

INSPECTION REPORT

ELM COURT SCHOOL

West Norwood, London

LEA area: Lambeth

Unique reference number: 100659

Headteacher: Mr W Hutcheson

Reporting inspector: Mary Last
17171

Dates of inspection: 4th – 8th February, 2002

Inspection number: 190401

Full inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

© Crown copyright 2002

This report may be reproduced in whole or in part for non-commercial educational purposes, provided that all extracts quoted are reproduced verbatim without adaptation and on condition that the source and date thereof are stated.

Further copies of this report are obtainable from the school. Under the School Inspections Act 1996, the school must provide a copy of this report and/or its summary free of charge to certain categories of people. A charge not exceeding the full cost of reproduction may be made for any other copies supplied.

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

| | |
|------------------------------|---|
| Type of school: | Special |
| School category: | Community |
| Age range of pupils: | 6 to 16 years |
| Gender of pupils: | Mixed |
| School address: | Elmcourt Road West Norwood London |
| Postcode: | SE27 9BZ |
| Telephone number: | 0208 670 6577 |
| Fax numbepr: | 0208 766 0309 |
| Appropriate authority: | Governing body |
| Name of chair of governors: | Mrs M Baker |
| Date of previous inspection: | September, 1996 |

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

| Team members | | | Subject responsibilities | Aspect responsibilities |
|--------------|---------------|----------------------|--|--|
| 17171 | Mary Last | Registered inspector | Science, modern foreign languages, music | What sort of school is it? How well are pupils' taught? What should the school do to improve further? |
| 19322 | Ms J Bedawi | Lay inspector | | Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? |
| 17530 | Mrs M Cureton | Team inspector | English, geography, history | How well is the school led and managed? |
| 22948 | Mrs M Vallis | Team inspector | Equal opportunities, English as an additional language, information and communication technology, art and design, physical education | How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils? |
| 3055 | Mr C Tombs | Team inspector | Special educational needs, mathematics, design and technology, religious education | The school's results and pupils' achievements |

The inspection contractor was:

Bench Marque Ltd
 National Westminster Bank Chambers
 Victoria Street
 Burnham on Sea
 Somerset
 TA8 1AN
 Tel: 01278 795022

Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

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

REPORT CONTENTS

| | Page |
|---|-----------|
| PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT | 6 |
| Information about the school | |
| How good the school is | |
| What the school does well | |
| What could be improved | |
| How the school has improved since its last inspection | |
| Standards | |
| Pupils' attitudes and values | |
| Teaching and learning | |
| Other aspects of the school | |
| How well the school is led and managed | |
| Parents' and carers' views of the school | |
| | |
| PART B: COMMENTARY | |
| HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS? | 10 |
| The school's results and pupils' achievements | |
| Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development | |
| HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT? | 13 |
| HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS? | 16 |
| HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS? | 20 |
| HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS? | 23 |
| HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED? | 24 |
| WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER? | 26 |
| | |
| PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS | 28 |
| | |
| PART D: THE STANDARDS AND QUALITY OF TEACHING IN AREAS OF THE CURRICULUM, SUBJECTS AND COURSES | 31 |

PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Elm Court is a mixed community special school for up to 120 pupils aged five to 16 with moderate learning and associated behavioural problems. Many have severely challenging behaviour, a significant proportion have other learning difficulties including autism or physical difficulties. There are currently 68 boys and 19 girls on roll. Forty-three pupils are of white, mostly UK, heritage, 27 are of black Caribbean origin, and 12 from black African or other black heritage. All pupils who have English as an additional language and receive good support from teaching assistants. Fifty-five pupils receive free school meals which is above average for this type of school. On entry pupils' achievements are low and this is adversely affected by their learning difficulties. Temporary exclusions and unauthorised absences are very high and exceed those of other similar schools; however, there has been only one permanent exclusion in the past 15 years. The long-term uncertainty about the future of the school has now been resolved but the timescale for the change to secondary status remains unclear.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Elm Court school is an effective school where many of the pupils make good, and often very good, gains in their learning and behaviour. The high level of absences and exclusions from the school and from individual lessons restricts learning opportunities for a small but significant number of pupils. Those who attend regularly make good progress and by Year 11 pupils' results in nationally accredited examinations are better than those of other similar special schools, an achievement recognised by a national award for excellence. The school has good arrangements for preparing regularly attending pupils for life after school. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Promotes good relationships between adults and pupils which motivates most pupils to do well and improve their learning
- Provides good teaching overall which enables pupils to become active and interested learners and obtain good examination results by Year 11
- Identifies pupils' work and progress well within lessons and helps pupils understand how well they have learnt through regular self-assessment
- Provides a very good range of extra-curricular activities including a superb Breakfast Club which prepares pupils for the day ahead through a warm welcome and good opportunities for pupils' social development
- Provides very good teaching in design and technology, information and communication technology (ICT), and physical education. Outstanding teaching in art and design enables pupils to produce consistently high quality, practical artwork

What could be improved

- The management of the persistently challenging behaviour exhibited by a significant proportion of the pupils in lessons and around the school
- The procedure for monitoring attendance and the effectiveness of the 'withdrawal' or 'pastoral' system
- The high levels of fixed period exclusions and authorised absences which result in many pupils missing a significant amount of teaching time
- Opportunities for pupils to attend mainstream schools on a part-time basis
- Some health and safety arrangements which were discussed with the headteacher.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory progress in addressing most of the key issues of the last inspection in 1996. However, it has been unable to address some longer-term planning issues due to the past uncertainty over its future. The school and governing body have improved their strategic planning procedures and arrangements for assessing pupils' progress are now good. The provision and teaching in science and geography for pupils in Years 7 to 9 has improved. A significant number of

pupils do not behave well in lessons and some teachers are not consistent in their management of these difficulties. However, the school now has appropriate arrangements to ensure smooth transition for pupils moving from the primary to secondary departments.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils achieve in relation to their individual targets.

| Progress in: | By Year 6 | By Year 11 | Key | |
|--|-----------|------------|----------------|---|
| Speaking and listening | A | A | very good | A |
| Reading | A | B | good | B |
| Writing | A | B | satisfactory | C |
| Mathematics | B | B | unsatisfactory | D |
| Personal, social and health education | C | B | poor | E |
| Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs* | B | B | | |

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

By Year 6 pupils listen carefully to teachers, answer questions and work effectively in small groups and pairs. By Year 11 pupils have good skills of collaboration. They answer questions very clearly and read aloud with good understanding in classes. Although some pupils have continuing difficulties with literacy overall, their levels of reading and writing are sufficient to help them gain good results in national examinations. In mathematics pupils are gradually developing an understanding of the use of number and by Year 11 their personal development and positive attitudes to work are good. The targets in pupils' individual education plans are well addressed in lessons and show that, when they attend regularly, pupils meet their targets and their achievements are improved.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Attitudes to the school | Satisfactory: although some pupils have difficulty settling down in lessons, they enjoy interesting activities and frequently work co-operatively in teams or groups. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Satisfactory: most pupils who attend regularly behave appropriately in most lessons and around the school. Their behaviour is particularly good at the beginning of the day and in the Breakfast Club. However, high levels of tension sometimes result in pupils being unable to take responsibility for their own behaviour. |
| Personal development and relationships | Satisfactory: relationships between adults and pupils are satisfactory and often good. They enable pupils to develop their motivation and ability to concentrate. Older pupils are mature and frequently helpful to each other, staff and visitors. |
| Attendance | Poor: levels of unauthorised absence are high at almost eight per cent and, together with an above average rate of temporary exclusions, result in some pupils missing significant amounts of taught time therefore restricting their progress. Permanent exclusions are exceptionally low however, with only one in the last 15 years. |

Pupils are happy at school and enjoy the welcoming atmosphere in the Breakfast Club, demonstrating good social skills by mixing well with others. Attendance is low however, and a significant proportion of pupils are absent without due cause. Pupils behave well when they are working in close proximity to the teacher, but when they move away to work on their own or in pairs the less mature pupils sometimes have difficulty in maintaining the required standards of behaviour. However, when

teachers pay regular attention to each pupil and plan work to meet their individual needs, pupils behave and achieve well and enjoy working hard.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| Teaching of pupils: | Nursery and Reception | Years 1 – 6 | Years 7 – 11 | Years 12 – 13 |
|---------------------|-----------------------|-------------|--------------|---------------|
| Quality of teaching | N/A | Good | Good | N/A |

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.

Where teachers have good skills in behaviour management and very good relationships with pupils, they are able to motivate them and ensure that they benefit from interesting and relevant lessons. Teaching and learning are very good or outstanding in over four out of every ten lessons and satisfactory or good in a further five out of ten. Only three lessons were judged unsatisfactory – two in French and one in geography. Teaching is very good in art and design, design and technology, physical education and ICT. It is good in English, mathematics, science, history and religious education. The remainder of subjects are satisfactory, with the exception of French because the school has not maintained the good standards found at the last inspection. In English teachers focus precisely on the individual needs of the pupils to ensure their good progress. In mathematics teachers provide pupils with a variety of activities which realistically address their needs both for examination purposes and for the use of mathematics in their own lives. In science pupils are extending their knowledge of the natural world and environment through practical experiments. Teachers have good skills in promoting the pupils' use of literacy and numeracy and most concentrate well on ensuring that pupils understand the key vocabulary used in lessons. Teaching assistants provide very good support to both teachers and pupils. The school has improved the quality of teaching since the last inspection when over one in every ten lessons was unsatisfactory and six out of ten good or better.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|--|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Good: the curriculum fulfils statutory requirements with all subjects of the National Curriculum and religious education taught. The school provides a good balance of activities through the week and is particularly relevant to pupils in Years 2 to 4. Pupils are regularly well prepared for life after school. |
| Provision for pupils with English as an additional language | Pupils with English as an additional language make the same progress as other pupils because they are included in all activities. Teachers make good use of technology to help their language development and teaching assistants are well trained to maximise these pupils' achievements. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Good: successful clubs such as ICT and the Breakfast Club promote very good social development. Visits to galleries and theatres and a wide range of books and artefacts support very good cultural development. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | Good overall: the school ensures that pupils are well supported and their personal, social and academic needs are met. However, there are a few difficulties concerning the provision made for pupils, particularly when off-site which has been brought to the attention of the school. |

The curriculum is good and provides a varied balance and range of subjects throughout the week. The school meets all requirements to teach National Curriculum subjects and religious education. Teachers plan well to meet the wide range of community groups represented in the school and ensure that the content of schemes of work and individual lessons are meaningful to the pupils' lives. Despite these strengths, some older pupils, mostly from ethnic community groups, are frequently not well and the school has already recognised the need to develop the curriculum so that it is more meaningful to this group of pupils.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | Good: the headteacher and management team provide good leadership. The headteacher has gained the respect of parents and staff for his continued effective and understanding management of the school. |
| How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities | Satisfactory: the present uncertainty over the school's future has hampered planning. The governing body is developing its knowledge of the school and its work and is conscious of the need to extend its monitoring role. Some statutory requirements regarding information about the school are not fully met. The school receives much good valued support from external advisors. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | Satisfactory: the school is beginning to gather data and develop its procedures for identifying its strengths and weaknesses but is not yet fully analysing underlying reasons for such issues as high levels of pastoral referrals. |
| The strategic use of resources | Good: there is a good level of resources which support pupils' learning throughout the school and they are well used for the benefit of pupils in lessons. There is a good number of staff although several are temporary appointments. Accommodation is satisfactory overall, but some subjects, such as physical education are restricted by lack of satisfactory space. The use of nearby facilities in other schools and colleges overcomes this problem. |

The school is well organised and runs on an efficient basis. Staff roles are clear although morale has clearly been affected by future uncertainty. Many governors are new to the school but are quickly improving their understanding of how well it operates. Resources are well targeted and all funds coming to the school are used well to support pupils' learning. Careful financial discussions are taken in the light of good advice and the school gives satisfactory value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The good support for the pupils' problems with learning and the help provided for the whole family • The improvements in behaviour • The good achievements pupils make by Year 11 • The information sent in reports and home/school diaries • The commitment of all staff and the high quality teaching • The approachability of the school particularly the time given to visiting parents by the headteacher | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The recent uncertainty about the school's future and intake • Inconsistent provision for homework • Insufficient speech therapy • Changing facilities for physical education • Inflexibility in transport limiting extra-curricular outings |

Parents expressed extremely positive views about the work of the school and say their children like coming to school, a view supported by the inspectors who saw all the pupils behaving well and chatting socially during the Breakfast Club. The parents have clearly been concerned about the future of the school and still have anxieties over the timescale for the agreed changes. Parents raised some health and safety issues which were investigated and then brought to the attention of the headteacher where appropriate. Parents are very supportive of the school and recognise that all the staff provide very good guidance both to pupils and families. No parents held particularly strong views about exclusions and absences, but all said that their children disliked being excluded and they tried hard to keep their children attending. The parents concerns are genuine but recognise that the school is making every effort to improve these aspects of its provision.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Achievement is good and has significantly improved since the last inspection. Pupils make good progress as they move through the school and Year 11 pupils who attend regularly are successful in a range of externally accredited courses. These are carefully matched to the pupils' needs so that accreditation ranges from Certificate of Achievement to General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE). Last year, 15 pupils studied for GCSE Certificates. Three pupils gained five or more passes at grades A-G and ten gained one or more grades A-G. Overall in English, mathematics, science, art and design, French and design and technology a total of 19 out of 37 entries were awarded grades B-E and 17 grades F and G. In art and design, four pupils gained grade C or better. In the Certificate of Educational Achievement 14 pupils gained one or more awards in English, science, design and technology and physical education. Of the eleven pupils who successfully completed a similar mathematics award five gained distinctions and five merits. In the year 2000, the school was nominated for an excellence award which signifies the results pupils achieved were better than those of pupils in most schools of similar characteristics.
2. The school sets challenging and appropriate targets for pupils year on year and is on course to achieve similarly good results this year. There are few significant differences in the achievements and progress of the boys and girls who attend regularly; these pupils include those with more complex needs and those from different ethnic backgrounds. However, those who are frequently absent without cause, frequently excluded and those sent out of lessons to the pastoral room do not cover the work identified for them regularly and therefore they do not achieve as well as they might with regular attendance.
3. The pupils' achievements are good in all aspects of English and show clear improvements since the last inspection. By age 11, pupils listen carefully to the teacher and answer questions confidently. They work effectively in small groups and pairs. By age 16, pupils have good skills of oral collaboration. They answer questions sensibly and clearly. They read aloud with good expression. In writing by age 11, pupils write in a range of styles and for a variety of purposes. They co-operate to write a whole-class book of original verse. By age 16, pupils' re-drafted writing is substantially correct. In reading by age 11, pupils enjoy reading poetry. They identify rhythm and rhyme and are capable of annotating a simple poem to show its rhyme scheme, paying close attention to the text, which is necessary for all successful literary criticism. By age 16, pupils have tackled Shakespeare and other authors with confidence and success.
4. In mathematics pupils also achieve well and make good progress; this is an improvement on the standard previously reported. They enter the school with low mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding. Lessons, especially for the younger pupils have been improved by the good practice found in the National Numeracy Strategy. By the age of 11 they are achieving well in relation to their prior learning, counting confidently numbers up to 50. They recognise simple number sequences and interpret data in a simple chart. They use correct terms for common shapes and some of their properties. They respond to such questions as 'What if . . .?' and discuss their answers using mathematical vocabulary. By age 16, they are able to work independently on their accredited coursework. Their work is neat and generally accurate. They are developing their own strategies for solving problems.

5. In science pupils also achieve well. The youngest pupils in the Years 2 to 4 class are developing a good interest in their environment and already understand the use of such terms as 'hypothesis' and 'experiment'. By Year 6 their work shows an understanding of the principles of electricity and how a circuit is completed. Pupils in Year 9 have developed a keen interest in science. Most pupils answer questions with enthusiasm showing an understanding of the properties of materials and how to differentiate between them. They have deepened their understanding of circuitry covered in earlier years and present their work in increasingly clear diagrams or chart form. By the end of Year 11 pupils have worked well towards the achievement of nationally accredited certification. This year all are on target to achieve the Certificate of Educational Achievement or grades A-G in GCSE.
6. In art and design pupils' achievement and progress is very good with some excellent features, with highly creative displays and examples of their work proudly shown to others during assembly. They also achieve well in GCSE art and design although their written and theoretical skills are less well advanced than their practical work. Progress in physical education, design and technology and religious education is also very good. In mathematics, English and science pupils make good progress in lessons and over time. In music progress is no more than satisfactory due to some pupils becoming over excited and therefore unable to control their own reactions during practical work. Only in French is pupils' progress less than satisfactory. Not all pupils are motivated by the language and many are reluctant to speak French.
7. Pupils across the age range make good progress towards attaining the targets set for them in their individual education plans. Where pupils have attended regularly, records show that they have built on their achievements and their attitudes. Although pupils' targets are not always written in specific and achievable terms, they do steer the pupils' learning forward in relevant steps and are well matched to their individual ability levels. However, where pupils have been persistently absent the target setting process is not effective in identifying their progress.
8. The school meets the differing needs of the different groups of pupils equally well ensuring full educational inclusion in all activities. Pupils with English as a second language make good progress as they move through the school. This is because members of staff provide very good models of spoken and written English and because of the very good teaching of speaking and listening throughout the school. This good progress in English enables pupils to make progress at a similar rate to their peers across the whole curriculum. Provision for pupils with a wide range of special needs is good. They also make good progress, as the result of extra support in the classroom including adapted aids, and the advice and assistance offered by the educational psychologist, school nurse, educational therapist and education welfare officer.
9. Despite these positive findings, the attendance rate of some pupils and the disruptive behaviour of a minority of others are having a negative impact on their learning and progress. It is difficult to make secure judgements on the possible improvements in learning for pupils who miss lessons through repeated exclusions or regular unauthorised absences. Additionally some pupils are sent to the pastoral room on more than one, and sometimes exceeding 20, occasions in one week. Although results overall are good both in the short and long-term, the pupils who regularly miss school do not achieve as well or gain equivalent levels of certification because of their irregular patterns of learning.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

10. The majority of pupils who attend regularly have satisfactory attitudes to school and work. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory, with strengths in Year 11. However, there is a significant proportion of pupils whose behaviour is unsatisfactory and sometimes poor. Pupil relationships are generally satisfactory, as is their personal development. School attendance is poor, due to the very high and unsatisfactory amount of fixed-term exclusions and unauthorised absence, much higher than at the last inspection. This has a most significant detrimental impact on pupils' learning and on the effectiveness of inclusion.
11. The youngest pupils have settled happily. They find learning exciting, for example showing delight when collecting leaves and twigs for science work. They are learning to listen well, when talking about following the school rules, in classroom discussions, and are gaining confidence in expressing their own opinions. They enjoy receiving praise and encouragement from the adults around them and try hard to do their best and behave properly.
12. Older pupils who attend regularly have satisfactory attitudes to learning. They show interest in learning and persevere when work is well planned and provides challenge. Pupils will increasingly offer help to their friends if they are having difficulties. As they move up the school, pupils gradually become more confident and able to work independently. This is seen at its best with Year 11 students, engrossed in their work, using college computers to complete wordprocessing assessments, with minimal intervention from college and school staff; or at school when maturely discussing and questioning the requirements of the GCSE design and technology examination paper with their teacher. Some pupils have irregular patterns of attendance by Year 11 because they have become disinterested in school. However, with care and support they frequently return to school albeit for short periods of time. Not all pupils feel that pastoral helps them to improve their behaviour, often returning to class still feeling angry, upset or resentful. Some, but not all, pupils worry about the work they have missed and the difficulty of 'catching up'. Teachers try hard to provide such extra support but one inconsistent disadvantage of the current system is the lack of subject specific support from teachers and adults whilst the pupils are withdrawn from class.
13. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory overall. The pupils are polite to visitors, perhaps holding open a door, or offering a friendly greeting. There is a very high regard and respect shown towards the headteacher; pupils glow with pride when they receive praise and are genuinely apologetic and crestfallen when reprimanded. There is a significant proportion of pupils who show persistently challenging behaviour. They are often skilled at playing upon weaknesses, deliberately irritating some staff, especially those new to the school, inexperienced, or lacking behaviour management strategies, and also fellow pupils, to cause disruption. They show a lack of respect for authority. Some pupils 'play' the pastoral 'time out' system; getting referred when they don't like the lesson, the teacher, or are just bored; when they have had enough of pastoral they write about the reason for referral, promise to apologise and return to class. Pupils can be referred many times during the day or week and it has little impact on improving their behaviour. The school has done very well in not using permanent exclusion for several years, the number of fixed-term exclusions and days lost is very high and unacceptable, having deteriorated significantly since the last inspection. Fixed-term exclusion is used frequently, for many reasons, some relatively minor; some pupils return from an exclusion only to find themselves excluded again within a couple of days. Far more pupils from ethnic minority backgrounds, especially the black pupils, are subject to exclusion, even though they are under represented within the school's population. The school is committed to including pupils from a wide range of society and ethnically diverse communities

within the area. Despite working in consultation with other services and support workers, the number of black pupils excluded continues to rise. The school continues to tackle this dilemma by building closer relationships with other schools. Until these are better established and effective the school will not be responding positively to educational inclusion.

14. The quality of pupils' relationships and personal development is satisfactory, overall, and relationships between pupils and staff are often good. The youngest pupils are learning to relate well to each other and become increasingly aware of responsibility to themselves and others. Through classroom discussions, they are able to talk about the consequences of their actions, sensibly. A significant minority of older pupils, particularly in Years 7 to 10, show less interest and respect for others' feelings, despite good informal guidance from most staff, for example, about name-calling. These pupils have difficulty controlling their emotions, such as anger or frustration and get easily irritated by other pupils, or when expected to concentrate on work. There are well-planned, formal personal development programmes for younger primary-aged pupils and a particularly effective 'life skills' programme for Years 10 and 11. The programme for Years 7 to 9 is not yet fully established and is recognised as an area for development in the school's planning documents. The life skills programme is very relevant to the oldest pupils' needs, with topics, for example, about sexual responsibility, so that they are well prepared for adult life. There are some good examples of responsibility in the school. The school council has delegates from all classes who discuss issues of concern. They agree to take responsibility for different areas, working to improve, for example, the quality of school dinners, or asking pupils' views on uniform, re-establishing a 'tuck shop' or playground improvements and facilities, particularly relevant to the few girls in the school. They then feed back to their class and at the next school council meeting. Two pupils arranged their own sponsorship to raise money for Comic Relief. Pupils aged 13 or above, are encouraged to travel to school independently, using public transport, if it is a feasible option. When provided with opportunities for responsibility, pupils are sensible about carrying out their duties; more formal opportunities for responsibility would allow greater pupil involvement and enhance positive attributes such as trust and self-esteem.
15. Attendance is poor and has deteriorated significantly since the last inspection. Registration procedures do not meet requirements because attendance registers are not completed accurately. This has health and safety implications. The decline in attendance is caused by the excessive use of fixed-term exclusion throughout the school, combined with the very high level of unauthorised absence, often for lengthy periods, some of which is condoned by the parents. Far too many pupils are disaffected, losing many days or weeks of their education, because they are repeatedly excluded, or absent without due cause or reason. This situation requires urgent resolution. All pupils have the opportunity to attend school and make the most of the education offered to them, and the parents to fulfil their statutory obligations.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

16. A major strength of the school is the large proportion of high quality teaching and learning. This enables pupils who attend regularly to make good short-term progress in lessons and, over time, to improve their abilities, achievements and concentration. With very few exceptions pupils are taught by their class teachers in Years 2 to 6 and by subject tutors in Years 7 to 11. Whilst there may be more effective teaching in individual lessons in some subjects or classes, overall there is no significant difference in the quality of teaching for younger or older pupils. In well over nine out of every ten lessons teaching and learning are satisfactory or better. They are very good or outstanding in four out of every ten lessons, good in over two and

satisfactory in the same proportion. Only three lessons were unsatisfactory representing less than one in twenty of those seen. Two of these lessons were in French and one in geography where the teachers did not manage the pupils' challenging behaviour effectively so that the learning of the majority of the class was affected. An additional common feature in each unsatisfactory lesson is the mismatch between the pupils' abilities and the tasks provided with the result that the pupils achieved less than they should because the work was either too difficult or too easy.

17. In the core subjects of English, mathematics, science and ICT teaching is good overall and frequently very good. Teaching is also good in history and religious education. Teaching is very good in art and design. Teaching and learning in all other subjects is satisfactory with the exception of French. Teaching and learning in French is unsatisfactory because interesting and relevant opportunities are not provided for the pupils and they are not motivated to work or try hard.
18. The very best teaching is a feature of lessons across all year groups but is most consistent in classes for the youngest and the oldest pupils. Employing contrasting styles these teachers illustrate how effectively pupils' needs can be met. In a science lesson with the Year 2 to 4 class, the teacher excited and challenged the pupils to discover as much as they could about forces. Using a very large number of effective resources, she skilfully encouraged the pupils to work independently increasing their scientific knowledge through to experimentation. They willingly pushed, pulled and tipped toys and placed strips of paper in front of a moving fan to observe the effect. Despite the range of learning difficulties the pupils all deepened their understanding of the word 'hypothesis' that in this lesson was expressed as 'nothing moves without a force to move it'. The teacher further challenged their understanding near the end of the lesson when she gathered them together to 'watch' a book move on the carpet. After a long period watching, one pupil announced 'It ain't moving' thus stimulating others to reflect and realise why it was not moving and then for one to exclaim 'It needs a force.'
19. By contrast, Year 11 pupils preparing for GCSE, knew with little intervention from the teacher, precisely what was required of them and, when one pupil needed a reminder of a method, another pupil explained spontaneously and quietly provided help. The teacher pre-empted difficulties by skilfully supporting and overseeing the pupils, moving around the room, encouraging and guiding them. Occasionally, the pupils all concentrated on a challenge such as when they were recalling the name of a number sequence. With good humour they admitted their inability to remember. All the pupils continued to work and concentrate on the tasks the teacher had specifically planned to meet their individual needs and abilities.
20. Even in satisfactory or good lessons there are occasionally weak elements. When teaching is less successful in promoting the pupils' interest, motivation and progress, teachers are less skilled in managing the pupils' distracting, and often very challenging, behaviour. Most teachers apply the school's agreed behaviour management policy effectively, always ensuring that they give three warnings before sending a pupil out to be withdrawn, or to pastoral. In these instances the level of unacceptable behaviour is minimised and interruptions to other pupils' learning and concentration are dealt with quickly. The remaining pupils settle again fairly quickly and effective teaching and learning ensues. Sometimes however, there is further distraction when pupils return from pastoral and interrupt the lesson, whether it is to apologise or to disagree with other pupils. However, the ineffective management of pupils' behaviour is a common factor in the four unsatisfactory lessons observed and also features, albeit less strongly, in some other lessons. This issue was also judged to be unsatisfactory in the last inspection. Although improved, teaching does not yet

consistently feature the highly skilled behaviour management strategies necessary to enable the few more unsettled or volatile pupils to learn effectively.

21. The majority of teachers are conscious of the need to reinforce and emphasise the use of literacy and numeracy in their subjects. In classes for the youngest pupils there is an excellent focus on the specific vocabulary for lessons. Older pupils benefit from linking their work to its origins, for example they learn that a series of numbers is known as the Fibonacci sequence. In all lessons pupils are given good opportunities to use and reinforce their reading writing and use of English. They fill in worksheets and record their thoughts and opinions in writing, with good support from teaching assistants, where necessary. The teachers' emphasis on the use of numeracy is not quite so strong and opportunities are sometimes missed to consolidate pupils' use of number.
22. Teachers have a good level of subject knowledge and regularly share the aims and purpose of the lesson with the pupils. This strategy helps them understand what they will be learning and doing, but more importantly, what is expected of them. When the lesson's aims are linked to self-assessment, the teachers are able to boost the pupils' self-confidence by helping them to identify precisely how much they have learnt. For younger pupils these good assessment techniques are informally included in discussion, whereas older pupils use a written format which they are able to keep as a useful record.
23. Teachers have high expectations in most lessons and have no difficulty in challenging each pupil on an individual basis. In art and design for example, the pupils' work is of an exceptionally high standard because the teachers will accept nothing less than their best efforts. Because they regularly review and appraise their work pupils know the standards they are achieving and how to improve.
24. There is no significant difference in the quality of teaching and learning between the ages and ability range of the pupils. The wide social and ethnic mix of the pupils is recognised well in lessons and the pupils' lifestyles are reflected in meaningful activities whenever possible. Pupils with English as an additional language are well supported by trained support staff. The needs of pupils with specific special needs such as autism or other physical difficulties are well promoted by the school and they achieve equally as well as other pupils. The pupils who achieve less well in lessons are those who miss part of them through referral to the pastoral system. Many such pupils are regular attendees in the pastoral room, some more than twice a day, and this reduces their learning opportunities. Although there are established strategies for working in subjects the pupils are missing, these are not always dealt with effectively because the pupils are too disturbed or reluctant to work or because the duty teacher may not be a subject specialist. However, subject teachers are generous in their time in helping pupils to catch up, but these strategies and the time allocated are not specifically monitored.
25. Where teachers have very good relationships with the pupils and understand them well they are also able to manage the incidents of unacceptable behaviour effectively and lessons usually proceed very well. In such lessons teachers are rigorous in applying the agreed procedures for behaviour management. Pupils know what to expect and they act accordingly. After due warnings if they are still unable to control their behaviour they understand that they must leave the room and go to pastoral. In these cases the pupils settle down quickly and are able to work and concentrate until the end of the lesson. However, where behaviour management is less successful, teachers do not consistently provide warnings to pupils, or give warnings which are then withdrawn. In these latter cases pupils are unsure of the position and sometimes

take advantage of the teacher by trying to negotiate their way out of trouble. This unsatisfactory situation can lead to wasted time in argument and confrontation.

26. When the quality of teaching is good, learning and achievement is also usually good and pupils know how well they have achieved. However this is not always so, as in almost every lesson one or more pupils are withdrawn from lessons and sent to the pastoral room. Whilst this helps the remaining pupils to concentrate and therefore achieve well, some pupils miss these significant portions of lessons and do not always fulfil the tasks set and completed by others. The school is not consistent in providing opportunities for them to make up such work.
27. Despite these weaknesses, the school has improved the standards of teaching and learning significantly since the last inspection when teaching was unsatisfactory in over one in ten lessons and good or better in six out of ten. However, the issue of consistency in good behaviour management remains a difficulty and, the highly skilled practice of most teachers does not extend to all.
28. Teachers make very good use of resources in lessons to stimulate the pupils' thinking. Very often there are a large number of articles to choose from such as in design and technology where pupils chose from a boxful of assorted fabrics. In a Year 9 science lesson pupils enjoyed experimenting with honey hair gel, balloons, tomato sauce and foam carbonated drinks to decide on the difference between liquid, solid and gas. In some subjects a clear link to ICT is not yet fully established, for example music.

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

29. The curriculum is good: it is broad and balanced and is generally made very relevant to the pupils' needs. For those pupils who attend regularly in Years 10 to 11, the curriculum provides a relevant range of activities to prepare them for examination and the next stage of their lives. It meets statutory requirements for teaching the National Curriculum and religious education. One of the weaknesses is that the school does not currently provide opportunities for pupils to attend mainstream schools part time as preparation for full attendance or for mainstream pupils to attend Elm Court. However, there are plans for links to be established with a neighbourhood school in the near future. There are also plans to enable pupils to make choices about the subjects they study in Years 10 and 11. There are good opportunities for national accreditation for pupils when they reach the age of 16 through the Certificate of Educational Achievement or the GCSE.
30. The primary curriculum (Years 2 to 6) is well based on the National Curriculum although rightly adapted to meet the needs of pupils generally working below national levels. The curriculum is planned to allow for exploration and experimentation and for the development of good communication skills with listening and speaking being actively encouraged throughout the day, supplemented by signing and symbols for the small number of pupils who need this reinforcement. Topic-based work is usually very well planned to allow for good coverage of the curriculum in all subjects but there are occasional lapses, for example in history and geography. This impedes the continuity and progression of the subject curriculum across the age groups which was a weakness at the time of the previous inspection.
31. The school curriculum is effective in planning for the development of the skills of numeracy and literacy. It has invested time and money in training and good resources and sets aside sufficient curriculum time to make a difference. The Key Stage 3 National Literacy Strategy is being well implemented. In addition staff and

pupils share a productive reading time together daily and individualised computer based learning programmes support the learning of pupils in Years 2 to 6. There are good opportunities throughout the day in a number of subject areas for reinforcing basic skills with a separate programme of key skills for pupils in Years 10 and 11.

32. The secondary curriculum is subject based, taught mainly by specialist teachers in specialist accommodation. Again, a good amount of time is given to the teaching of the skills of literacy and numeracy. Subject policies and schemes of work, criticised in the previous report, are now satisfactory or better. This means that planning to cover all areas of the National Curriculum is now better, ensuring that all pupils have full access to it.
33. Although careers and vocational education are very good, extended work experience for selected pupils, especially for those excluded on many occasions, cannot be provided. Careers education starts in Year 9 and develops in Year 10 with preparation for work through learning interviewing techniques and writing a CV. Two week's work experience for all pupils contributes significantly to personal development and encourages further education. Pupils report that they feel valued and mature and are able to cope with challenging tasks. College links help prepare pupils for life after school but the range of courses available is very restricted.
34. The school has relevant procedures for organising the annual reviews of pupils' statements and their progress. The Code of Practice is implemented well and suitable targets for individual pupils' learning are identified. A focus of the school's current work is to improve the quality of its targets so that the smallest steps of learning can be identified more clearly. All pupils have statements of special educational needs. The school works hard to ensure that pupils receive the extra provision stated and that parents are fully involved. This is made easier because a range of professionals visit the school regularly. There is a part-time school nurse and representatives from child guidance, educational therapy and educational psychology services visit together monthly. The school is well adapted for people with physical difficulties and includes useful ramps.
35. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. For social and cultural development it is very good. Pupils are made to feel wanted and cared for from the start of the day. The Breakfast Club, which leads directly into assembly, contributes significantly to spiritual development with its inclusiveness and sense of community. Assemblies celebrate pupils' individual achievements but also give sufficient time for reflection and meet statutory requirements. The quality of work in subjects such as art and design, or sometimes science, lifts the spirits and raises expectations. School and home are brought closer together by the celebration of many of the major faith festivals with some parents contributing to assemblies and religious education.
36. Moral development is good. The school works very hard to help pupils distinguish right from wrong. Pupils are treated with great respect and are given every opportunity to discuss their behaviour and its impact on others. The weakness is that some systems put in place to help modify their behaviour are not as effective as they might be, with some pupils repeating patterns of behaviour which have led to conflict. Lessons directly focusing on personal development are effective. For example, the youngest pupils in the school begin to understand that the choices we make have consequences that result in themselves or others becoming happy or sad. Sexual responsibility is encouraged for pupils soon to leave Elm Court School by the time given for mature discussion and practical advice. Very good opportunities exist in physical education to emphasise the benefits of keeping to the rules and working co-operatively with others.

37. Provision for social development is very good. This is a sociable school where adults and pupils clearly enjoy each other's company. Communication is a strength with in-built opportunities throughout the day for speaking and listening with pupils developing a vocabulary to express their thoughts and feelings. Signing is used for the very small number of pupils who are hearing impaired or have complex learning needs. Pupils have some opportunities during the day for working in pairs or in larger groups and are encouraged to use breaks and lunchtimes productively. Support staff encourage games or teach skipping, and clubs such as the after-school clubs bring pupils of all ages, faiths and backgrounds together. College and residential opportunities, for example to the Isle of Wight, broaden social development and contribute to educational provision. The wider school community comes together in social activities such as barn dances or bingo or through trips made possible by the generosity of the Variety Club. There are insufficient opportunities for meeting with pupils from mainstream schools and this makes reintegration into mainstream schools less likely.
38. Very good opportunities exist for cultural development. The school celebrates the ethnic and religious diversity within its community and in so doing contributes well to racial harmony. Visits to theatres and galleries such as the South Bank, Tate Modern and the Young Vic have supported the curriculum well but have also sparked pupils' interest in performance. Two pupils have been successful in auditions and are to appear in a Young Vic production of Mephistopheles. The contribution of a jazz band, a drummer and an opera singer have enhanced music and a theatre group helped pupils consider career choices. Artefacts and books are chosen thoughtfully to support multicultural development and displays reflect diversity. A month is given to the study of black history and the work of artists and writers from around the world are studied. Pride in home language is fostered through initiatives such as lunchtime clubs led by pupils who teach basic vocabulary to their peers.
39. Provision for extra-curricular activities is very good and contributes significantly to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development as well as supporting wide areas of the subject curriculum. Pupils and staff eat and talk together in harmony at the excellent Breakfast Club. Attendance and dinner registers are taken at each table, and there is time for individual attention to each pupil making them feel special at the start of the day. The weekly after-school club draws a large number of pupils of all ages and there are organised games in the playground at lunchtime. Support clubs for GCSE and statutory tests run at certain times of the year, helping pupils to feel the same as mainstream peers. Tickets given and money raised by local organisations makes access possible to out-of-school facilities such as bowling or trips on the London Eye. There are other good community links. For example local businesses have raised thousands of pounds to contribute towards the cost of resurfacing the playground. The local Fire Service has bought sports equipment and a digital camera and visitors such as engineers, police and fire officers contribute to assemblies or lessons.
40. The school has developed satisfactory relationships with local schools and colleges. The physical education curriculum benefits significantly from the generosity of neighbouring schools in sharing their facilities and pupils gain socially as well as academically from using the staff expertise and accommodation at Lambeth College. Pupils from Elm Court School meet pupils from other special schools on a number of sporting occasions. The award of a large grant and its planned use to strengthen links with mainstream schools is good.
41. The school's provision for personal, social and health education, including health and sex education is good. Planning for citizenship is still in its early stages. Lessons are delivered during tutorial time so that pupils and adults know each other well.

Discussions in class provide focused opportunities for debate about feelings and areas of stress and the school council provides another forum for issues of concern. Input from professionals, such as the school nurse or educational psychologist brings specialist knowledge and advice.

42. A local group provides advice and support for the small number of girls in the school and agencies such as the Brook Advisory Service help pupils of both sexes address sexual responsibility and health-related issues.
43. The community makes a good contribution to pupils' learning and there are satisfactory links with local colleges and student training institutes. However, the school has not developed links with mainstream schools to provide an integration programme. This has a very low profile and is not meeting the intentions and aims of inclusion.
44. The school is proactive in approaching local and national businesses and charities for sponsorship. It investigates every opportunity that will enhance the pupils learning environment, through, for example, bids for additional funding. It has achieved a commendable degree of success through its perseverance. A local business consortium recently raised £2,200 for the school by organising a 'Race Night', with the money to be spent on re-surfacing the secondary football pitch. The highly successful Breakfast Club, providing a positive (and nourishing) start to the day is supported through external funding.
45. Pupils undertake many visits to the local community connected to the work being done in school, including regular trips to the public library, the swimming pool and trips to theatres and museums. There is a residential 'water activities' week to the Isle of Wight and an established exchange programme with pupils from a school in La Rochelle, France. The six-a-side football team, supported by Millwall Football Club, recently won a local tournament.
46. The link with Lambeth College is well established and provides vital support for Years 10 and 11 pupils working towards national academic and vocational qualifications in science and ICT, enhancing their chances of gaining good results. Careers education and work experience organised by the South Bank Careers Service is very good, informing pupils of the choices and opportunities available to them at Post-16. Year 10 pupils usually complete their work experience placements well, and this provides them with a better understanding of the world of work. Most Year 11 pupils do move on successfully to college, further training or employment. Many students spend time at the school as part of their training to gain experience of special needs education. One group of such students has just arrived from America on a three-month visit and the pupils are already enjoying talking to them and benefiting from the help they give in lessons.
47. The recent innovative introduction of the school-based 'One Stop Shop' in September, brings together many community health, support and welfare services to support families experiencing the most complex, or ongoing medical or emotional difficulties with their children. Professionals, including the educational psychologist and the senior psychiatrist, are able to meet parents or carers with their children and discuss and action ways forward. Parents are able to access support to meet their children's needs within one meeting, rather than having to attend different meetings in several venues. The 'One Stop Shop' is only dealing with a few families at the moment; it has not been in operation long enough to assess its long-term impact.

48. The school's good links with the local community results in good contributions in terms of facilities, shared work and work experience placements, to broaden pupils' learning opportunities and their knowledge of the world of work.
49. There is no formal programme for pupils to be considered for re-integration with mainstream primary and secondary schools. Although a few pupils have had previous negative experiences of mainstream schools, all pupils and their families do not have access to planned opportunities for mainstream integration. This is an area where the school is not proactively promoting the principles of inclusion. The organisation of such shared work or visits to mainstream schools have had a very low profile and are not meeting the intentions and aims of inclusion.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

50. The school provides good levels of support, guidance and assessment for the pupils, does its best to ensure that they enjoy school and achieve as well as they can, particularly when they attend regularly. All staff work closely together to provide pupils with a learning environment that is caring, supportive and warm. Pupils benefit from good, informal personal and educational guidance.
51. The school has made generally good progress in developing its assessment, planning and monitoring procedures, particularly at Years 7 to 11, and for primary pupils in Years 2 to 4. There is good assessment practice in most subjects, for example, English, art and design and religious education, but there is no regular or effective identification of pupils' skills in French or music. There is too little consistent assessment in Years 5 and 6, an issue that has only recently been acknowledged by senior managers, and it has limited effectiveness in identifying pupils' strengths and weaknesses. This was a key issue in the last report and has improved significantly, however, the unsatisfactory identification of all aspects of pupils' progress limits the teachers' ability to respond consistently to their individual needs. The monitoring of pupils' personal development is satisfactory. The monitoring of attendance is unsatisfactory, as is the monitoring of behaviour. Some of the school's procedures with links to health and safety and child protection are unsatisfactory and require attention.
52. An assessment policy offers clear guidance to staff. Action plans are included and reviewed annually. These show that the school has still not developed a marking policy. The marking seen is variable in quality and inconsistently used by teachers. Overall, assessment procedures and practices are good and provide a close match between National Curriculum study requirements and pupils' National Curriculum learning levels; 'P' scales are used for the few pupils working at pre-National Curriculum levels. The results from pupils' baseline assessments and from raw score tests are carefully analysed. Individual literacy and numeracy levels, together with reading and mathematical ages are carefully assessed against National Curriculum levels and regularly reviewed. This information is closely linked to the provision of academic, personal and behavioural targets that give an overall 'picture' of individual pupils' progress in learning, clearly identifying strengths and areas for development. This 'feeds' neatly into pupils' individual education plans and ensures that provision identified in statements is met. The pupils themselves are made aware of their targets which are generally, but not totally, reinforced in every lesson. Pupils are expected to complete written self-assessments of completed work, and this helps them understand what they have learnt, but a small minority of staff do not ensure that pupil assessments are systematically completed.
53. Good information is gained from assessment and used well to modify the curriculum planning, but is not always so effective in teachers' daily planning; some plans are

detailed and thorough, with work that fully meets pupils' individual needs. Most planning shares the learning objectives with pupils so they know what they are expected to learn by the end of the lesson, but a minority do not do so, or provide work that is suitable for higher attaining pupils or outline the work of classroom assistants, so that they can always provide the best possible quality support. There is good practice in the regular monthly planning meetings between school and college staff, that often ensures very good progress for most pupils in Years 10 and 11, when they work at college.

54. Informal guidance about behaviour given by staff to individual pupils is often good and enhanced by the positive quality of relationships. Pupils find this helpful. However, formal behaviour monitoring procedures and strategies to promote good behaviour are inconsistently applied, therefore unsatisfactory. The undated behaviour policy is under review. It is based on the pastoral referral system, which the school has developed and refined over many years. The senior managers have recently begun analysing relevant data to help them improve its effectiveness and to lessen the number of times pupils are sent out of lessons. The behaviour policy offers staff little guidance on how to manage behaviour in class or strategies for managing the increasingly challenging behaviour effectively, without having to resort to referral. Pupils of all ages are frequently sent to pastoral and miss much vital learning as a result. The policy states that referral records should be maintained, but the school was unable to provide any full records over any sustained period of time. Nor is there any system to monitor if the pupils who are most frequently sent to pastoral are also most subject to fixed-term exclusion. Some monitoring is done, for example of days lost due to exclusion (186 last term) and a bar chart showing exclusions of ethnic minority pupils since 1998. Girls and black pupils are still excluded in disproportion to the school's population. There are fewer and shorter exclusions in Year 11. However, exclusion has increased significantly since the last inspection. School record keeping is inconsistent and unhelpful in providing clear monitoring data. Some pupils who have misbehaved and who have individual behaviour plans, get their record books signed by class teachers and are pleased when they get a good report. The behaviour policy makes only passing reference to bullying; whilst some pupils are concerned about bullying, they feel that it is dealt with effectively, once teachers are told. The undated manual handling policy is in draft form only giving clear guidance, including a recording form; the school does not use this or follow it consistently, or ensure that staff follow their own published guidance. Physical restraint records do not give the actual length of time for restraint; it is unclear if parents are always informed about incidents; some records are undated or on loose sheets of paper. The school has no racist incident book, as is now required, even though a significant number of pupils do use abusive language that is sometimes of a racist or sexist nature. Pupils do not believe that the pastoral referral system is helping them to improve their behaviour. The frequent use of pastoral and the excessive number of exclusions supports this view.
55. The monitoring of attendance is unsatisfactory. The school keeps handwritten registers, but they are not kept accurately; too often marks are incorrectly entered or sometimes missed altogether. This has health and safety implications. A bid is being prepared for a computerised registration system, so that attendance monitoring will provide, for example, individual pupil data. Office staff ring parents and carers daily to enquire about any unexplained absence; letters are sent if there is no response. This is good practice, but is having little impact on reducing the very high unauthorised absence. The educational welfare officer visits weekly and deals with pupils having chronic attendance problems. Pupils receive a certificate for 100 per cent termly or annual attendance; for the majority of pupils this is an unrealistic target. Most pupils are transported to school and usually arrive on time. A few pupils arrive late, often those who are travelling independently and are entered into registers, although the

time of arrival is not always recorded. The school is not managing to reduce the excessive number of fixed-term exclusions and this has a major impact on school attendance.

56. The monitoring of personal development is satisfactory. The staff know their pupils well and are sympathetic, supportive and caring, so that relationships are often good. Pupils can talk to individual staff, with whom they have the best rapport, about personal difficulties. This informal guidance is usually well received. The Breakfast Club, for example, provides very good opportunities for staff and pupils to mix together in a family style social setting and provides a relaxed and good start to the day. The recently introduced 'One Stop Shop' is focused on improving pupils' personal development and in helping them to overcome difficulties. It brings together access to much professional support for pupils and their families in a relatively informal situation, and allows free discussion to develop individual strategies that will help the few pupils involved to find ways to move forward. Formal personal and social education is very good for the youngest primary age pupils who are able to develop their awareness of others' views and opinions through productive classroom discussions. For Years 10 and 11 pupils there is a very good 'life skills' programme that prepares them very well for adult life, often incorporating outside speakers and visits. The formal programme for Years 7 to 9 is not yet established. It is felt that work on building relationships and better communication skills would be particularly useful. Teachers provide detailed summaries of personal development in pupil reports.
57. The school benefits from the large number of health personnel who visit regularly. The school nurse attends part time and is on call at other times and is responsible for administering any medication pupils require. The school doctor and the educational psychologist are regular visitors. There are four trained first-aiders and accident books are properly kept. There is concern about the limited time for speech or occupational therapy and the loss of art therapy, but inspectors acknowledge that this is caused by staff shortages and is not under the school's control.
58. Although clear procedures are in place for reporting arrangements for child protection issues the school has no fail-safe systems in place to cover situations that may have child protection implications, and this is a significant weakness. The designated person is trained but needs updated training to take account of new guidance. The school does not have its own policy but follows local authority guidance; this is due to be updated. There is good practice in the keeping of an 'initial concerns' log. Informal guidance can be obtained before a formal referral is made. A number of pupils are on the 'at risk register' or are 'looked after'. The 'looked after' pupils all have personal plans and the school is involved in drawing them up. Files containing child protection information are kept separately and securely with limited access. The school attends case conferences or provides reports. There is concern that information about pupils placed on or removed from the 'at risk register' is not always received promptly. The school recognises that attention to child protection procedures should be rigorously adhered to.
59. Some arrangements for health and safety are unsatisfactory. The school uses local authority policy and guidance, but needs to ensure that all aspects related to health and safety, including tests and checks, are covered and match policy requirements, including situations with health and safety implications. Fire drills are held regularly and the school carries out assessment of potential hazards on the site and building. The school has been informed of issues noted during inspection.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

60. The school gives high priority to, and is very good at communicating with and involving parents in, their children's education, development and progress. Parental involvement in the school's work is satisfactory as is their contribution to their children's learning. Parents have good opinions about the school.
61. Ongoing communication with parents is very good and a strong feature of the school, even though many parents work or live far away, or have other commitments. For example, primary home/school diaries are used very effectively to provide a daily overview and parents contribute by writing about behaviour, attitudes and achievements at home. The diaries are also used for further information, perhaps a request for homework, or reasons why a pupil may not be working as well as usual. Parental support is sought when pupils are following individual behaviour plans and in most cases this is provided. When visiting the school parents are always provided with the warmest of welcomes; staff will make the effort to see them even at short notice and find time to listen. Parental input to annual reviews is valued because the information they give helps staff to build a 'big picture' of individual pupils. Parents and carers are sometimes surprised to find that their child behaves well at home but not at school, or vice versa.
62. There is no formal parents' association, but the school holds termly social events and the local community also holds events to raise funds for the school. Parents are invited to assemblies and participate in events such as the Christmas Hamper raffle. Parents find direct involvement in the daily life of the school difficult due to other commitments, but the school does its best to keep them fully informed.
63. The quality of information provided to parents is satisfactory. There are a few omissions from the prospectus and annual governors' report but both documents contain much interesting and useful information. Newsletters are sent approximately half-termly, but parents receive regular letters, for example, about parents' evenings, trips or invitations to meetings about the curriculum. Termly meetings are held to discuss pupil progress and parents are given sufficient time for discussions with staff. There is good informal access to staff at other times. Most pupil reports are of good quality, being detailed and thorough with clear academic and personal targets that provide an overall view of pupils' progress. Pupils also contribute their own written summary of their achievements during the year. However, the primary reports are unsatisfactory because they only report on English, mathematics and science, and not other subjects, so they fail to meet requirements. Parents are always invited to review meetings and are encouraged to attend. Parents value the review meetings.
64. Parents' contribution to their children's learning is satisfactory. Parents are invited to meetings about, for example, the SATs or vocational and academic examinations. They are also told of the content of the life skills programme. Pupils receive regular homework, largely based on literacy and numeracy; the youngest pupils take book bags home each night. Pupils preparing for accreditation or exams work on assignments at home. Pupils say they are expected to complete their homework. Parents can ask for more homework and the school provides this willingly. Parents express pleasure at how their children progress in learning.
65. Parents have good opinions of the school. They particularly like the caring and warm leadership of the headteacher and the approachability of staff. Their children are happy and make good progress and they feel that teaching is good. Some parents expressed concern about the lack of homework and want better extra-curricular provision. However, inspectors feel that the school does all it can to provide a suitable range of extra-curricular activities including the daily Breakfast Club and the

opportunity to participate in school visits to France. Transport arrangements are somewhat inflexible and prevent some pupils who travel a long distance from attending the weekly after-school clubs. This denies these pupils the opportunity of mixing socially with peers and older friends.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

66. Leadership and management are good overall. The headteacher continues to provide strong and supportive leadership which encourages and helps all pupils and staff to work an efficient school. He is well liked and respected by pupils, parents and teachers, and courteously makes time to speak to all who need his help and advice. He continues to strongly support the caring ethos of the school. Key national strategies have been successfully introduced on target. A satisfactory level of financial planning supports priorities identified in the school development plan. Whole-school monitoring of teachers' performance is good. The monitoring of some aspects of curriculum co-ordination lack, however, sufficient rigour and not all teachers involved in the subject are aware of overall strengths and weaknesses.
67. In the context of uncertainty with regard to the immediate redesignation of the school, the fate of its site, and the possible redeployment of some staff, the senior management team do well to maintain good staff morale and effectively promote the school's distinctive ethos and standards. Exceptionally good relationships are apparent everywhere. All pupils, boys or girls, whatever the nature of their difficulties or ethnic origin, are included in all learning experiences. The school's commitment to equality of opportunity is palpable.
68. The senior management team fulfil their duties with a high degree of success. Most curriculum co-ordinators and subject managers give a strong lead to educational provision. Schemes of work realistically reflect how educational success can be achieved. Delegation of management duties is generally satisfactory, although the second deputy headteacher is seconded to other duties for part of the week. The governors are newly appointed and their role within the school is being actively developed. Meetings are regular and effective, and helpful to the senior management team. Governors are not yet, however, asking the difficult questions that would show them to be critical friends of the school. They have not yet undertaken any analysis that would enable them to have a true picture of specific aspects of its performance. Governors are only now becoming aware of the necessity to monitor health and safety issues in the school. This was a criticism in the last report. It is acknowledged by the school as a weakness and training is being given. There are deficiencies in the governors' annual report to parents, which must be remedied in the next report. Many governors are new to their roles and only just beginning to understand how well the school operates. They are also aware that their role in curriculum monitoring has not been developed since it was criticised in the last inspection.
69. The school works hard to raise the achievement of pupils from ethnic minorities and for those with English as an additional language. They are aware that there is an imbalance of boys and girls and constantly monitor the situation, for example by grouping girls together. However, there is not always equality of opportunity for all pupils. This is because work is not always well matched to individual needs and the high rate of exclusion, either within school or at home, means that many pupils receive unequal access to the curriculum.
70. The monitoring of evaluation and development of teaching is satisfactory. The school has effectively evaluated the strengths and weaknesses of its teachers. It shares best practice, and helps weaker teachers to analyse and draw on the approaches that work well with particular pupils. Good teachers are also used in a training

capacity, but the school still experiences difficulties ensuring effective and consistent behaviour management strategies. The senior management team are fully involved in the evaluation and monitoring of all staff. Procedures for performance management are good, and all teachers who applied passed the threshold last year. Performance targets, which are helpful and realistic within the school context, are set for all teachers. Support staff are well managed. Training, by the school or by the local authority, is ongoing and effective. The teachers and support staff work together as a harmonious team. The very good standard of teamwork and liaison support inclusion very well and enables all pupils to make the same good progress.

71. The school supports its priorities by a satisfactory level of strategic financial planning. This procedure is currently compromised by uncertainty with regard to the school's future. Financial control and administration are good, unobtrusive and responsive to need. The recommendations of the last audit have been fully acted upon. The quality and frequency of financial information available to the headteacher is very good. The school has sensibly earmarked a good proportion of its current budget for addressing expenses concerning re-designation and the larger than normal financial carry-over is part of planned provision. The destination and use of specific grants are carefully tracked. The school office makes good use of ICT in all its procedures. Office staff are well trained in the use of new technologies. Their contribution to the life of the school is helpful and efficient.
72. The school uses the principles of best value well although the local authority provides some of the services. Comparisons with other schools are ongoing, estimates are carefully compared and consultation with others has become routine. The school provides additions to the curriculum, such as the well-managed and valuable Breakfast Club, for which a specific grant has been obtained. The school provides satisfactory value for money.
73. The level of staffing is good. The number, qualifications and experience of permanent teachers match the demands of the curriculum. They almost all hold formal qualifications for the subjects they teach at secondary level, which is an improvement since the last inspection. Some temporary teachers are less well experienced. The induction of all staff is good. Senior staff give a high level of dedicated support to all new personnel, which gives them a good chance of success in a school where behaviour can be challenging. Job descriptions, criticised in the last report, continue to be generic and insufficiently detailed and, as the school has not fully addressed this matter since the last inspection, this is a weakness.
74. Accommodation is satisfactory. The school reports under the Disabilities Discrimination Act. All areas of the school are now fully wheelchair accessible. There is adequate teaching space, with specialist rooms for art and design, science, food technology and design and technology. There is unsatisfactory provision for gymnastics, however, although the school makes use of the facilities of another establishment. There are eight hatted classrooms, in a good state of repair. Classrooms and corridors are well decorated with pupils' work that makes them bright and attractive. Some areas, such as the foyer, are in urgent need of painting. The outside of the main building is shabby and in need of painting and some minor repairs. The last leak in the roof was mended during the week of the inspection. The surface of the hard playground is unsatisfactory, and the local community has raised a good deal of money which is currently being used to start refurbishing the playground and grassed area. The play area lacks seating, so that some pupils tend to congregate in the toilets and are unable to sit quietly outside.
75. The school is aware that vehicular access to the school is still dangerous, as described in the last report. Pending possible improvements, pupils are kept away

from the front of the school as much as possible and supervision is very good in order to minimise the risk of poor behaviour.

76. The accommodation is well managed. A rolling programme of refurbishment takes care of the buildings' most immediate structural needs. Washbasins and toilets, criticised in the last report, are now clean. The ICT room continues to be cramped and poorly ventilated. Storage space for physical education is still inadequate so that several areas are restricted in space.
77. Provision of resources has improved since the last inspection. Resources for learning are generally good, with well-chosen, attractive and highly appropriate learning materials used across the curriculum. There are few resources for music technology, and resources in physical education are unsatisfactory because there is no larger equipment for gymnastics, and very little for small games. However, the school makes good provision for all physical education activities through the use of local schools and colleges. The library is a significant strength and is increasingly used by pupils for reference purposes.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

78. To continue to raise standards and further improve the quality of education for all pupils, the headteacher and school should:
- a) Improve the standards of behaviour of a significant number of pupils by:
- i. ensuring a consistent approach to behaviour management which complies with the school's published procedures;
 - ii. sharing the very good practice demonstrated by those staff who are successful in motivating and promoting good pupil behaviour;
 - iii. continuing to seek increasingly meaningful and motivating activities for disaffected pupils in Years 10 and 11; and
 - iv. providing staff training as necessary in supporting, guiding and managing the pupils with challenging behaviour.
- (Para refs: 9,10,12,13,16,20,25,27,35,51,54,70,73,75)*
- b) Improve the time that pupils are out of classes by:
- i. reviewing the use of the 'withdrawal' or pastoral system so that the school's guidelines are adhered to by all staff;
 - ii. limiting opportunities for pupils to self-refer to the pastoral room so that they only do so when they have genuine and pressing reasons;
 - iii. making better use of time within the pastoral room so that pupils benefit from support and guidance but maximise the use of their time effectively for learning; and
 - iv. monitoring the effectiveness of referrals, particularly for pupils with high levels of attendance, who do not show significant improvement in their behaviour.
- (Para refs: 2,9,12,13,20,24-26,54)*

- c) Improve attendance by:
- i. improving the management of, and enthusiasm for, school, of the most difficult and challenging pupils;
 - ii. continuing to work closely with support agencies, home and other professional services;
 - iii. seeking ways to motivate these pupils and to improve their attitudes to learning;
 - iv. monitoring and analysing attendance procedures and reasons for temporary exclusions to identify and address underlying causes; and
 - v. monitoring more closely the effect of short-term exclusion upon pupils' attitudes and behaviour on their return to school.

(Para refs: 2,9,10,12-15,53-55,69,103)

- d) Improve opportunities for pupils to experience life in mainstream education by:
- i. establishing links with nearby schools for pupils to visit and increasingly attend lessons on a part-time basis;
 - ii. seeking ways of working in co-operation with mainstream schools so that good staff practice is shared; and
 - iii. seeking opportunities for relevant pupils to prepare for a return to mainstream education.

(Para refs: 29,37,39,40,43,49)

- e) Ensure that all procedures and practices meet local authority guidelines, particularly regarding the health and safety issues and child protection, and are brought to the attention of the headteacher.

(Para refs: 15,51,55,58,59,68,)

Should also improve:

- the role of the governing body in fully monitoring and evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the school;
- the contents of the governors' report to parents to ensure that statutory requirements are met;
- the regular and accurate completion of registers and reports by all staff;
- standards in modern foreign languages, they have declined since the last inspection; and
- assessment in modern foreign languages and music.

(Para refs: 15,39,51,55,63,58,141,142,145)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

| |
|-----|
| 70* |
|-----|

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

| |
|----|
| 54 |
|----|

* The quality of teaching was not graded where lessons were taught off site by someone other than a member of the school staff.

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| | Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|------------|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| Number | 7 | 24 | 18 | 18 | 3 | 0 | 0 |
| Percentage | 10 | 35 | 25 | 25 | 5 | 0 | 0 |

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

| | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils on the school's roll | 87 |
| Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals | 55 |

English as an additional language

| | No of pupils |
|---|--------------|
| Number of pupils with English as an additional language | 7 |

Pupil mobility in the last school year

| | No of pupils |
|--|--------------|
| Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission | 5 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 5 |

Attendance

Authorised absence

| | % |
|-------------|------|
| School data | 12.2 |

Unauthorised absence

| | % |
|-------------|-----|
| School data | 7.9 |

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

NB There were too few pupils to report attainment at Key Stages 2 and 3

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 (Year 11)

| | | | | |
|--|------|------|-------|-------|
| Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 4 for the latest reporting year | Year | Boys | Girls | Total |
| | 2001 | 11 | 4 | 15 |

| GCSE results | | 5 or more grades A* to C | 5 or more grades A*-G | 1 or more grades A*-G |
|---|----------|--------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified | Boys | 0 | 0 | 9 |
| | Girls | 0 | 3 | 3 |
| | Total | 0 | 3 | 12 |
| Percentage of pupils achieving the standard specified | School | 0 | 20 (20) | 80 (20) |
| | National | 0 | 0.6 | 19.8* |

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

**The totals quoted here represent a comparison with MLD schools nationally which may not represent a fair comparison with the school's actual intake, which includes a significant proportion of pupils with EBD.*

| GCSE results | | GCSE point score |
|-------------------------------|----------|--------------------------------------|
| Average point score per pupil | School | N/a |
| | National | Not able to make relevant comparison |

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

Ethnic background of pupils

| | No of pupils |
|---------------------------------|--------------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 27 |
| Black – African heritage | 6 |
| Black – other | 16 |
| Indian | 0 |
| Pakistani | 0 |
| Bangladeshi | 0 |
| Chinese | 1 |
| White | 37 |
| Any other minority ethnic group | 0 |

Exclusions in the last school year

| | Fixed period | Permanent |
|------------------------------|--------------|-----------|
| Black – Caribbean heritage | 52 (112 tot) | 0 |
| Black – African heritage | 24 | 0 |
| Black – other | 30 | 0 |
| Indian | 0 | 0 |
| Pakistani | 0 | 0 |
| Bangladeshi | 0 | 0 |
| Chinese | 0 | 0 |
| White | 6 | 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: Y2 – Y11

| | |
|--|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 13.7 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 6.1 |
| Average class size | 8.1 |

Education support staff: Y2 – Y11

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 13 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 297 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

| | |
|--|-----------|
| Financial year | 2001 |
| | £ |
| Total income | 1,192,545 |
| Total expenditure | 1,142,420 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 11,425 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 99,552 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | 118,235 |

Recruitment of teachers

| | |
|--|-----|
| Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years | 4.4 |
| Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years | 4 |
| Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE) | 4 |
| Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE) | 4 |
| Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE) | 4 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 43 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 9 |

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Both at the pre-inspection meeting and in the questionnaires parents and carers expressed their support for the school. They are all appreciative of the hard work and commitment of the staff and the time they give in supporting the pupils, both during lessons and at the end of the school day. Parents acknowledge that their children make significant improvements in their learning and behaviour and value the examination awards they receive. Parents value the extra-curricular activities available, particularly where pupils are able to visit such places as the Isle of Wight. Parents noted their concerns that the provision of homework was not always consistent and that they were sometimes unsure of what their children were required to do. The parents expressed few opinions on the high levels of absence and exclusions except to say that they receive good support from either the school or the welfare service to encourage their children to attend. Inspectors agreed with the parents' views in all respects and understand the stress that ensued when the future of the school was undecided. Inspectors felt that the school provides as good a range of extra-curricular activities as it can, but the involvement of some pupils is necessarily limited by their need to be transported home at the end of the day.

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

ENGLISH

79. Pupils enter the school with low levels of literacy, particularly in reading and writing. By the time they are 11, pupils who attend regularly, listen carefully to the teacher and answer questions confidently. They delight in reading poetry aloud, especially if it is their own work. They have prepared a beautifully written and illustrated class poetry book 'Dinner at our house' based on Benjamin Zephaniah's 'Lily's diet'. The pupils work effectively in small groups and pairs to write poetry individually. They identify rhythm and rhyme and are capable of correctly annotating a simple poem to show its rhyme scheme, paying close attention to the text which is necessary for all successful literary criticism.
80. By the time they are 14, pupils collaborate effectively in pairs and small groups. They are capable of productive discussion and feed back their findings confidently to the class. They delight in reading simplified Shakespearean dialogue, although their speech is hesitant and some need help over the longer words. Pupils have good recall of the plot of Macbeth, and are helped to record what they know of each scene of the play. In their study of the media, pupils know the basic vocabulary with which to discuss the main differences between a broadsheet and a tabloid newspaper. They analyse the front sheet of a newspaper effectively. They realise that newspapers change over time in response to new technologies.
81. Pupils write in a variety of styles and for a range of purposes. They show their ability to write for a specific audience in the very attractively produced children's books they have written. In their study of diaries and journals they draft an imaginary account, based on John Cabot's voyage of discovery, onto a computer. They know they are writing in the first person and past tense. They save their work before redrafting it. They make very good use of ICT to present their work in striking and original ways. Extensive, independent writing is a strong feature of their attainment.
82. By the time they are 16, pupils have very good skills in speaking and listening which they use well to discuss texts or to debate with other pupils and staff. They ask and answer questions sensibly and clearly in response to the teacher's questioning. In their reading of 'Roll of thunder, hear my cry' they understood the unfair way in which black people were treated in the Deep South, and entered into productive discussion with their teacher about it. Higher attaining pupils use a computer package to key in their first draft of an essay based on this as part of their GCSE coursework. Others need a word frame to help them to do this by hand. Pupils work for this includes extensive personal writing and responses to short stories such as 'The Landlady' by Roald Dahl and 'The Speckled Band' by Conan Doyle. Pupils write a well thought-out account of their work experience. When it is redrafted, much of their writing is substantially correct.
83. Pupils make such good progress because they are very well taught throughout Years 2 to 6. Planning is exceptionally detailed and specific in Years 3 and 4 where effective and very good use of individual education plans, literacy targets and comprehensive assessment allows the teacher to make particularly well-focused provision for pupils. As a result, all pupils progress at the same rate whatever their prior attainment or experience of spoken language. Resources are well chosen. Pupils are particularly interested in the big books that are provided for them. They rapidly develop well-controlled behaviour in well-managed activities such as 'circle time', where simple signing which is well understood by the pupils, aids their learning. On these occasions pupils are relaxed and confident and learn to listen to the

teacher, and to speak very well. Learning materials are very carefully adapted to lower attaining pupils and contain a multi-sensory dimension. Higher attaining pupils write in pencil, for example, but lower attainers trace their letters in shaving foam. The very good level of planning allows lessons to be packed with learning activities and gives good opportunities for pupils' active involvement. Imaginative strategies such as the 'Magic Finger' game help pupils to learn and interests them greatly. As a result, class management appears to be effortless. Lessons are rigorous and demanding. Teachers' very good knowledge of reading acquisition ensures pupils make the connection between the shape of a letter and its sound, for example. In the cheerful and rumbustious lessons in Years 5 and 6, where pupils read their own original verse and worthwhile poems by others, great attention is paid to rhyme and rhythm. Pupils are given the basic technique of annotation and the new vocabulary which enables them to describe the way in which the verse is written. When pupils write, much attention is paid to punctuation. The careful individual planning which would have assured breadth of curricular provision and good progress over time, however, did not support these lessons by providing specifically targeted tasks according to each pupil's needs and abilities.

84. Teaching is good for pupils in Years 7 to 11, and a high proportion of lessons are very good. In a very good lesson in Year 10, learning objectives were made absolutely clear to the pupils so they knew what they must do to succeed. Planning was of a high order. The very good assessment of pupils allowed the teacher to plan a good range of well-focused activities which held pupils' attention and maximised their progress. Pupils were very well prepared for discussion by visual prompts. As a result, they gained in confidence and responded particularly well to the teacher's skilful questioning. The teacher made good use of a learning support assistant to record their attainment. Planning for a written task was at an individual level, with well-designed word frames and written prompts of excellent quality. The supporting materials enabled all pupils to make the same very good progress. There was soon a buzz of activity in the classroom, with all pupils confidently on task and achieving very well. Pupils knew their individual literacy targets and handwriting targets and worked towards them. In this lesson, a useful plenary session was used to consolidate learning and focus pupils' attention on what had to be achieved next. In a Year 11 lesson, in which pupils were practising written examination techniques, all pupils made very good progress because careful and effective assessment enabled support to be targeted precisely where it was required. All pupils rapidly settled to work in this lesson and showed themselves capable of sustained concentration.
85. The high quality teaching in English is characterised by consistently good skills in behaviour management. Pupils from Year 7 onwards know what is expected of them and they know that the teachers will treat them fairly. Because the teachers apply a consistently fair approach to behaviour management and plan interesting and motivating activities, there are fewer incidents of pupils being referred to the pastoral room in English lessons and, as a result, the majority of pupils stay in the room throughout the teaching, listen well and make good progress.
86. The good assessment procedures are a key factor in the very good English curriculum provided by the school. This enables lessons to be precisely targeted on both group and individual levels. Texts presented to the pupils are interesting, challenging and worthwhile. Although drama is not separately timetabled, role-play and other drama techniques are frequently and effectively used in lessons and pupils have good opportunities for public performance in assemblies and the Christmas production. Theatre visits for all pupils are a strong feature of extra-curricular provision.

87. The curriculum is fully accredited and enables all pupils to study for a national recognised qualification. All pupils in Year 11 leave the school with a GCSE qualification in the subject, a Certificate in Educational Achievement or an externally validated certificate of achievement.
88. Co-ordination of the subject for Years 7 to 11 is very good. The co-ordinator is knowledgeable, highly experienced, diplomatic and effective. In Years 2 to 6, co-ordination and overview is unsatisfactory because the subject co-ordinator is not fully involved in checking what each teacher plans to cover over time. The staff have not been keeping records which are consistent in format so that, in English, each pupil's achievements can be plotted and the broader picture of the pupils' progress and achievements identified. Although the senior managers are currently compiling new systems for gathering data concerning pupils' achievements, the school is not currently able to clearly identify how well the pupils progress over time.
89. Since the last inspection, there has been a very good level of improvement. Lessons based on the National Literacy Strategy have been successfully extended to Years 7 to 9 but provision has lapsed in some lessons in Years 2 to 6. Assessment procedures, already effective at the last inspection in Years 3 to 4 have been further refined to accommodate the progress made by lower achievers. The curriculum is now formally monitored to ensure the work supports pupils' progress but procedures need additional rigour. Teaching is now formally monitored, and has improved. The provision and use of computers in the department and the skill of the teachers has developed considerably. There has been a good level of improvement in learning. Progress is now very good in some lessons in Years 2 to 6, and good overall, with some pupils making very good progress, in Years 7 to 11. Teaching is now very good in Years 2 to 6, and good, and sometimes very good, in Years 7 to 11. No unsatisfactory lessons were seen during the inspection, although some lesson planning was unsatisfactory. Since the last inspection pupils' response to their lessons has improved.

Literacy

90. Pupils' standards of literacy are supported by a comprehensive whole-school policy, which is well monitored and efficiently managed. 'Literacy advancement' is well promoted for 20 minutes a day for four days a week, when all the school has access to the very good library provision. Additional reading materials specifically chosen by class teachers to reflect pupils' preferences and interests add interest and variety to what is on offer. Older pupils have access to a range of broadsheet and tabloid newspapers and magazines which reflect their leisure interests.
91. All pupils enjoy the books and papers, whether they read them, skim them or simply look at the pictures. Planning of this provision is at an individual level and therefore helps each pupil to make at least satisfactory progress in the short term. Literacy targets are well known to pupils and to teachers, and pupils work towards them during this time, sometimes discussing with the teachers what they should do next. The school's active promotion of literacy and communication informs all staff training, all subject teaching and supports pupils' confidence and attainments very well. Lessons in key skills in Key Stage 4 further support standards of communication.
92. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are very good. Pupils are capable of careful listening in a range of subjects, especially in physical education where listening to instructions is part of all lesson planning. Pupils respond well orally and ask and answer questions appropriately in the classroom. They develop useful skills of oral collaboration which allows them to work in pairs and small groups in a range of subjects. Pupils talk of what they have done in mathematics, using plenary sessions

to consolidate their learning. Listening skills are well developed in art and design. All pupils, sometimes with help, read simple reading materials and worksheets that are presented to them in lessons, whether in books, on paper, or on the computer screen. The teaching of key words improves their understanding. In geography, pupils download materials for use in their research before writing a paragraph about a holiday island. In this subject, they present their work in a range of styles, showing competent use of the computer. Pupils, sometimes with help, are able to record the work in all subjects. The best writing is well structured, sometimes lengthy, and when redrafted can be substantially correct. ICT skills are well taught and used throughout the school to support reading and writing.

The National Literacy Strategy

93. The school has made satisfactory provision for lessons based on the National Literacy Strategy but there are weaknesses in the management of the National Numeracy Strategy.
94. Although literacy lessons are very good in some classes, lessons based on the National Literacy Strategy have lapsed in others. Staff have been fully trained and resources are good.
95. Lessons based on the National Literacy Strategy have been successfully introduced for pupils in Years 7 to 9. Teaching is consistently good and pupils work hard in their literacy lessons, but after one term teachers are not yet fully confident. Nevertheless, the planning is very good and is seen to be effective during the inspection. Co-ordination Key Stage 3 is good. Resources are of good quality and support teaching and learning well.
96. Methods for identifying the strengths and weakness of literacy provision across the school are still developing. The school is, however, now delivering aspects of literacy as part of its curriculum for Years 7 to 9. Senior staff are now aware of difficulties in incorporating the fundamental aspects of the strategy into the wider context of all subjects so that pupils are encouraged and helped to develop their use of reading and writing well in tasks which require these skills in all other subjects.

Library

97. The library provision within the school is excellent.
98. The library is an attractive room, brightly decorated and welcoming. It is staffed on three days a week from 8:30 am to 3:45 pm, a period much longer than is usual in similar schools. The number of volumes far exceeds the number recommended by the School Library Association. All books are of good quality, attractive and appropriate to the curriculum and pupils' achievement. Shabby and outdated volumes are systematically removed from the shelves. Provision is augmented with as many volumes again which are dispersed in classrooms. The library is very well run. It is properly catalogued and a record of borrowings kept. The stock is well used. Pupils borrow from 15 to 20 books per day. Staff borrow up to 30 volumes per week.
99. Pupils are given lessons in the use of the library and its catalogue. They visit during literacy advancement times to borrow books. At lunchtime, the room is a hive of activity, as pupils look at books and magazines and play educational games. Provision includes a computer and CD-ROMs. The budget is generous for the number of pupils. The subject staff are consulted before all purchases. Management of this resource is very good.

MATHEMATICS

100. Overall the school's provision for mathematics is good. Pupils achieve well and make increasingly good progress as they move through the school. This represents a good improvement since the previous inspection when pupils' progress was judged to be satisfactory overall. It is a result of consistently good and very good teaching for pupils aged 11 to 16, which is also an improvement when compared to the findings of the last inspection. It is also because pupils' behaviour and their attitude to the subject improve as they get older. Behaviour is now satisfactory overall and often good where the pupils are well motivated and supported through good teaching and motivating tasks. The good levels of improvement in progress, achievement and behaviour apply equally to boys and girls and to pupils with different special educational needs.
101. Young pupils enter the school with very low levels of understanding of mathematics and most pupils are working towards Level 1 of the National Curriculum. They make a satisfactory start in acquiring basic number skills and are helped to concentrate through focused teaching, good pace and continuous support. Teaching in this age group is satisfactory. Teachers have clearly benefited from the National Numeracy Strategy in the planning and structure of lessons and in the good use of numeracy resources. In a Year 4 lesson for example, pupils learn to count and 'take away' the number of toys in a bin and chant together numbers to ten. In a Year 6 lesson pupils learn to count on and back in twos, fives, and ten, using a counting stick. Lessons have a clear start and proceed at pace and all pupils are involved by the good use of targeted questions, appropriately differentiated to match pupils' levels. Group work is well organised and pupils are set appropriate tasks to consolidate number concepts, with worksheets and practical games involving dice. Sometimes lesson planning is not always followed and too much time is spent on oral work and mental calculations and too little on the plenaries, when learning objectives and behaviour are reviewed and progress and understanding are confirmed. Pupils are generally co-operative, but need the regular prompts, praise and individual support from the teacher and learning support assistant to maintain their concentration. One disruptive pupil is sent to the pastoral room so he does not disturb the learning of others, but in doing so misses much of the lesson. By the end of Year 6, higher attaining pupils demonstrate clear gains in number skills. They show understanding of place value of numbers up to 100 and count sets of objects reliably and use mental recall of addition and subtraction facts to 20. Lower attaining pupils count, order, add and subtract numbers involving up to ten objects.
102. In the middle school pupils up to the age of 14 build on this firm basis and make good progress in applying their skills in a wide variety of tasks. Teaching in this age group is consistently good. A Year 9 class, for example, learn about probability through conducting an experiment by throwing a dice and recording the scores and odd and even numbers. They learn the mathematical vocabulary of probability with words like 'fair', 'certain', 'unlikely' and 'impossible'. In this way pupils' literacy skills are reinforced. They discuss events that might have two likely outcomes and they record and interpret their findings using tally charts and tables. Again, the behaviour of a minority of pupils disturbs the flow of the lesson and again these pupils miss out on learning by being sent to the pastoral room. In a Year 7 lesson, pupils use mirrors to identify lines of symmetry. As a result they know that the number of lines of symmetry in a regular shape is equal to the number of sides. Teachers in this age group show good subject knowledge, so they clearly explain the task and give informed advice that leads pupils to reach their own conclusion. The majority of pupils are well behaved and attentive because the work is challenging and interesting. They take a pride in the presentation of their work. The teacher asks lots of 'why' questions that require them to think mathematically. Learning support assistants are effectively

used, giving one-to-one support or making timely interventions that maintain pupils on task. Good plenaries review progress and celebrate achievement and good behaviour. By the end of Year 9, higher attaining pupils classify two and three-dimensional shapes in various ways using mathematical properties such as reflective symmetry. They construct bar charts and pictograms to communicate information. Lower attaining pupils use everyday language to describe the properties and positions of two and three-dimensional shapes. They sort and classify objects by one criterion.

103. Pupils aged 14 to 16 continue to consolidate their understanding of number and learn new skills. They make very good progress because teaching is very good and sometimes excellent and because they are more mature and self-controlled. The teacher enjoys an excellent relationship with them and this enhances the learning. He has high expectations of their work and behaviour but is relaxed and humorous. He has a good understanding of the subject, its examination syllabi and programmes of study, together with a good knowledge of pupils' special educational needs and what they are capable of achieving. Setting in this age group is used well to target teaching and learning. Pupils come to the lessons well motivated. They settle quickly and follow the appropriate coursework. Most work independently on individual tasks. Their work is neat, well presented and accurate. One higher attaining pupil readily offers help to a friend and explains what he has to do. The teacher circulates the room giving evaluative comments that help pupils to improve and uses the blackboard to explain difficulties of common interest. The progress and achievements of pupils in this age group is affected by their poor attendance. A regular feature of good lessons is an emphasis on self-assessment, which, together with teachers' records, provide a fully detailed picture of the pupils' progress over time. By the end of Year 11, those pupils who attend regularly, are on target to gain grades E-G in GCSE Foundation Level and several units of the Certificate of Achievement.
104. The primary and secondary co-ordinators provide good leadership and direction for the subject. Together they review the subject development plan, scrutinise planning, observe lessons, and report to the governors on developments within the subject. The National Numeracy Strategy has had a positive impact on teaching in the primary department and is developing in the middle school. Resources are good and well used. Good use is made of a commercial computer program which provides a wide range of tasks to consolidate and extend pupils' numeracy skills through their independent use of the computer. ICT is generally used well in support of the subject in many lessons and numeracy skills are reinforced in other areas of the curriculum, particularly in science, geography and design and technology.

SCIENCE

105. Provision for science is satisfactory and very often good for pupils at all ages and ability levels. This represents good progress since the last inspection when there were significant weaknesses in the subject. Pupils from Years 2 to 6 are taught by their class teachers, those from Years 7 to 11 by the specialist science co-ordinator and also in classes at the local college. All pupils make at least satisfactory gains in their understanding of basic scientific ideas and how they affect their lives. The school has improved provision and standards in science since the last inspection when there was a significant amount of unsatisfactory teaching in Years 7 to 11. Teaching and learning are now good overall, with specific attention frequently paid to pupils individual learning needs.
106. Teaching and learning are good for pupils in Years 2 to 4. They benefit from very exciting practical work which helps them make very good progress in understanding, for example, why a force is needed to move an object. These youngest pupils in the

school behave very well in science because they are motivated and because the range of resources is so exciting. The greatest strength of teaching at this age is the teacher's determination to let pupils discover things for themselves. So, for example, she gives them each a strip of coloured paper before turning the fan on and lets the pupils discover for themselves what happens when the paper is in the air stream. Problem solving and enjoyment are a regular feature of such highly skilled teaching: when one pupil's 'science detective' hat was too big, the teacher simply said 'solve it' which the child did by going independently to a hat box to find a suitable replacement.

107. By Year 6, however, the behaviour of a minority of pupils distracts others and prevents all pupils from concentrating and learning as well as they might. Teaching is satisfactory and provides suitable coverage of the curriculum with relevant and often good opportunities for practical and theoretical work. For example, the teacher had planned an interesting and investigative lesson for pupils to broaden their understanding about friction, its characteristics, advantages and disadvantages. Pupils enjoyed exploring boxes containing brushes, pieces of material and saucepan cleaners. The majority of pupils were behaving well, concentrating and investigating the properties of these items carefully. They identified their purposes and knew for example, that friction between brush and shoe improves the 'shine'. However, one or two pupils with less mature behaviour could not resist the opportunity of playing about with the materials, did not complete their own tasks and limited the concentration of others. After some confusion they were sent to the pastoral room and others were then able to continue with renewed interest.
108. In Years 7 to 11 pupils are well taught by the specialist science co-ordinator who is competent and confident in her teaching and, together with a teaching assistant, manages behaviour well. In all lessons pupils benefit from a good range of practical activities which help them understand the world around them. Although the co-ordinator only joined the school this term, she has already established good relationships with many of the pupils. They behave well when handling scientific equipment in response to the teaching and laboratory assistants' continued emphasis on health and safety. All pupils understand and comply sensibly when required to wear protective gloves and handle materials carefully.
109. In science, teaching is good overall. It is very good for the Years 2 to 4 class and most pupils benefit from enjoyable experiences with many opportunities to use well-planned resources. Pupils' behaviour is satisfactory overall and in the well-planned lessons they show a natural curiosity and a positive interest in the subject and complete their work successfully. Where teaching is less secure and pupils' behaviour is not well managed they become aggressive with each other and their overall attitudes to learning are unsatisfactory. There were examples of unsatisfactory behaviour in two lessons in school and one at college but all these pupils demonstrated much improved behaviour in other lessons, proving that they were able to take responsibility for their actions when they chose.
110. Pupils are genuinely excited when lessons include interesting practical work. For example in a Year 7 lesson concerning the identification of liquids, solids and gasses the pupils enjoyed looking, smelling and turning beakers containing honey, hair gel, tomato sauce, foam and a fizzy drink. As these substances were familiar to them the experiment was meaningful to their everyday lives. Several pupils recognised cornflour as a thickening agent in sauces and gravy. The teacher ensures pupils' understanding by good use of questions and several pupils are able to explain why honey is sometimes liquid and sometimes solid.

111. By Year 9 pupils have discovered how acid burns, but their learning opportunities are somewhat limited due to immature behaviour and the teacher had to delay one experiment until they were quiet. Pupils do, however, understand the importance of health and safety and showed such respect by watching carefully as the teacher added hydrochloric acid to zinc powder – when they saw the outcome this deepened their understanding of chemical reaction and reinforced their understanding of experimenting carefully and safely.
112. Both Years 10 and 11 pupils attend a local college as part of their science timetable. Some pupils in Year 10 however, experienced difficulty working in such a setting and could not adequately control their behaviour. This reaction unfortunately paints a negative picture of the pupils within the college community and limits both the opportunities and benefits of mixing with other students. Although a very small minority of pupils were particularly disruptive, others tried hard to concentrate on the lesson and responded well to questions about the quality of metal and its reaction to other materials. However, this element of unsatisfactory behaviour was dealt with effectively and very promptly by the school and alternative supervisory arrangements should prevent a reoccurrence of similar incidents. The school plans the work well with the college so that pupils consolidate their learning by connected work back in the school laboratory. In this case the same pupils continued work in school the next day where their behaviour was satisfactory and, although one pupil was removed from the class, the remainder made good progress and understood how much iron rusts when exposed to salt water or oil, and how iron filings can be separated from sulphur.
113. By contrast, the work and behaviour of Year 11 pupils at college was good. Working towards GCSE they increased their knowledge of chemicals, handling their equipment with care and demonstrating their understanding of their work by explaining why the litmus paper reacts by turning pink and then white. At school, pupils reinforce this work well and are effectively supported by the teaching assistant who uses notes made during the college lesson to help the teacher to challenge the pupils and check their understanding. Although they are not well motivated by any significantly new learning in this follow-up lesson, the students remain biddable and try hard. They accept that they are consolidating earlier work and take most interest when the teacher moves around between them. They recognise ‘that funny smell’ again, but none can identify it as ‘hydrogen sulphide’.
114. The school has improved arrangements for science by ensuring the curriculum is well matched to National Curriculum requirements for each year group. Arrangements for pupils’ transition between Years 6 (end of primary) and 7 (start of secondary) are much improved. Although the co-ordinator only has a short-term contract, she has good subject knowledge and leads the subject effectively. Resources, accommodation and staffing are good with particularly helpful supervision and glances given by teaching assistants during practical work. Relevant recording and assessment identify the pupils’ satisfactory outcomes in practical work. In Year 11 they sit for GCSE or the Certificate of Educational Achievement. The school is predicting that pupils are on target to maintain last year’s good results in the Certificate of Educational Achievement where all but one pupil achieved one or more units and improve on last year’s F and G grades in GCSE.

ART AND DESIGN

115. Art and design is a strength of the school. It has maintained its high status which was noted at the previous inspection because of the determination and skill of the co-ordinator. Teaching has been strengthened even more by the very good subject knowledge of a recently appointed teacher. Pupils achieve very well at art and design

and the attainment of some of the oldest pupils is in line with the work of pupils in mainstream schools.

116. Pupils achieve well in Years 2 to 9 and very well in Years 10 and 11. They like the subject and they try hard. Pupils respond well to the challenges set them, having learnt that they will be well supported to achieve pleasing work. Pupils in Years 2 to 4 are already observing well-matching pictures of the Impressionists and selecting materials for their own still life. Pupils a little older, print repeating patterns based on Buddhist symbols which links with their religious education lesson. By Year 7 pupils use ICT skills. They adapt and manipulate work previously photographed using the digital camera, developing a subject vocabulary as they work. Very good quality resources contribute to good achievement in Years 8 and 9. Fabrics from around the world engage the interest of pupils from a range of ethnic backgrounds. Their own designs are modelled on a small part then cut out carefully and used to print. Packaging is studied in detail and a range of skills, from lettering to papier-mâché, applied as pupils create giant three-dimensional chocolate bars. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 achieve particularly well in the GCSE examinations, enjoying the creative side of their work the most. They build up portfolios of work, sometimes using sketchbooks to try out a range of techniques and media and discuss their work with some perception. They use research skills, including reference to books and the Internet before choosing which aspects of a unit of work on the jungle they will concentrate on.
117. Teaching is very good in lessons, with some excellent teaching. This leads to much good and very good learning. Teachers expect pupils to do well and to work hard and they rarely disappoint. Planning for lessons and individuals is very good and assessment is so individually focused that every pupil progresses. Pupils are made aware of their targets for work and behaviour and want to please because relationships are so good. Support staff work as part of a team, concentrating on learning as well as behaviour. Where teaching is satisfactory, there is good focus on cross-curricular work and experimentation with resources but not such a focus on high achievement as there is in some other lessons. In those lessons individual needs are very well met, for example by the sensitive choice of resources or enlargement of work. In the best lessons very good discussion focuses pupils' attention on their work and helps them to understand the next stage. Very good subject knowledge, and the good use of ICT also contribute to good and very good learning.
118. The management of art and design is very good. The co-ordinator enthuses pupils and colleagues with her belief that everyone can achieve well. Careful planning based on the National Curriculum, the GCSE syllabus and individual needs combined with very good assessment procedures make this more likely. Pupils benefit from a broad curriculum enriched by visits to major art galleries and increasingly well supported by ICT. The school has no kiln so ceramics is not a strength although there are opportunities for other three-dimensional work. There are pleasing displays of artwork throughout the school but no murals brighten outside walls and the school has already recognised this as an area for development.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

119. It was only possible to see four lessons of design and technology in Years 9, 11 and 10 which was seen twice. The highly skilled subject co-ordinator teaches across the age range and plans very well for pupils to extend their skills between Years 7 to 11. Teaching is very good overall with one excellent lesson with Year 11 pupils. This stimulating teaching captures the interest of the pupils and motivates them to strive for high standards. All pupils make very good progress in design and technology

because they enjoy the practical nature of the subject and the activities that are well planned by the teacher. In Year 9 this skilled teacher provided a wide range of choices for the pupils that drew upon their levels of ability. They were able to express their preferences by choosing one out of four designs and to determine the size of the photo frame they were making. These elements of choice meant that the pupils felt involved in decisions about the product from the outset and they consequently took great care in producing high quality work. The teacher has excellent relationships with the pupils and is skilled at pre-empting any potential incidents of unacceptable behaviour. She does so by diverting the pupils' attention away from others and engaging them in conversation. With one Year 11 pupil she initiated a conversation concerning the quality of fabric available and which would best suit the T-shirt logo he had designed. This strategy immediately involved him in replying to her and then cutting out the fabric required by which time the incident had blown over.

120. All the pupils take great care to use equipment safely; they switch off irons and sewing machines as soon as they are finished and take care to follow the teacher's instructions. They differentiate between material which will adhere to fabric for appliqué work or for ironing on. They can explain the decisions they have taken about their work and the influences on their designs. For example, one pupil proclaimed that her work was all her own by designing a bold statement for her T-shirt stating '100% MINE'.
121. The curriculum is very good and provides full coverage of the National Curriculum content. Lessons include visits to commercial enterprises such as watching pizzas being made in preparation for a project on designing, making and marketing the pupils' own creations. After Year 9 pupils concentrate on textiles for their Certificate of Educational Achievement or GCSE work. Results are good and this year all the pupils are expected to maintain recent results and achieve good passes in Certificate of Educational Achievement and over half to be awarded grades C-F in GCSE.
122. The resources are good and used well although the school has not yet implemented plans to introduce computer-aided design. Whilst the current budget is adequate it is not sufficiently generous to provide the full range of visits, or consumable stock which would provide the pupils with a wider understanding of the richness of choice in fabrics and the facility to purchase them directly from shops or markets. The school has improved upon the sound standards found at the last inspection through systematic improvements in the curriculum and firm, consistent behaviour management.

GEOGRAPHY

123. Geography was a cause for concern at the time of the previous inspection. Standards were too low at the end of Year 9 and some unsatisfactory teaching and behaviour impeded progress. Although achievement is now satisfactory for pupils by the end of Year 9, some other weaknesses remain. It was only possible to see two lessons during the inspection and none were observed for pupils in Years 2 to 6. Judgements are based on looking at the quality of pupils' work and by speaking to staff and looking at their planning. Pupils make a good start in Years 2 to 4 and achieve well. They know that homes are different not just in the local area, but around the world. They suggest how the school and the local area could be improved, for instance, by reducing the amount of litter. They make their own models from plasticine to understand that islands are surrounded by water. Pupils from minority groups achieve well because of attention to their individuality. For example, pupils research homes in Portugal or Somalia and look at the globe to identify their position in relation to London. Achievement for pupils in Years 5 and 6 is unsatisfactory

however. This is because the discrete skills and knowledge of the subject are not planned for or taught sufficiently in topic-based work and there is barely sufficient coverage of the curriculum, which has been recognised by the school as a focus for development.

124. Achievement for pupils in Years 7 to 9 is satisfactory overall although it is sometimes unsatisfactory in the short-term. This is where unruly behaviour leads to too little work being completed or where individual needs are not met. Pupils in Year 7 achieve well when engaged in practical work. They start to understand contours when they make good maps using layers of cork. They create their own keys to identify geographical features and consult maps of varying scale. Pupils in Year 8 compare two local areas and complete a shopping survey which develops social skills as well as an understanding of the use of land. A visit to Bluewater Shopping Centre extends this knowledge, with pupils recording their findings in a range of ways. By Year 9 pupils are starting to consider the effect the interests of multi-national companies have on the environment, for example when mining. The teacher's own interest in geology is reflected in well-presented work on rocks and volcanoes.
125. It is not possible to make accurate judgements on teaching and learning for pupils aged 7 to 11 because no lessons were seen. However, it is likely from evidence of planning and the display of work that it is at least satisfactory for the youngest pupils. Teaching for pupils aged 11 to 14 is inconsistent but satisfactory overall, with some significant weaknesses in learning when pupils are not able to control their own behaviour and they interrupt learning opportunities for others. Teaching is satisfactory where support staff are available to work with individuals and help to modify behaviour. Where support is unavailable, the unsatisfactory or poor behaviour of a significant minority of pupils impedes the progress of all. The pace of lessons is slowed as pastoral procedures are completed and the thread of the lesson is lost. Individual needs are not always met, for example work is not always matched to the ability levels of the more or less able and text is not always enlarged for pupils with visual impairment. However, teachers use a good range of teaching methods and develop the skills of literacy and numeracy well. Pupils record their learning in a range of ways using wordprocessing, sketches, maps and graphs of different types, for example when presenting the results of a local traffic survey.
126. The management of the subject overall is satisfactory and, because the co-ordinator has good subject knowledge, the subject curriculum is made relevant to all pupils. Good use is made of visits to support the curriculum. There is insufficient planning for continuity and progression across the year groups.

HISTORY

127. By the end of Year 4, pupils have a basic knowledge of the Great Plague and the Great Fire of London. They understand some of the consequences of both of them. Higher attaining pupils recall incidents from the lesson and can recount what they have learned.
128. Lessons could not be seen in Years 5 and 6 because the subject is not being taught this term. Pupils had made some models of castles in previous lessons and these were noted.
129. By the time they are 14, pupils have some knowledge of the Romans in London, and realise that archaeology has told us some of the things we know. They realise that historical evidence comes in many forms, but have considerable difficulty in connecting the past with the present. In their study of the Industrial Revolution, pupils empathise with children at work in the factories in Britain 200 years ago. They know

of the terrible working conditions of some women and children and realise something of the physical effects these would have on them. Higher attaining pupils make some limited comparisons between past and present working conditions, and say how things have changed. Very good learning was seen in a lesson in Year 9 where pupils asked themselves, 'Have there been any famous women in history?' By the end of the lesson they had identified Lady Godiva, Helen of Troy, Boudicca, Mrs Thatcher, Madame Curie, Marilyn Monroe, Elizabeth the First, Florence Nightingale and Cleopatra and knew something about them all.

130. Teaching is good. Pupils were very well taught in the lesson on the Fire of London observed in Years 2 to 4. Planning was of a high order and allowed the lesson to be packed with interest. The teacher explained why the fire happened very clearly. She lit a candle to concentrate pupils' attention. She read a very simple and appropriate tale to which the pupils listened with great interest and horror. They had good opportunities for role-play as they made faces 'full of fear' and yelled and screamed as a response to a vivid oral evocation of the flames. Class management was very good and pupils remained controlled. They delighted to join in singing 'London's burning'. Staff filmed their role-play as a television announcer. Pupils achieved very well as they described the disaster. A valuable plenary session allowed pupils to look at photographs of their previous activities and so consolidate their learning.
131. The good teaching in Years 7 to 9 is characterised by lively, interesting and accessible explanations, which helps pupils understand the difficulties under which people lived in earlier times. There are clear objectives for learning. Commercially prepared materials are well chosen and appropriate. A key teaching strength is the good attention paid to literacy in the lessons. Reading is well supported by flash cards, and writing frames of good quality assist pupils' writing. Resources are good, with effective use made of photographs, authentic artwork, artefacts and video clips. The curriculum is appropriate. Co-ordination at Years 7 to 9 is good. The subject could profitably be extended into Years 10 and 11.
132. Since the last inspection, humanities had been discontinued in Years 2 to 6, and history is now very well taught as a discrete subject. The good standards of teaching and learning described in the last inspection have held firm.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

133. Improvements in information and communication technology (ICT) have built on the good standards found at the last inspection and have resulted in very good provision. Teachers have worked hard to improve their knowledge and ICT is now used regularly to support learning in many areas of the curriculum. All pupils have access to computers and much good use is made of digital cameras, tape recorders and videos. Pupils also benefit from discrete teaching of the subject both at school and, for those in Years 10 and 11, at college and make good progress in their knowledge, skills and understanding.
134. The youngest pupils achieve well from the start. They wordprocess captions to label their history work and 'paint' images of the Fire of London. Information on class religions is gathered from a website with pupils becoming increasingly familiar with a keyboard. Listening skills develop throughout Years 2 to 6 as pupils tape record their work or listen to stories and identify sounds. Individual programs on the computer teach independence skills as well as reinforcing learning in the basic skills.
135. By the end of Year 9 these good achievements continue as pupils use a wordprocessor to help plan and re-draft work. In Year 7 they manipulate and blur images during art and design lessons, creating psychedelic effects. As they gain

confidence pupils follow written instructions to enter a simple database on the computer as well as compiling pie charts and spreadsheets. Literacy and numeracy skills are reinforced significantly throughout all years through ICT.

136. Some pupils in Years 10 and 11 excel at the subject during college lessons leading to national accreditation in wordprocessing. Very positive attitudes and high levels of concentration help them succeed in demanding work when, for example, they enter profit and loss on a spreadsheet and calculate differences. Sometimes, especially where pupils are unsupported, behaviour deteriorates, slowing the lesson and limiting the achievement of all pupils.
137. Only two lessons of ICT were observed but evidence from these, the quality of the pupils' work and the displays of tasks undertaken in ICT in other subjects show that the quality of teaching and learning is very good. Very good teaching and clear explanations with Year 9 pupils resulted in a positive approach to compiling and completing data handling sheets. The teacher's clearly expressed expectations of good behaviour meant that the pupils' targets for behaviour and work were met, helped by the brisk pace of the lesson and the teacher's very good subject knowledge. Work was well matched to individual ability, helping to keep pupils on task and ensuring learning for all, including additional challenging activities for one higher attaining pupil who finished early. In an excellent lesson at college, excellent learning took place in work which was highly challenging and motivating. Pupils responded very positively to the more adult environment, although this is not always the case. They created and interrogated spreadsheets and refined wordprocessing skills related directly to their national assessments.
138. Management of the subject is very good. The co-ordinator is highly experienced and has significant expertise. He supports and monitors his colleagues well and has ensured that ICT remains a priority for school development. Resources are good with every pupil having access to the Internet within each classroom. All pupils have signed contracts promising responsible use is made of this facility. ICT has permeated most areas of the curriculum well, although there are still areas for development such as modern foreign languages, music and geography.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

139. Provision for French is unsatisfactory. Four French lessons were observed in Years 7 to 9. Teaching and learning were satisfactory in two, but unsatisfactory in the remainder due to the pupils' behaviour which was sufficiently poor to cause significant disruption to the lesson. All lessons followed a similar pattern and whilst there are regular opportunities for pupils to listen, speak and write, they work together as one group. Higher attaining pupils, or those who finish their work more quickly, are required to wait for others to catch up with no further activities planned. The pupils display mixed attitudes to French; some are interested and try hard to do well but their enthusiasm and motivation is limited by the distracting behaviour of others. The teacher does not manage behaviour well by applying the school's agreed behaviour management strategies. Pupils are often required to leave the room but a refusal or reluctance to do so results in confrontation between teacher and pupil which helps neither to resolve the situation, limits the teaching time and the concentration of other pupils.
140. Pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory overall. Whilst some participate in a simple conversation in French none can go further than a few simple phrases and some are reluctant to speak at all. There is insufficient planning for the pupils' individual needs

and although pupils benefit from well-spoken French they do not cover sufficient work in lessons.

141. Resources are satisfactory in terms of books and listening material but there are too few resources to interest the pupils in French culture or in issues which are meaningful to them. In the past the school has had a strong link with a similar school in France and there are current plans to establish a new link. Overall however the school has not maintained the standards found at the last inspection.

MUSIC

142. It was only possible to see two music lessons with Years 6 and 7 during the inspection due to staff illness and timetabling arrangements. Teaching and learning were satisfactory overall but with some weakness in behaviour management and in the use of assessment. The teacher has good musical skills and knowledge and plans activities which the pupils enjoy. The teacher's high expectations of co-operative group work is essential in enabling pupils to work and play together successfully. Year 6 pupils found successful collaboration difficult and became very noisy, interrupting other pupils' work and concentration. However, by the time they came to play their composition in assembly later in the day they rose to the demands of the performance very well and made a very good contribution to the preparation of the Chinese New Year celebrations.
143. In both observed lessons pupils showed that they have the potential to play instruments carefully, with imagination and in time. However, they do not control their behaviour well. In both lessons there were incidents of tensions between pupils.
144. The teacher has good skills and a secure knowledge of his subject but does not consistently apply the school's agreed behaviour management strategy. Pupils do not make best use of learning time and although the progress is satisfactory pupils have the potential to do more and better.
145. The music curriculum is good, but assessment procedures are inadequate and this limits the effectiveness of lesson planning. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development and parents and friends enjoy Christmas performances. Based on the few lessons seen and the contribution of music in the remainder of the curriculum, there is still insufficient individual planning to ensure pupils' needs. Behavioural difficulties are identified and activities planned which challenge them, but ensure they make progress in playing instruments and increasing their technical knowledge. The school has not improved upon the provision found at the last inspection.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

146. Physical education has some very significant strengths, notably the good quality of teaching and the very good attitudes pupils display to the subject. It also has weaknesses of resourcing and accommodation, which severely restrict the teaching of gymnastics. The shortcomings of changing facilities have been overcome since the previous inspection and improvement overall since that time is satisfactory.
147. Achievement is good for pupils of all ages. A very pleasing aspect of physical education is the enjoyment pupils show during the lessons and how well concentration levels are maintained. Pupils in Years 2 to 4 respond to instructions quickly, moving at different levels as they try to interpret the music during dance sessions. Movement is somewhat restricted because the multi-purpose hall has already been prepared for assembly. They join with pupils in Years 5 and 6 to meet

physical challenges which have been selected carefully for their own level of physical ability. Older pupils achieve well because of good opportunities which utilise neighbouring schools and leisure centres and because teaching is so good. No swimming was observed, but pupils in Year 9 were enthusiastic to leave for their session and reported how much their stamina and strokes had improved. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 understand the importance of warming up and cooling down. They follow an increasing complex series of steps with obvious enjoyment. During a volleyball lesson they achieve very well because they strive to beat their previous targets, for example for keeping the ball in the air. Very clear expectations of good behaviour and keeping to all subject rules help to maintain focus. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 continue to develop volleyball skills showing knowledge of specialist vocabulary and working well in pairs and groups before enjoying a full game.

148. All teaching and learning are at least good with the majority of lessons being very good or outstanding. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and lead by example which gives them credibility in the eyes of the pupils. The contribution of support staff to the subject contributes significantly to learning. They are competently involved in all physical activities working effectively with groups or individuals whilst also managing to complete assessment records of individual learning. Activities are selected very well to engage the interest of pupils. Younger pupils identify animals from their recorded sounds then move accordingly and laugh aloud as they dance the Hawaiian hula-hula in the classroom during a brief physical interludes. All pupils learn well because of the high degree of challenge and because targets are individual and realistic. For example, rules of games are modified for pupils who are physically restricted or the number of jumps they complete are fewer. Where teaching is excellent, the teacher's subject expertise, behaviour management and use of support staff combine to motivate sometimes reluctant pupils to make significant gains in learning.
149. The subject is well led by a keen co-ordinator. He has worked hard to overcome the problems of unsatisfactory accommodation and resources, especially gymnastics by ensuring very good use is made of neighbourhood facilities. This ensures that pupils receive a well-balanced subject curriculum especially with the introduction of a very good scheme for younger pupils. The local community has been generous in its support of the school and has contributed significantly to funding for the necessary re-surfacing of the playground. Unsatisfactory surfacing also restricts the use of outdoor play equipment. Through high expectations, good achievement, residential visits for outdoor and adventurous activities and opportunity for team sport, the subject makes a very significant contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Assessment in the subject is particularly good and is now improved by accreditation through the Certificate of Educational Achievement for the oldest pupils.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

150. By Year 6, pupils have some basic understanding of major world religions. In their study of Buddhism in Year 6, pupils recall the 'Wheel of Life' and its significance. They have used a prayer wheel and understand why Buddhist monks wear orange robes. They show an interest in, and are keen to continue to learn about, additional Buddhist customs and beliefs.
151. By Year 9, pupils have a more extensive knowledge of world religions, including Judaism. They readily identify religious articles used in the synagogue, and most name them accurately. They have studied the Sikh Amint ceremony. Although lower attaining pupils sometimes had difficulty in differentiating between Islam and Sikhism in this lesson, most pupils understood the difference eventually. In this lesson they

learned to identify and name religious objects connected with Sikhism, and successfully came to associate the religion with the language of Urdu and the region of the Punjab.

152. Oral development is a strong feature of pupils' learning in their exploration of relationships. Pupils gave considerable thought and engaged in much discussion, some of it with adults, towards designing a poster to advertise for a friend. They were able to articulate what it is they value in a friendship, and higher attaining pupils listed the characteristics of a good friend.
153. In the lesson observed in Years 10 and 11, pupils examined at length some of the legal, medical and religious views on the subject of abortion. They were helped to articulate their own views on the ethics of this issue.
154. Pupils are well taught. Teachers know a good deal about the world religions, and their explanations are clear and accessible. Their use of authentic religious artefacts makes the awe and wonder of religions real to the pupils. For example, in the lesson on Sikhism, pupils gasped at the richness of the golden ritual objects. Teachers use 'hands-on' techniques, such as enabling pupils to turn a prayer wheel, to help pupils to concentrate. This increases their motivation to learn. The department makes very good use of health professionals in its lessons in relationships and ethics.
155. The curriculum is appropriate and resources are very good. Management is efficient.
156. Since the last inspection, teaching and learning have improved. The valuable links with personal, social and health education could profitably be developed further.