They treat books and resources respectfully. A few pupils, with additional behavioural needs, respond very well to being given responsibility around the class. There are effective strategies for improving pupils' behaviour. By the time they are sixteen, many pupils can be trusted to work independently in an adjoining room without close supervision.

76. Assessment in English is good. Assessment of reading skills is used well for pointing to the next step in individuals' learning. However, the use of assessment to inform planning for further development of writing skills is not as effective in Key Stages 3 and 4, as it is in Key Stage 2. The IEP targets for writing focus rightly on small achievable areas of learning, but may not necessarily be key areas for taking pupils forward in their writing skills. In Key Stage 4, IEP reading targets do not consistently focus on skills' improvement so that pupils' learning lacks direction.

77. Since the last report, English has improved in a number of ways. The standard of teaching in Key Stages 3 and 4 has improved and it has been maintained in Key Stage 2. The National Literacy Strategy has been implemented, and has been well supported by staff training. IEP target setting and assessment have improved across the curriculum, and standards are already rising.

78. The co-ordinator has been very successful in leading the implementation of the National Literacy Strategy and has a clear idea of the direction of further development. The training of staff to implement the literacy strategy, and to use other programmes, has been effective. There is formal recognition in the school development plan of the need to focus on improving writing skills. Library accommodation is near to completion and will be a very valuable teaching resource. Meanwhile classes in Key Stages 2 and 3 have book resources within the class. There is sufficient non-fiction and fiction at suitable reading levels but the co-ordinator recognises that fiction texts are limited. In Key Stage 4, there are not enough age-appropriate fiction titles. The careers library has some texts that are too difficult for pupils to read.

MATHEMATICS

79. Pupils attain good standards in all area of mathematics in the primary department. In Key Stage 3 standards are satisfactory, but are good again in Key Stage 4. This represents good improvement since the last inspection, when standards were judged satisfactory throughout the school. The national numeracy strategy has had a very positive impact on provision for the younger pupils. Teachers have high expectations and use appropriate methods; consequently pupils make good progress. In Key Stage 3, pupils consolidate their skills and knowledge, but the work is less challenging and not always matched to their abilities, so that progress slows, although it is still satisfactory for most pupils,. It is unsatisfactory for higher attainers in some lessons. The pace and urgency of work increases when Key Stage 4 pupils work towards external accreditation and they make good progress in completing coursework, working accurately for tests and developing mathematical skills that they can apply to tasks outside school.

80. Pupils arrive at the school with a variety of mathematical experiences, but most lack confidence and several are still at early stages of counting and number recognition. They quickly develop enthusiasm for numeracy lessons. By the time that they are eleven, all pupils are able to use a number line to work out addition and subtraction to twenty. Lower attainers still get rather muddled when given mixed addition and subtraction calculations. Higher

attainers have rapid recall of doubles of numbers to ten, know 2, 3, 4 5 and 10 times tables and simple fractions. They can apply this knowledge effectively when given problems in words. All pupils have a good grasp of the basic language of measurement. Higher attainers investigate the properties of three-dimensional shapes. They show insight and enthusiasm when beginning new topics such as symmetry. One pupil said 'It's the same the other way round', and another, 'Oh, like halving'.

81. By the time that they are fourteen, higher-attaining pupils have an understanding of place value, and know facts such as $1\text{kg} = 1000\text{g}$. They can round numbers up and down, and have an idea of a 'sensible' answer to simple problems involving numbers. Lower attainers use a table square to look up the answers to multiplication questions, and all read tables of data accurately. Some pupils get confused when counting past 100, but improve quickly when prompted, showing that this may be due to a lack of practice. They undertake data handling projects, with higher attainers working independently and others receiving support to help them interpret their results. They measure with standard and non-standard measures and develop their money skills.

82. By the time that they leave school, pupils produce a high volume of neat work. Higher attainers have rapid recall of appropriate number facts and bonds, including fractions and simple percentages, which allow them to work out day-to-day problems. They use calculators for more complex calculations, and to check their answers. All use scales to weigh and measure, with lower attainers reading the nearest number and higher attainers giving increasingly accurate readings. They develop their time management skills using timetables, calculating the impact of delays on journey times.

83. Pupils' numeracy is practised and applied through activities in other areas of the curriculum. They learn, for example, about relative proportions and position in art, co-ordinates in geography, and reading scales in science. They undertake data-handling projects learning to create and interpret graphs and charts.

84. Teaching has improved since the last inspection and no unsatisfactory lessons were seen. Many teachers make good use of computers in their lessons, such as using art packages to develop concepts of symmetry, and spreadsheets to generate motivating electronic worksheets. It is consistently good in Key Stage 4, and good in Key Stage 2, except in one lesson where teaching was excellent. Planning is clear and detailed, with activities clearly matched to individual targets, so that each pupil can make appropriate progress. The style is confident and lively, with good mental warm-ups and effective questioning strategies used to get pupils thinking. Well-briefed and skilled support assistants help to monitor and assess activities, ensuring that all pupils can discuss and develop their work. Relationships are very positive, and behaviour is effectively managed with firm and fair good humour. This ensures that lessons run smoothly and that time is very well used.

85. Teaching is satisfactory in Key Stage 3. In this key stage, teaching is characterised by very good relationships, good task focus, and brisk pace. There are good features in many lessons, but there is some lack of continuity between lessons during the week taught by different teachers, and tasks are not always accurately matched to pupils' abilities. Assessment is not yet satisfactory for these pupils, and this sometimes leads to inappropriate targets or work that does not challenge pupils sufficiently.

86. The mathematics co-ordinator has worked very well with staff to implement the National Numeracy Strategy. There is clear educational direction for the subject, and the short and long-term targets that are set are becoming more ambitious. Training, and the monitoring of teaching, has had a very positive impact. Links with the local authority have encouraged and contributed to developments.

87. The curriculum in Key Stage 2 is very good, with daily numeracy sessions and a broad and balanced programme of activities. This is helping pupils to develop flexibility in their thinking, and allows them to generalise and apply what they learn in other contexts. Formal assessment that reflects the current curriculum is still developing, but teachers have a good picture of what pupils know, understand and can do, and use this effectively when planning work. In Key Stage 3, there is sufficient time allowed for the subject, but only three lessons a week, in one of which pupils are grouped according to their attainment in physical education. There is insufficient continuity between what is done in these lessons, and the lessons are not sufficiently frequent to maximise the impact of appropriate teaching. The annually assessed levels, annual review targets, and targets in Individual Education Plans are not sufficiently linked. In Key Stage 4, the curriculum is driven by Schools Mathematics Project (SMP) accreditation. This gives pupils appropriate certification for their work and also helps them to develop good skills that they can use in the wider community or in employment. There is continuous, accurate assessment of pupils' strengths and needs, and action taken to develop skills and understanding.

88. Resources are well managed and deployed. They are adequate for work in Key Stages 2 and 4, but more practical equipment is needed to illustrate and consolidate number work, such as place value, for pupils in Key Stage 3.

SCIENCE

89. Standards of achievement are good on the whole. Pupils in Key Stage 2 make good progress, and although progress at the start of Key Stage 3 slows, because pupils have less time allocated, progress accelerates again at the end of the key stage. As a result, progress in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. In Key Stage 4, more time is allocated to science, and this, together with recent changes to teaching which ensure that modules are covered in a shorter time, is resulting in accelerated progress that is good. Pupils approaching the end of Key Stage 4 gain accreditation for science, and the school has just awarded its first Gold certificates for the Science Plus course.

90. Pupils in all key stages cover a balanced programme of work across the four attainment targets. They make similar progress in knowledge and understanding of science, and in acquiring investigative skills. By the time they are eleven, pupils make observations, recognise similarities and differences, and they record findings using prepared charts. They all use scientific terms, when they describe materials as smooth, hard, or flexible, for example. A few identify quite subtle differences between materials, such as whether they are 'see through' or not. Some older pupils give detailed verbal explanations, such as explaining where sand comes from, showing a clear understanding of how the forces of erosion can change the nature and location of rock.

91. By fourteen, most pupils understand how to construct a bar chart to present findings from an investigation, and they do this independently or with support. For example, they show the force in Newtons required to pull a shoe across different surfaces. Some are beginning to understand about chemical reactions, and higher-attaining pupils know that some reactions are reversible. A small number show an understanding of the difference between elements, mixtures and compounds.

92. As pupils approach school leaving age, they have acquired a broad knowledge and understanding of the subject, and most attain a Bronze, Silver or Gold certificate on the Science Plus course. During the inspection the oldest pupils showed that they were able to apply their knowledge of investigative work to a study of water quality on the Oulton Broad. For example, they were able to suggest the use of filtration, microscopic examination and pH testing. Higher attaining pupils could suggest hypotheses about the cleanliness and water temperature at different points on the Broad. They could also give reasons for their ideas.

93. Pupils show good attitudes to work in most lessons; they are keen to tackle investigations, to answer questions and to find out from textbooks. They work successfully in groups, discuss sensibly together, and help one another. Hence, they are able to build on one another's ideas. When looking at habitats in the school grounds, pupils show respect for wildlife, talking in hushed tones when in the school's own wildlife garden. Most behave well, and they make predictions and suggestions with confidence, knowing that their contributions will be valued. They also think hard, to try and explain what they observe.

94. Teaching in science is good overall, and in Key Stages 2 and 3. At Key Stage 4, half the lessons seen were good and half satisfactory, and although marking of pupils' work is a weakness at this key stage, teaching is good overall. Of the twelve science lessons seen, one was very good, seven were good and four were satisfactory. Science lessons are generally well planned and prepared. Planning identifies opportunities for reinforcing literacy and numeracy skills, as well as for the use of information technology. Learning outcomes, which are identified in lesson plans, are shared with pupils and reviewed in a plenary session towards the end. Pupils are, therefore, clear about what they are to learn, and to begin to assess the gains they make in each lesson. This practice also helps them to learn from one another. Teachers are skilled in questioning pupils, to check or deepen their understanding, and to help pupils draw on their own experiences. In one lesson, for instance, the teacher was able to draw out the idea of air resistance being a 'stopping force', thus encouraging pupils to frame scientific explanations for what they had observed. Occasionally, teachers allow certain pupils to dominate the answering.

95. Teachers have high expectations of pupils understanding and using scientific language. For example, when Year 7 pupils were sorting living things they were encouraged to think about the *criteria* they would use to do this. A very good range of resources is used by teachers, some of them homemade. One such example was seen when pupils were exploring habitats. They were given a laminated sheet on which a table was marked. Cards, attached with velcro, could be detached and then secured in the appropriate place on the table, thus building up a portable, waterproof record for use out of doors. This really appealed to the pupils, who enthusiastically recorded their findings. Teachers also make good use of suitable textbooks with an appropriate readability level, as well as good quality resources selected

from the school's stock, which has been improved greatly since the last inspection. In addition, teachers bring in items themselves, to create stimulating and challenging tasks and displays. One such display was used very effectively in a class of younger pupils, to encourage them to think what materials objects were made out of, and whether they were *natural* or *man-made*. Strategically placed posters and other sources of information enabled pupils to find some of the more difficult answers themselves.

96. Support staff are used very effectively in science. They are very well briefed, and contribute well to planning and direct teaching. They have acquired confidence and good skills, and this was demonstrated when one encouraged pupils to be *detectives* and to look for *evidence* of animals, as well as animals themselves, in different habitats. Shortly afterwards, a pupil spotted a snail's 'abandoned' shell. Teachers generally monitor the work pupils do with support staff, ensuring that the pupils' achievements during a lesson are acknowledged and shared with the rest of the class during the plenary session.

97. The most significant weakness of teaching is the lack of marking in Key Stage 4, which contrasts with the useful verbal feedback that pupils are given on their work in class. Occasionally there is a loss of pace, a lack of challenge for some higher-attaining pupils, and instances of weak behaviour management.

98. Leadership by the co-ordinator is very good, and has led to a considerable improvement in standards, in the quality of teaching and in the provision of resources since the school was last inspected. Expectations have been raised by the target-setting initiative, and the co-ordinator's intervention to increase the pace of learning for older pupils is accelerating their progress. The monitoring of teaching is very good, and support for teaching has secured improvement. Records are adequate, and there are plans to extend the good practice in Key Stage 2 to the other key stages. Records could be further improved by showing more detail of actual attainment, to make them more helpful in planning next steps and in monitoring progress.

ART

99. Standards of achievement in art have continued to rise since the last inspection and are now very good throughout the school. Pupils make very good progress as they work through a very well planned and effectively resourced programme of activities. A few pupils in each year group attain standards similar to national expectations in many projects. Teachers and support assistants have a very good understanding of the ability of each pupil and everyone is constantly challenged to develop and improve their work.

100. By the age of eleven, pupils have experienced a wide range of activities, including textiles and three-dimensional work, and have participated in individual and group projects. Much of their work is skills based and they learn to mix colours, to develop good mark making skills and to observe closely when they draw. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 6 are beginning to copy photos of familiar buildings with close attention to the correct proportion and positioning of different elements, showing that they are aware of perspective. Most pupils, even when their drawings are immature, show very good use of space and confident control of pencils and brushes.

101. By the age of fourteen, pupils are developing good routines, using sketch books, choosing materials appropriately and taking responsibility for their work. They investigate proportion when they learn about portraiture, and higher attainers quickly start to apply this to the pictures that they draw of their friends. They produce a high volume of work of good quality, including embroidery, clay masks and careful colour and line studies. They discuss the work of artists that they have studied, such as Picasso and Archimbaldo, showing quite detailed knowledge. Pupils enjoy reading books and looking at CD-ROMs to find out more.

102. By the age of sixteen, pupils apply their knowledge and skills to projects such as printing their own fabric after William Morris, making T-shirts with designs in the style of Matisse, creating photomontage, pop-art and spiky 3D figures inspired by Giacometti. They are currently working on studies for environmental sculptures. Accreditation, for all the oldest pupils, is currently through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) Youth Award Scheme's expressive arts challenges. This does not provide sufficient breadth, or challenge, for many pupils at the end of such a rich experience and does not fully acknowledge the high standards that they attain.

103. Teaching and learning are very good in all lessons; all the pupils benefit from specialist teaching in a dedicated art room. Lessons have a clear structure. Learning objectives and high expectations are shared with pupils so that everyone understands what they are supposed to do and can work confidently in this specialist environment. Rich stimulus and research materials are provided and pupils develop curiosity, as well as literacy skills, when developing their knowledge and designs. Constant monitoring of work, and very skilled questioning, encourage pupils to really look, work carefully and improve their efforts. A very well organised learning environment allows pupils to select and manage their own media and materials, developing mature routines, such as collating and looking after quick sketches and resources for designs. Feedback to pupils, on achievement and behaviour, is realistic and challenging so that most pupils work hard to attain higher standards. Teaching of social and moral issues underpins all interactions. Pupils develop very good co-operative skills and are regularly heard making appreciative comments about each other's work.

104. The co-ordinator has developed a particularly effective assessment scheme in advance of the new National Curriculum orders. This comprises photographic evidence, an individual portfolio and comments with attainment levels, and gives a very good picture of each pupil's work.

105. The subject makes an excellent contribution to pupils' wider personal development, and is carefully planned in collaboration with other subject teachers. Music, poetry and drama are used very effectively to stimulate ideas and feelings. Pupils develop spiritual awareness through their work on church art and architecture, and are encouraged to explore different perspectives on the meaning of life, environment and ancestry through themes such as *Songlines* and *Dreaming*, when they study the art of Maori and native Australians. They also develop empathy through rich, culturally diverse experiences, representing different countries, historical periods and social issues such as war and poverty.

106. Art is a strong feature of the school and enriches the learning experiences and environment for the whole school community.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

107. Pupils' achievements in design and technology are satisfactory overall. Pupils in Key Stage 2 make good progress in developing designing and making skills. By age 11, pupils use a range of small equipment competently, to design and make photograph frames, for example. They modify their designs and evaluate their work when it is completed. Progress in Key Stages 3 and 4 is satisfactory. By the time they are 14, pupils are developing a sound understanding of dietary considerations. For example, with support, they modify recipes to reduce the amount of fat. They use small equipment such as saws and planes to shape wood, and kitchen equipment to make buns. Fourteen-year old pupils' designing skills are better in resistant materials than in food. Sixteen - year old pupils have support to make good quality boxes which have an inlaid design on the lid. They modify a given recipe for a quiche, to improve the amount of fibre and reduce the fat content. The progress of some higher-attaining pupils is limited because the tasks set for them are insufficiently challenging.

108. Pupils have good attitudes to their lessons. They enjoy the subject and gain enormous satisfaction from their successes in a practical environment. Boys and girls are very well motivated by their work with food. Girls frequently persevere well when using saws and other small equipment to shape resistant materials. Pupils are co-operative and pleasant. They are often reluctant to stop work at the end of the lesson. Even when teachers spend too long talking to the class, pupils are patient and co-operative.

109. Teaching is satisfactory. It is at least satisfactory in all lessons, and in one lesson it was good. Teaching is particularly effective in lessons where pupils are set a problem and they are supported to consider a range of possibilities by trying out different solutions. In these lessons, pupils make good progress in developing their awareness of different materials and their understanding of the relationship between design and purpose. The practical making skills are well taught across the curriculum. Teachers plan to address individual needs. However, there is insufficient difference between the expectations of 11 year old pupils and those aged 14. Consequently, higher-attaining pupils are insufficiently extended. Teachers for this group of pupils lack sufficient subject expertise in food technology. As a result, pupils spend too long listening rather than finding out for themselves through practical investigations, for example, conducting their own survey. Teachers question well to check for understanding. This is particularly effective where questions are targeted so that all pupils are involved. Classroom support assistants are effectively deployed to ensure that pupils make progress. Teachers use a sound range of resources to relate the learning to everyday life but, in some lessons, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils to examine and analyse them. Lessons for older pupils in food technology are particularly well organised and have a good pace. Occasionally, the work set for older pupils is too difficult, for example, the concept of alternative sources of protein.

110. The curriculum meets statutory requirements although there is less emphasis on designing than making. A good range of relevant tasks has been planned. However, tasks do not always ensure that pupils extend their knowledge, skills and understanding as they move through the school. There is insufficient emphasis on the use of information technology, for example, the use of control. Assessment is developing, but is not yet sufficiently well

established, and ongoing records of attainment do not provide a secure basis for final assessments, or help teachers to plan the next steps. Since the last inspection, the curriculum has been extended to provide more opportunities for teaching the design aspects of the programmes of study. Resources have been improved and are now satisfactory but there are too few everyday artefacts for pupils to investigate and explore. The role of the co-ordinator is being extended to oversight of Key Stage 2. The accommodation is good.

GEOGRAPHY

111. Achievement in geography is good in Key Stages 2 and 3. Pupils develop a clear understanding of the world in which they live.

112. Two, good quality lessons were seen during the inspection; one from Key Stage 2, the other from Key Stage 3. Additional information was drawn from pupils' books, attractive wall displays and examples of pupils' project work, together with teacher's records. Ten- and eleven-year old pupils recognise and name their local town, Lowestoft, on maps. They understand the difference in size between towns and villages. Using maps and photographs, these pupils identify and name different features of the coastline, such as cliffs, caves and beaches. Most are also aware of the differences between man made and natural features. Eleven and twelve year old pupils define the purpose of a port, and know how it differs from an inland town or coastal resort. They know there have to be good communications to factories, with road and rail links, and they understand about settlement on rivers. Pupils produce good, coloured bar graphs by computer to record their findings.

113. In the lessons observed, the quality of teaching was good. Well planned and prepared lessons, supported by teachers' skilled questioning, meant that pupils remained on task for the whole lesson. Pupils were eager to answer questions and demonstrate their skills in geography. There was also good co-operation between pupils and staff, and between pupils themselves. Progress in pupils' learning at Key Stage 3 has improved since the last inspection.

114. Assessment in Key Stage 2 is based on observation and the learning outcomes from Key Stage 1 programme of study. This is entirely appropriate. The planning of work in Key Stage 2 is based on these assessments, and progress is recorded at three levels. This is good practice. In Key Stage 3, the system for planning through assessment is not fully in place because of the changes to the National Curriculum. However, a start has been made using questioning techniques to assess achievement. This was evident in both lessons seen, and it helped pupils to make progress.

115. The balance of the curriculum is satisfactory and is relevant to pupils' needs. Accommodation is good but the resources available to teach geography are insufficient. Pupils would gain more skill, knowledge and understanding from the opportunity to use a wider range of materials and texts. The use of information and communication technology to support teaching in Key Stage 3 is good.

116. A weakness, at present, is that there is no co-ordinator for geography, although the acting co-ordinators in the primary and secondary departments have worked conscientiously to maintain the profile of the subject. Given the teaching skills and pupils' abilities in the school, this subject has not reached its potential. Aspects of the subject relating to map work and orienteering are taught very successfully as part of the ASDAN scheme at Key Stage 4, but there is no accreditation for older pupils who achieve more widely in geography. Curriculum planning is not fully developed.

HISTORY

117. Achievement in history is satisfactory in Key Stage 2 and good overall in Key Stage 3. Pupils in Key Stage 2 are beginning to understand the differences between the past and present. In Key Stage 3, pupils have an understanding of the passing of time. They also know how we find out about the past and where to discover facts about history. Ten and 11 year old pupils place annual holidays in chronological order. They identify different events associated with holidays during the different seasons. They have studied the life and work of Florence Nightingale and the differences between old and new toys. Thirteen- and 14 year old pupils were aware of the conditions and working hours in factories 200 years ago. Some calculated the passage of time backwards to the time of the Plains Indians and knew that the evidence from the past could be discovered in documents, photographs and pictures. Others recognised why, in World War II, ports in England had been bombed, and why, in Tudor times, Henry VIII had certain wives beheaded. Some could describe the appearance of Henry VIII, and could write about the differences between their homes and medieval homes. Higher-attaining fourteen year old pupils had written freehand accounts of the past and the lower attainers had copied various pieces of information. Many had drawn some good pictures of medieval houses and figures in history. Pupils' progress in Key Stage 3 has improved since the last inspection

118. During the inspection one lesson was observed in Key Stage 2 and three in Key Stage 3. The lesson in Key Stage 2 was satisfactory, and the lessons in Key Stage 3 ranged from satisfactory to very good. The teaching was judged to be good overall in this key stage. Where lessons were very good, the planning involved a variety of activities and drew upon a wealth of material from other subjects, such as art, with good cross-referencing with English, maths and information and communication technology. The lesson on the Plains Indians was supported by the superb display of Indian artefacts and photographs that illustrated the school's Key Stage 3 performance of *Dream Stealer*. The best lessons had a lively pace that kept pupils actively engaged. A particular strength of teaching is the skilful use of questioning, which challenges all the pupils to make observations and interpretations of the evidence. The satisfactory lessons were well planned, and used a variety of equipment and aids, but occasionally the activity strayed from a historical focus. In the good and very good lessons children stayed on task and were eager to answer questions and pursue their historical enquiries. Assessment in Key Stage 2 is based on observation and use of the QCA framework. It informs the planning of activities well. Pupils' achievements are recorded at three levels. In Key Stage 3, this system is not in place although a start has been made on using questioning techniques to assess achievement.

119. The balance of the curriculum is satisfactory and based closely on the National Curriculum programmes of study. The work is adapted to make it relevant but planning could be developed further. Accommodation is good, but the resources available to teach history are insufficient. Pupils would gain more skill, knowledge and understanding overall from opportunities to use a wider range of artefacts, text, and photographs, and to make more external visits. The use of information and communication technology and role play in the subject is growing, and contributes well to pupils' understanding. At present, there is no co-ordinator for history, and although the acting co-ordinators have worked conscientiously in the primary and secondary departments to develop aspects of the subject, the lack of whole school co-ordination is a weakness. As a result, this subject has not reached its potential. For example, there is no accreditation to acknowledge the achievements of the older pupils.

INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY

120. Pupils achieve well in information technology. Their good progress is linked to the frequent opportunities to use equipment and a good range of interactive equipment. Even the youngest pupils can use some programs independently. By 11, pupils are confident in their use of computers. They log on and off and use a mouse with the minimum of support. They use pictures and text, and higher-attaining pupils print their work independently. For example, pupils edit text to change the print and they can move a picture from another location and drop it into their own text. Pupils are beginning to understand how to find information from CD-ROMs and appreciate their capacity to hold a large amount of information. By the time they are 14, pupils are beginning to understand how information can be managed and manipulated. For example, they use spreadsheets to work out times tables and *Powerpoint* to present information. By 16, pupils use databases to find and manage information, about the weather, for example. They use a word processing program to enhance and present their own work for accredited courses. Pupils of all ages use computers regularly in other subjects, particularly in English and mathematics.

121. Pupils have good attitudes to working with information technology. Both boys and girls are clearly confident. They enjoy the control they have and their ability to produce work of a good quality when their own presentation skills are poor. In some lessons, pupils are amazed and delighted by their discoveries. Pupils are patient when they need to wait for others or for support from an adult. Pupils persevere well. For example, after losing his work, one boy began to re-do it, having identified the cause of the loss.

122. Teaching is good overall. It is never less than satisfactory and in four out of seven lessons, it was good. In one lesson it was excellent because the pupils made excellent progress in inserting pictures into text to present information. In this lesson, planning was very thorough and inspired pupils to want to achieve even more. The teacher's subject knowledge was excellent, so was skill in making information easily accessible to pupils. There was excellent rapport between the teacher and the pupils, who asked appropriate questions so that their understanding was deepened. In good lessons, pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are extended. The end of lessons is used effectively to check how many pupils had achieved the planned objectives. Pupils' learning is well managed in most lessons. In occasional lessons, where pupils made less progress, the teacher lacked confidence about using computers and the tasks set for pupils were less challenging. A general weakness is that ongoing records of pupils' attainments are not kept, and therefore assessment does not inform planning.

123. The subject is well managed and significant progress has been made since the previous inspection. The subject meets statutory requirements although there is insufficient emphasis on control and modelling. There is a good range of resources. There is a very favourable ratio of computers to pupils and a good range of software. However, there is insufficient peripheral equipment, such as concept keyboards, to support pupils with additional difficulties and non-reading older pupils. Although pupils are unable to gain accreditation through courses in Key Stage 4, this is under review. Staff are becoming increasingly aware and skilful in using computers as a result of training. Accommodation is very good, but the ventilation in the information and communication technology room is noisy and not very effective in warm weather.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

124. Standards of achievement in French are good. This is a considerable improvement since the last inspection, when pupils made unsatisfactory progress. There is a suitable emphasis on speaking and listening, although pupils do have opportunities to read and write in French. Although no lessons could be seen in Key Stage 4, records of pupils' marks in tests show that they make similar progress to pupils in Key Stage 3. Pupils also gain recognised accreditation for their achievements in the subject.

125. Pupils at 11, have few or no French language skills. However, they soon begin to recognise greetings, classroom commands and to learn their colours and numbers. They respond to instructions, such as *levez vous* and *répétez*. Through gradual exposure to key words, and effective consolidation, they steadily increase the range of words they understand and use. They grow in confidence, and by fourteen, they have a broader understanding of spoken French and their accent is recognisable. They recognise cultural differences between France and England, and most have enough French to get by on a visit to France. For example, they recognise some of the shops that they might wish to visit, such as the *boulangerie*, *supermarché* and *pâtisserie*. Most can carry out a short conversation.

126. Teaching of French is very good. Of the three lessons seen, two were very good and one was good. Lessons are very well planned and prepared, with clear learning outcomes that are communicated to pupils at the start and reviewed at the end. Pupils know exactly what is expected of them, and are pleased to have their gains acknowledged. Teacher expertise has improved considerably since the last inspection, and a good range of methods and resources, including games, tapes and interactive CD-ROMs is now used. These appeal to pupils, who tackle tasks with enthusiasm. There is constant repetition and reinforcement, so pupils make clear gains during lessons. For example, at the start of a role play of shopping in France, pupils did not recall how to ask the price of an item. However, with copious reinforcement and practice, several felt able to incorporate the appropriate phrase, *Ça va combien?* into their imaginary exchange with a shop assistant. Changes of activity ensure that pupils are involved throughout lessons. Support staff are used very well, and are skilled

themselves. For example, they take responsibility for a group, reading a simple French text aloud to pupils, who really enjoy trying to work out the storyline by using their understanding of the spoken word and the picture clues. Pupils' rise to the high expectations of staff, who intervene to check understanding, provide sensitive support, and encouragement. The teacher uses a wide variety of assessment techniques, and encourages pupils to assess themselves, including to identify what they need to practise more.

127. Leadership in the subject is very good, and has resulted in substantial improvement since the last inspection, both in standards and in teaching. Training opportunities have been used to good effect, and accreditation introduced to acknowledge pupils' achievements. An area for further improvement is the provision of opportunities to visit France, to experience the language and culture at first hand.

MUSIC

128. Music is a pleasurable activity for pupils throughout school. They enjoy music and have regular opportunities provided for practising and performing. They have an after-school music club available for all. Music makes a valuable contribution to the spiritual, social and cultural development of pupils and is planned well to link with other subjects.

129. Achievement in music is good. It has improved significantly since the last inspection when progress was satisfactory by the end of Key Stage 2, but unsatisfactory by the end of Key Stage 3.

130. Progress of pupils by 11 and 14 is good, as they steadily build their musical skills and understanding. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are aware of the dynamics of sound, and explore sound effects to communicate rough and calm seas. They enjoy singing in unison, and listen and appraise performance 'I like how S. made the sea soft', 'A bit too loud, so T could not be heard'. They make suggestions to improve performance 'If you had all of us doing it that would sound very good'. In Year 3 and 4 they learn to listen carefully to music and environmental sounds, and first start to compose sequences of sounds. They record their compositions and play them for tape recording, higher attaining pupils following the note representations and rhythms accurately.

131. In Key Stage 3, pupils learn to control dynamics, adding sound effects to convey mood and create an accompaniment for the *Thunderbird* song about the Plains Indians, linked to their humanities topic. By 14, they are refining their responses to music, are identifying differences and recognising the importance of rhythm. When performing, some are able to maintain independent instrumental lines with awareness of others. They record music on untuned instruments using symbols, and play the electronic keyboard, matching letter notation to marked keys. Each term, they take part in drama performances, which usually incorporate playing, or singing.

132. Specialist teaching in music is good or very good in both key stages. A number of pupils have teaching from a peripatetic teacher of music, and those pupils have after-school music practice and lunchtime practices which are supported by a skilled special needs assistant. Lessons in both key stages are well planned with clear learning objectives. Plans show links with literacy and humanities, art and religious education, so that pupils extend their spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness, as well as developing musical skills and

knowledge. Through a series of timed, short activities, pupils work co-operatively and purposefully, at a good pace, making considerable progress in their learning. The pace of lessons is brisk, ensuring that pupils are challenged, and that they know what to improve.

133. Pupils have fun in music lessons and their attitudes are very positive, enthusiastic and committed. They work together well and are sensitive to the feelings of others when they are asked to comment on the work of another group.

134. The quality, quantity and standard of resources for music are good. There are tuned and untuned instruments, and sound makers from a range of cultures. Pupils also have opportunities to use music programmes on computers, although this work has not progressed far at this stage. They record their work and have enough keyboards for everyone in the class at Key Stage 3. Formal assessment of musical skills is recognised as an area for development. A designated music room has been made available for music and there are further plans for its refurbishment.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

135. Standards of achievement in physical education are very good in all areas of the subject, and in Key Stage 4 they are excellent for some individual pupils. At this key stage the school achieves notable results in cross country running, football, swimming and long jump. Last year the school achieved the prestigious Sportsmark Award, one of only 340 schools in the country to do so.

136. Pupils from the age of nine to eleven play a form of rounders demonstrating well their ability to work co-operatively with one another, striking and fielding the ball successfully. The majority of pupils exceed their previous best in making successful strikes. More able pupils strike, catch and throw a ball accurately over greater distances. Many are familiar with the names given to the positions of the players, backstop, and bowler. In swimming, the most able eleven-year olds have developed an excellent swimming style over a variety of strokes. In crawl and backstroke the position and use of legs swung from the hips, plus good breathing technique, enables pupils to swim with pace and power over significant distances. Swimmers of average and low ability work extremely hard with growing confidence to improve upon their previous best. The lowest attaining swimmers use buoyancy aids and develop a good leg kick to aid propulsion.

137. Fourteen-year old pupils undertake appropriate stretching and warm up exercises before activities. They develop techniques for sprinting and long jump and also demonstrate the need for an explosive sprint and the appropriate techniques for taking off and landing in long jump. Pupils measure the distance of their jumps and co-operate well during the lessons. Sixteen-year old pupils are developing skills in an explosive start to sprinting, and the holding of the head correctly. They maintain efforts well to the finishing line. They are also able to develop techniques for throwing the javelin, adopting the right grip, releasing the javelin at the right moment, and adopting the correct body position for throwing. More able pupils develop this technique with a running throw. The majority of pupils improve on their previous best, some significantly. Pupils' progress has improved in Key Stage 3 since the last inspection.

138. Teaching is very good across the key stages. It is at least good in all lessons, and most often very good. Lessons are well planned against National Curriculum programmes of study and are well resourced with support in terms of special schools assistants and equipment. A particular strength of the teaching is the ability to communicate effectively with pupils, and the setting of personal targets to pupils of all abilities in activities. Pupils relish this challenge. It stimulates their participation in lessons and promotes physical achievement. Another strength of the teaching is the support and development of other subjects through physical education. Pupils answer questions about their work that fosters communication, and they measure distances they have jumped, for example. In addition, pupils help to carry equipment and record results. This fosters very good attitudes across the key stages with pupils remaining on task and taking responsibility for themselves and others. Health and safety is always observed in lessons, with appropriate stretching and warm up exercises, and clear explanations about safety, when using and carrying the javelin for instance. Pupils, whatever their age and ability, work hard and co-operate with staff, attempting to better their personal best and improve their techniques in physical activities.

139. The physical education curriculum is excellent. It is very broad, and well balanced. It is considerably enhanced by the outdoor and adventure activities that take place regularly during the school year. For example, the Forest Challenge involves pupils in orienteering, canoeing, raft building, climbing and mountain biking. Physical education also enhances and develops other areas of the curriculum, such as literacy, maths, music and personal, social and health education. The curriculum is well adapted to meet the range of abilities in the school, from the very able, who win county cross-country events, to other pupils with variety of co-ordination and emotional problems. A strength of the school's work lies in the opportunity for girls to take part in the full range of activities, including football. Assessment is excellent and is used very effectively, across the key stages, to monitor individual pupils' performance in the full range of physical activities. This is enhanced by the school's system of target setting within lessons. Very good records are kept of pupils' achievements. Pupils enjoy their physical education work greatly, and are rewarded by splendid portfolios that contain a variety of certificates and medals that reflect their considerable sporting achievements.

140. Facilities for the teaching of physical education are very good, with a shallow swimming pool on site and the opportunity to use the local pool for diving and distance swimming. There is also a hall, and generous field space for football and athletics. Use is made of the long jump pit belonging to the neighbouring comprehensive school. The resources for physical education are very good. Leadership in the subject is excellent, by an expert teacher who has woven together an outstanding physical education programme. The school has achieved many notable successes in a wide range of activities in East Anglia, football, swimming, athletics and cross-country running.

141. Physical education is a very strong feature of the school, providing pupils with success in a wide range of physical activities. Its overall achievement has been to improve most pupils' self esteem, as well as their health and sporting behaviour. The co-ordinator is planning to introduce nationally recognised accreditation to validate achievement in the subject in Key Stage 4, and this would be a positive step.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

142. Pupils make satisfactory progress in religious education in all key stages. Factors that limit progress are the modular nature of the timetable, which means that pupils have terms when they do not learn religious education, under-developed planning, and weaknesses in assessment. There is currently no co-ordinator for this subject, but there is a planning overview covering the required elements within the guidelines of the Suffolk Agreed Syllabus, from which teachers make medium and short-term plans.

143. By the age of 11, pupils are interested in, and aware of, what a Bible is, and know some of the stories from it. They discuss the predicament of Jonah and respond to questions, which pose moral dilemmas. Higher achieving pupils have good awareness of the consequences of actions and can offer alternative solutions to actions. By the age of fourteen, pupils are challenged to consider 'Why was Joseph a hero?' and can offer ideas of some aspects of the definition of hero. They know about some key features of the main world religions and explore celebrations and key events of life. In Key Stage 4, pupils re-enact scenes from the story of Moses in order to develop empathy and understanding. Higher attaining pupils make suggestions, whilst other pupils show an understanding of the concepts, and lower attaining pupils need support and prompts to help their understanding.

144. The very good teaching in Key Stage 2 has been maintained since the last report, whilst in Key Stages 3 and 4, teaching is good, an improvement since the last inspection. Where teachers' questioning is skilful and challenging, pupils respond thoughtfully and express original ideas. With encouragement they give reasons for their answers. When teachers have good awareness of pupils needs, they differentiate work well, giving appropriate support using skilled learning support assistants, so that all pupils achieve as well as they can.

145. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are very good overall. They are interested, listen carefully, ask questions and work supportively together. They work very well in groups to create dramatic scenes.

146. Assessment in religious education has not yet been developed. Resources for teaching religious education are sadly lacking, particularly in the area of artefacts for learning about world religions, but also in texts with suitable reading levels for pupils.