

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **WEATHERFIELD SCHOOL**

Dunstable

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109736

Headteacher: Mr Carl Peters

Reporting inspector: Mrs Jayne Clemence  
22629

Dates of inspection: 1 – 4 October 2001

Inspection number: 190411

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

© Crown copyright 2001

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 for pupils with moderate learning difficulties

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 7 – 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Brewers Hill Road  
Dunstable  
Bedfordshire

Postcode: LU6 1AF

Telephone number: 01582 605632

Fax number: 01582 605632

Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr M Tilley JP

Date of previous inspection: November 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
22629	Jayne Clemence	Registered inspector		How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9339	Jan Zachary	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
1358	Glyn Essex	Team inspector	English Special educational needs	
23300	Lily Evans	Team inspector	Art French History Music	
19582	John Lomas	Team Inspector	Religious education Equal opportunities	
18206	Elizabeth Mildner	Team Inspector	Mathematics Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

20622	Ann Sydney	Team Inspector	Information and communication technology Geography	
1224	Graham Todd	Team Inspector	Science Design and technology Rural studies	How well does the school care for its pupils?

The inspection contractor was:

Serco QAA Limited  
Herringston Barn  
Herringston  
Dorchester  
Dorset  
DT2 9PU

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
<b>PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT</b>	<b>8</b>
Information about the school	
How good the school is	
What the school does well	
What could be improved	
How the school has improved since its last inspection	
Standards	
Pupils' attitudes and values	
Teaching and learning	
Other aspects of the school	
How well the school is led and managed	
Parents' and carers' views of the school	
<b>PART B: COMMENTARY</b>	
<b>HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?</b>	<b>15</b>
The school's results and pupils' achievements	
Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development	
<b>HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>HOW GOOD ARE THE CURRICULAR AND OTHER OPPORTUNITIES OFFERED TO PUPILS OR STUDENTS?</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?</b>	<b>30</b>
<b>PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS</b>	<b>31</b>

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

**35**

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Weatherfield is a special school for pupils between the ages of seven and sixteen years. All pupils have statements of special educational needs, and the majority has moderate learning difficulties. A small minority of pupils has emotional and behavioural difficulties, and several pupils are on the autistic spectrum disorder. There are currently 149 pupils; 57 girls and 92 boys. Most pupils are from white ethnic backgrounds, and two pupils are from Black Caribbean and Black other heritages. The proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals is smaller than in most other similar special schools at 24 per cent. There are no pupils with English as an additional language. The school site has a rural studies centre, and a small farm. The accommodation is surrounded by playing fields, with an enclosed area for sheep, geese, rabbits, hens, goats and guinea pigs. In addition, there are allotments for growing fruit and vegetables, a kitchen garden, and green houses for cultivating plants. This unique resource is an integral part of school life and the curriculum.

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

Weatherfield is a good school with many strengths and several outstanding features. Pupils are achieving good standards overall in relation to their special needs, with a higher proportion gaining nationally recognised awards since the last inspection. The quality of teaching is very good overall and makes a very positive impact on the pupils' learning. The leadership and management provide clarity, purpose and direction for the school, with a strong emphasis on developing pupils' personal and social skills, alongside academic achievement. Many pupils enter Weatherfield School with little confidence, low self esteem and limited experience of success. By the time they leave, most pupils are thoroughly well prepared for the next stage, having gained in confidence, with a realistic understanding of the challenges ahead. The school provides good value for money.

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

- Pupils achieve well in many subjects, and most pupils leave with nationally recognised awards
- The very good teaching has a strong and positive impact on the pupils' learning and achievements
- The headteacher's good leadership and the very effective senior management team; ensure a strong and positive environment has been established for pupils to learn effectively and achieve well
- Pupils have very good attitudes towards school; they are ready to learn, willing to take responsibility, and understand the importance of effort and hard work
- The very good quality and range of learning opportunities; ensures pupils have a rich and varied education
- The rural studies centre and farm make an outstanding contribution to the pupils' education

- The very good personal and social education programme ensures pupils develop confidence and self esteem;

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

- Assessment procedures; pupils' achievements are not tracked rigorously, and individual education plans often lack precise targets for improvement
- Target setting for individuals, groups and the whole school are underdeveloped
- Planning and provision for pupils with additional special needs; strategies for managing pupils with difficult behaviour are not consistent throughout the school

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in November 1996. At the time, there were many positive aspects reported, including pupils' attitudes, leadership and management, teaching, and relationships. These strengths have been sustained and in some instances improved further. There is more good and very good teaching, and a higher proportion of pupils leave with nationally recognised awards than before. Weaknesses in music have been eradicated and the subject now has some very good features. Transport arrangements have improved and most pupils arrive at school on time. The key issues have been addressed systematically. The school has extended and improved its accommodation, six staff have left, and a further six established successfully within the last two years, and more pupils referred to the school with greater learning difficulties and behaviour problems. There has been a good level of improvement overall.

## STANDARDS

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

<b>Progress in:</b>	<b>by Year 6</b>	<b>by Year 9</b>	<b>by Year 11</b>	<b>Key</b>
Speaking and listening	A	B	A	very good      A
Reading	A	B	A	Good              B
Writing	A	B	B	Satisfactory      C
Mathematics	B	B	A	Unsatisfact ory                  D
personal, social and health education	A	A	A	Poor                E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B	B	

Pupils achieve very well for the degree of their special educational needs, and many leave with nationally recognised awards. In 2001, in Year 11, all pupils gained a City and Guilds Diploma in vocational education. In English, pupils achieved very well in Certificates of Achievement, with many reaching the higher levels. In mathematics, a significant proportion gained distinction, and one pupil achieved a GCSE pass at foundation level. In science, two higher attaining pupils gained GCSE passes, and 12 pupils gained distinction in Certificate of Achievement. They make rapid gains in reading, writing, speaking and listening. These skills are built upon effectively as pupils move through the school. There is a slight variation in the rate of pupils' learning in Years 7,8 and 9. There is more inspirational and challenging teaching provided for pupils in Years 3-6 and Years 10-11 than in Years 7-9, and this is why pupils' achievements are not as consistently high in these years as others. New staff are becoming more familiar with the pupils' needs, though in some cases, work is not sufficiently challenging or well matched. Pupils make very good progress in English in many areas, and information and communication technology (ICT) throughout the school. They learn to express themselves with growing confidence, and use computers to record work efficiently. Pupils make very

good progress in mathematics by the time they leave school, and there are many good opportunities to use their numerical skills in other subjects. The pupils make very good progress in their personal and social skills. There is considerable emphasis upon pupils taking genuine responsibility for different aspects of school life. The rural studies centre makes an exceptional contribution to the development of such skills. A few pupils, some who are new to the school, with emotional and behavioural difficulties, are not achieving as they should. This is partly due to their negative attitudes towards work, and partly to insecure management of their behaviour by a few teachers. As a result, time for learning is sometimes wasted. The formal targets set for pupils in their individual education plans at annual reviews are not always sufficiently precise. The school is considering how best to set whole school targets, though this area is underdeveloped. The standards achieved are based on highly effective teaching and teachers' secure knowledge of the pupils' individual needs. Pupils by the time they leave school are thoroughly well prepared for the next stage, with a realistic understanding of the challenges that lie ahead.

### **PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES**

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Very good; pupils are enthusiastic and willing to learn
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good; most pupils show consideration and respect for one another and adults
Personal development and relationships	Very good; pupils grow in confidence, relationships between pupils and with adults are very good
Attendance	Good; pupils attend regularly and in most cases arrive punctually

Pupils develop very good attitudes and behave well. There are very good relationships between pupils and with adults, based on trust, respect and consideration. As a result, pupils develop in confidence and maturity as they move through the school. They understand the meaning of good citizenship and become reliable, responsible young adults by the time they leave. Attendance is good and pupils arrive punctually, ready to apply themselves with effort and hard work in order to improve.

### **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

<b>Teaching of pupils:</b>	<b>Years 3 – 6</b>	<b>Years 7 – 9</b>	<b>Years 10-11</b>
Quality of teaching	Very good	Good	Very good

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

The quality of teaching is very good overall. Teaching in Years 3-6 and 10-11 is very good, and in Years 7-9, it is good. There was only one instance of unsatisfactory teaching. There is a significant amount of good and very good

teaching in English and mathematics that is having a very positive effect on the pupils' reading, writing and number skills by the time they leave school. Teaching is similarly effective in developing the pupils' literacy and numeracy skills, and the national strategies for both are being implemented successfully. Teachers are effective in meeting the needs of the vast majority of pupils. In a few examples, teaching is less effective for pupils with additional special needs, including those with emotional and behavioural difficulties. In otherwise satisfactory teaching, strategies for managing their behaviour were not consistently effective, and some learning time was lost. Teachers are very effective in developing the pupils' communication skills. Teaching in science is good overall, and very good for younger pupils. Teaching in personal, social and health education is very effective, helping pupils become mature and responsible citizens. Teaching is highly effective where teachers have specific specialist subject knowledge, for example in mathematics, physical education, ICT, food technology, music and art and design. Teaching in rural studies makes an exceptional contribution to the pupils' education and learning throughout the school. The highly effective teaching is having a strong impact on the pace of pupils' learning. Many pupils develop a genuine love of learning, showing interest and enthusiasm in the work, alongside a realistic assessment of how they need to improve further.

#### OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good; it is enhanced by the excellent rural studies and farm unit that has a strong impact on all areas of the curriculum
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall; good provision for pupils' spiritual and cultural development and very good provision for their moral and social development
How well the school cares for its pupils	The care for pupils is very good; procedures for monitoring progress and methods for assessment are sound

The school has a positive partnership with parents. Many parents express a high degree of satisfaction about the school, the teaching, leadership and management, and their children's achievements. These views are supported by the inspection team. The curriculum has many very good features. The strategies for literacy and numeracy are effective, and have impacted positively in raising standards further. The excellent rural studies and farm unit has an important influence throughout the school. The centre links closely with many areas of the curriculum and brings learning to life in a real and relevant way. Pupils learn about life, growth and death in caring for animals. They understand the importance of caring for the environment, including how to look after the land in order to become self-sufficient. The curriculum planning and provision for pupils with additional special needs is sound, though there is scope for improving the pupils' targets both for their behaviour and academic development. The school has developed sound procedures for monitoring and assessing the pupils' progress and achievement. Many of these procedures are informal and are not sufficiently formalised or documented systematically. All staff take great care to ensure the school is a safe place for pupils to develop and learn.

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

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good; the headteacher provides clarity, purpose and direction and is supported ably by a strong and effective senior management team
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Satisfactory; governors understand their responsibilities and carry out their duties diligently.
The school's	Satisfactory; useful informal discussion takes place, though

evaluation of its performance	this is not formally documented or included as part of the school improvement plan
The strategic use of resources	Good; staff are well deployed; resources used efficiently and finances prioritised carefully

The headteacher provides good leadership and is supported by strong and effective senior managers. The governing body fulfils its responsibilities satisfactorily. The school has many informal discussions to evaluate its performance, though this is not well documented. Governors are not in a sufficiently informed position in this respect to ask questions from their own initiative as a result. Resources are used efficiently and effectively. There is a suitable number of well-qualified staff to teach the curriculum, and learning resources are satisfactory overall. Accommodation is satisfactory, though there are limitations in space. Several classrooms and the library are very cramped. The school makes best use of this accommodation, though some pupils are restricted in their movements during certain lessons. The external accommodation and the environment have excellent features, and the school has developed outstanding areas for learning. The school applies the principles of best value to its decisions, and provides good value for money.

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

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parents would feel comfortable to approach the school</li> <li>• The school is helping their children become mature and responsible</li> <li>• The teaching is good</li> <li>• The school expects their children to work hard</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A minority of parents would like to see their children have more homework</li> <li>• A minority would like more activities for their children outside lessons</li> </ul>

The inspection team agreed with all the positive comments expressed by the parents. The amount of homework is considered carefully by the school, and the inspection team consider it to be appropriate for the individual pupils. Although there are few activities organised after school, mainly due to the logistics of organising additional transport for pupils who live long distances from the school, inspectors felt there are many other activities outside lessons during the school day. It would benefit the school to clarify this wide good range of activities with the parents.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The school is successful in enabling pupils to achieve very well in relation to their special educational needs. More pupils are gaining nationally recognised awards than at the time of the previous inspection. This is in the light of a changing school population, with a higher proportion of pupils having more complex learning difficulties, and more pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school ensures that all pupils are included regardless of their individual differences. The majority of pupils achieve well. There is a small minority of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties whose achievements are hindered in part by their attitudes towards work, and partly due to some teaching that is insecure in managing their behaviour. A few of these pupils are new to the school and have yet to settle into the routines and rise to the expectations met by other pupils. There has been good improvement in standards overall since the last inspection.
2. By the age of seven, on entry to the school, many pupils are working towards, or at Level 1 of the National Curriculum. By the age of eleven, the majority of pupils are working at Level 2 in English, mathematics and science, with a significant minority working at Level 3. This represents good achievement both in lessons and over time. Many pupils make rapid gains for example in their reading skills, and this has an important effect on many other areas of their learning and achievements. Pupils' achievements are good in mathematics and physical education (PE). They are very good in English, science, information and communication technology (ICT), art and design, geography and music. Achievement is satisfactory in religious education (RE) and design and technology (DT).
3. Pupils by the time they leave school achieve a wide range of national awards. All pupils gain a City and Guilds Diploma in vocational education. They are also successful in gaining the national award Edexcel Certificate of Achievement in English, mathematics, science, design and technology and food technology. Some pupils take the GCSE Foundation level in Art, English and mathematics, and some the "National Interactive Computing Award Scheme" at beginners and intermediate levels in ICT. In English, pupils by the age of sixteen perform well in Certificates of Achievement, with a significant proportion attaining the higher grades. In mathematics in 2001, in Year 11, five pupils gained pass level, five pupils gained merit, and nine pupils gained distinction. In addition, one pupil was successful in GCSE at foundation level. In science in Year 11, two higher attaining pupils gained GCSE passes and 12 pupils gained distinctions in the Certificate of Achievement.

4. Pupils achieve very well in their communications skills as they are encouraged successfully to express their views and opinions. There are many very good examples where pupils are encouraged to explain their ideas, work together and report back their findings during lessons. This helps further extend their language, speaking and listening skills. Pupils achieve well in their use of literacy and number throughout the school.
5. By the age of fourteen, many pupils are achieving well, and make good gains in their learning. Pupils' achievements are at least good in many subjects including English, mathematics, science, DT, music and PE. They are very good in ICT, and art and design. Their achievements are satisfactory in geography, history and religious education. Occasionally pupils at this stage, in particular those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, do not achieve as well as others because the teaching is not always as effective in sustaining their concentration and managing disruptive behaviour effectively.
6. By the age of sixteen, pupils' achievements are at least good in most subjects. Their achievements are very good in mathematics, ICT, and art and design. Pupils achieve a satisfactory standard in RE. They are very well prepared for the next stage of their education, due to the highly effective careers education programme, and the high standards expected of them by teachers in developing their personal and social skills.
7. In English, the National Literacy Strategy is being implemented well. It has been adapted appropriately, and modified helpfully for the pupils' specific needs. Pupils are achieving very well in acquiring basic reading skills. This is due to the very effective teaching and use of the National Literacy Strategy. Pupils develop a genuine enjoyment of reading and grow in confidence as a result. The systematic approach to spelling assists the pupils further in their reading and writing. There is a very well structured programme for developing the pupils' writing, including basic handwriting, and independent writing through their primary years. This is ensuring the very good levels of achievement in spelling, punctuation and sentence construction. Older pupils research the life and times of famous authors such as Charles Dickens, using dictionaries and reference books usefully to further their knowledge. They develop important skills of taking notes, which help further in their recording of information, both in English and other subjects. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are able to discuss issues with an impressive level of maturity. They talk with insight about their own personal challenges, and how they intend to overcome them at college. Pupils write compositions with increasing imagination, and some have retold parts of Macbeth through letters and dialogue with good results. Most pupils read with increasing accuracy the materials linked to their examinations and course work. They are less inclined to read purely for pleasure, though resources for this purpose are limited, particularly in books that have suitable content and interest, and match the pupils' reading levels.

8. In mathematics, pupils are achieving well overall. By the time they are in Year 11, many pupils achieve very well and gain nationally recognised awards. The National Numeracy Strategy is being implemented effectively. Pupils are encouraged to use their numeracy skills in a variety of subjects across the curriculum, for example in weighing ingredients for food technology, drawing graphs to represent data using their information technology skills and counting rhythm and beat in music. There are numerous practical examples in the rural studies centre where pupils have to remember daily routines, times for feeding the animals and the correct weights and amounts of food. In addition, some pupils are recording the weather and making mathematical observations in relation to the windmill. The garden area is another rich learning area where pupils watch the growth of seeds over time and ensure the correct amount of water is given daily. They weigh the produce and sometimes make a modest profit if the goods are sold. Pupils by Year 6 are gaining confidence in problem solving, using addition and subtraction rules with increasing accuracy. They are categorising three- dimensional shapes according to their properties with growing understanding. By Year 9, many pupils use their skills of estimation with a good level of accuracy. They estimate certain lengths in metres, using a widening range of mathematical vocabulary to express their findings. Older pupils in Years 10 and 11 use a variety of strategies effectively to solve practical mathematical problems. They have a secure understanding of simple fractions and the principles of decimals, and use ratio accurately, for example in the context of riding bicycles.
9. In science, pupils achieve good standards overall, and very good standards by Year 6. Pupils at this stage study a wide range of scientific principles including forces, motion and friction, and make careful observations of their findings. By Year 9, they use scientific language with growing understanding and make predictions using a variety of scientific notions, including seed dispersal and evaporation. By Year 11, pupils studying for national awards are able to discuss the idea of genetic similarities and differences in appearance and the likely links and causes of such features.
10. Standards in ICT are very good and developing from strength to strength. The highly effective coordination of the subject, alongside examples of very good, and occasionally excellent teaching, is ensuring that pupils are becoming increasingly confident in their use and application of ICT skills. The technology suite and its use is making a very positive impact on the pupils' achievements. There are many examples where ICT is an integral part of other subjects, for example in recording findings, drafting work and producing data in different forms.
11. The standards achieved by the school are strongly influenced by the highly effective teaching seen in many areas. Teachers know the pupils well and therefore work is well matched to the wide range of pupils' needs. Pupils could be doing even better if their targets were clearer, and procedures for tracking the learning were more rigorous. The formal targets for pupils, as

recorded in their individual education plans are often too general, particularly in their academic work. The school is considering how best to set whole school targets in English and mathematics, though this area is currently underdeveloped.

12. The school is ensuring that pupils achieve well for the degree of their special educational needs. There are very effective strategies for promoting the pupils' personal and social skills, whereby they leave with confidence and maturity, well prepared to face the challenges ahead.

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

13. Pupils' very positive attitudes are a strength of the school. Attitudes, behaviour and personal development are similar to those found in the last inspection, with improvements in some areas. Parents confirmed in questionnaires that their children like school (92 per cent), that the school expects them to work hard (98 per cent), and that behaviour is good (94 per cent).
14. It is a powerful reflection on the school's ethos and expectations that the pupils' attitudes are generally very good and they are able to behave with confidence and maturity in the outside world, considering they are often disaffected with the education system when they first join. In most lessons, pupils arrive ready to learn, settle down quickly and are ready to be engaged by skilful and lively teaching. In a Year 5 science lesson on magnetism, for instance, the teacher had to deny knowledge of magic when she made a round magnet behave strangely and objects jump off the table, making the captivated pupils exclaim "Wow!" with delight. Good examples were seen of many pupils' capacity for sustained concentration and independent working. For instance, in art and design lessons Year 4 and 5 pupils showed great perseverance when fully absorbed in close observational drawing work, and Year 11 pupils were able to independently develop their own ideas when working on final designs for three-dimensional landscapes.
15. Pupils' behaviour is good overall. Many examples of exemplary behaviour were seen in class and outside the school, such as trip by Year 11 pupils' to a local leisure centre, where they were involved in a variety of physical education activities in partnership with a local disabled group. No bullying was observed during the week of the inspection, and pupils confirm that any issues arising are dealt with effectively. Exclusions are rare, and below the national average for the type of school. Pupils are very aware of the standard of behaviour that is expected of them, showing appropriate courtesy to visitors as well as staff and each other. However, there were instances of unsatisfactory and poor behaviour from a minority of pupils in lessons during the inspection, particularly boys in Years 7 to 9. This is also a similar finding to the last inspection. Where these incidents occur, they are nearly always happen where teachers have limited skills in dealing with challenging behaviour, or, in one case in Year 6, where pupils' familiar routines had been disturbed by an unexpected change to their teacher for the day.
16. Relationships between pupils and with adults are nearly always very good, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. The ability to work

in teams or groups was seen in many lessons, and the pupils' support and respect for each other was well demonstrated in a Year 6 ICT lesson, where pupils spontaneously applauded their friends as a Roamer computer was successfully programmed and made to travel across the floor. The high levels of respect for property and living things are also well developed. There is no sign of graffiti or vandalism around the school, resources are well treated and this is one of many areas of school life that is so well supported by the regular opportunities provided by the rural studies facility to nurture plants and wildlife.

17. Attendance is good, with both authorised and unauthorised absence below levels expected nationally for this type of school. Most authorised absence relates to medical visits or holidays taken in term time. Punctuality has improved with the appointment of a new transport contractor this term, though some buses still arrive late in bad weather – a situation beyond the control of the school. Both attendance and punctuality have improved since the time of the last inspection.

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

18. There are many strengths in the quality of teaching. The high proportion of good, very good and occasionally excellent teaching is having a very positive impact upon standards, pupils' achievements and learning. The quality of teaching is very good overall. In almost two thirds of the lessons observed, teaching was either good or very good. In just under one third of the lessons, teaching was satisfactory. A small proportion of the teaching was excellent. Teaching was unsatisfactory in only one instance. The teaching for pupils between Years 3 and 6 is very good overall. In Years 7, 8 and 9, the teaching is good on balance, with more satisfactory teaching observed than elsewhere in the school. Teaching is very good overall for pupils in Years 10 and 11. There has been good improvement in teaching since the last inspection, with a higher proportion of good and very good teaching, and significantly less unsatisfactory teaching.
19. Teaching for pupils between Years 3 and 6 has many very good features. Overall, teaching is very good in English, science, art and design, geography, ICT, and music. It is good in mathematics, and PE. Teaching is satisfactory in RE. Teachers in Years 4, 5 and 6 organise themselves whereby they teach together in teams for much of the time. This is most effective, as pupils benefit from a wider range of expertise in any one class. These shared arrangements are planned meticulously, and carefully implemented. For example in Years 4 and 5, two teachers work seamlessly together, ensuring the pupils benefit from larger group work before moving into smaller groups for more individual support. The timing of activities is precise, and pupils move swiftly to their next tasks with impressive ease. Learning support assistants are deployed most efficiently and support the pupils' learning systematically. Many have additional and relevant qualifications to their work. This adds further understanding as they

support the pupils systematically in their learning. They know individual pupils very well, and take responsibility and initiative appropriately during the lessons.

20. In a very good art lesson in Years 4 and 5, the highly efficient organisation ensured all pupils were able to complete several tasks to a high standard within the lesson. Lower attaining pupils produced careful line drawings from observations of fresh fruit, whilst other pupils used frames to draw only what they could see within a defined area. The environment both inside the classroom and outside was used most effectively, resulting in high quality observational drawings of fruit, water lilies and plants. Pupils moved efficiently between groups and teachers both inside and outside the classroom, with maximum time spent concentrating on the tasks. They were justifiably proud and satisfied with their achievements, only frustrated that the lesson had to end. The highly effective characteristics of this lesson were seen in other lessons including English, mathematics and science. In a Year 6 science lesson, the very good teaching ensured pupils used their scientific skills with increasing accuracy to investigate the principles of friction. The teacher's clear explanation, and strong emphasis on developing the pupils' scientific language, ensured all were able to make accurate predictions. The resources were carefully chosen to include silky materials, shiny paper, sandpaper, plastic, bricks and glass, and helped the pupils to describe more precisely their findings. One pupil, after much thought, declared that "smooth, silky fabric has low friction" There was much useful learning about friction and its meaning as the lesson developed.
21. Teaching for pupils between Years 7 and 9 is good overall. It is very good in art and design and PE, and good in mathematics, science, ICT, DT and music. Teaching is satisfactory in English, geography, history and RE. Newly appointed staff are developing a growing understanding of the pupils' wide ranging needs, though in some examples, work is not sufficiently well matched or challenging. In otherwise satisfactory teaching, strategies for managing pupils' behaviour were not entirely secure or consistent. Pupils with more difficult behaviour did not always learn effectively as a result.
22. Teachers ensure all pupils are included, regardless of their individual differences or learning needs. The vast majority of teachers know the pupils very well, thus ensuring work is suitable and well matched. The informal assessment during lessons is effective and used to inform what happens in the future. Formal assessment procedures are sound, though less well developed. This means that new staff may not necessarily have a clear enough idea of what pupils have achieved in the past. The targets in the pupils' individual education plans are similarly too general. Pupils learn very well in many instances as teachers know them so thoroughly. They could be doing even better if the formal assessment procedures were more established.

23. Teaching for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is very good overall. It is very good in mathematics, art and design, ICT and PE. Teaching is good in English, science, DT and geography. Teaching is satisfactory in RE. Teachers have a very thorough knowledge of their subjects, enabling the pupils to be taught specialist skills effectively and accurately, for example in mathematics, science, ICT, food technology, PE, music and art. There are high expectations set for pupils both academically and socially. In a highly effective session at the leisure centre, the high quality organisation led to exemplary behaviour by many pupils as they learned new physical skills and played as part of teams alongside pupils from other schools, including those with physical disabilities. Elsewhere, older pupils understand how they can improve, for example in a very good mathematics lesson, pupils compared their progress from one week to another, identifying with the teacher how they could improve further in the future.
24. There were examples of excellent teaching in mathematics in Year 11, ICT in Year 6, and PE in Year 9. The excellent teaching was characterised by brisk starts to the lessons, clear learning objectives that challenged all pupils, and teachers demonstrating excellent knowledge in the subjects; thus providing technical support and training in skills that extended pupils' thinking throughout the lessons. As a result of the excellent teaching, pupils covered much ground in the lessons, and were able to evaluate their own learning accurately. Teaching in the rural studies and farming unit is highly effective and has an excellent impact on daily routines throughout the school. The high quality teaching in rural studies ensures pupils leave school with many additional and practical skills, for example in rearing animals and market gardening. Many pupils develop a keen sense of responsibility and commitment, and demonstrate the ability to complete daily routine tasks throughout the year whatever the weather. Pupils are thoroughly well prepared to make the most of college life as a result of such experiences and expectations. Teaching in rural studies and the farming unit makes an exceptional contribution to every area of school life and the pupils' wider education.
25. Teaching in personal, social and health education is very good overall throughout the school. There is considerable emphasis on developing the pupils' personal and social skills both in lessons, and throughout the school day, in a variety of creative ways. This results in pupils developing a real ownership for many areas of school life, including the environment. Teachers instil a sense of pride and ambition amongst the pupils as they move through the school, helping them to recognise strengths and areas for further development both academically and socially. Teachers are increasingly using ICT as a means to further develop their own subjects. They are very well supported by a subject leader for ICT who has excellent skills to teach and support staff in this process.
26. Teachers and support staff make a strong team who work hard to ensure pupils learn effectively, feel confident to tackle challenges, and are proud of their achievements.

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

27. The school has been successful in developing and enriching the curriculum since the previous inspection and there has been a good level of improvement. Pupils are taught a curriculum which has the National Curriculum 2000 as its basis and the school extends the potential of that curriculum through a range of other activities, including a very successful rural studies department. Hence the school fulfils its aim of helping pupils develop enquiring minds, independence, confidence and an awareness of and respect for their environment and all living things. In achieving these aims pupils are developing mature attitudes and values which underpin their good and very good levels of social and academic learning. All pupils have equal opportunities to follow the curriculum regardless of their differences or backgrounds.
28. The quality and range of learning opportunities for all pupils is very good through out the school. All statutory requirements are met. Pupils up to Year 6 experience the full range of the National Curriculum plus RE, personal, health and social education (PSHE) and rural studies. Time is allocated appropriately to give priority to developing literacy and numeracy skills. ICT is not only taught as a subject but also incorporated into many other subject activities. Pupils from Years 7 to 9 learn the same subjects with the addition of careers education and guidance for Year 9 pupils. The curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 focuses on preparing those older pupils for national awards at the end of Year 11 and for leaving school to enter the world of work or further education. The school is successful in widening pupils' experience within the curriculum, so that for example all younger pupils go swimming at some time each year, design and technology includes regular food technology lessons and science is enriched by the practical activities of rural studies. In this latter subject pupils, through practical tasks including plant propagation, small garden projects (such as building a wind and solar powered driven pond fountain) as well as caring for animals and poultry on the school's own small holding, are able to put theory into practice while developing a real pride of ownership in their school environment, and respect and sensitivity in dealing with animals.
29. The curriculum for pupils with additional special needs is sound, though in some examples, it is not sufficiently modified for their needs. In some cases, pupils' behaviour is not well managed and the quality of the curriculum suffers as a result.
30. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 study English, mathematics, science, ICT, leisure sports, RE and PSHE. In addition they study two subjects from an option range which includes art, DT, food technology and rural studies. All pupils are involved in taking the City and Guilds diploma in vocational

education that includes elements of history and geography, consumer affairs, a business enterprise scheme, careers and skills for life such as budgeting and applying for jobs. European studies give these pupils an insight into life in other countries in Europe. Pupils are taking the national award Edexcel Certificate of Achievement in English, mathematics, science, design and technology and food technology. Some pupils take the GCSE Foundation level in Art, English and mathematics and some the “National Inter- Active Computing Award Scheme” (NICAS) (Beginners and Intermediate levels) in ICT. The City and Guilds diploma in Tending animals, plants and land is also available. Altogether this gives pupils a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum of good quality and their achievements can then be celebrated in the National Record of Achievement completed by all pupils at the end of Year 11.

31. The school regards the PSHE programme as a vital element in nurturing the pupils’ social and personal development. The provision for PSHE within the curriculum is very good, and as a result, pupils are encouraged to grow in maturity and responsibility. Teacher’s planning for PSHE is adapted appropriately from National Curriculum 2000, ensuring that pupils are aware of health issues as well as relationships and citizenship. This also includes sex education and drugs awareness.
32. Both the National Literacy and National Numeracy strategies are securely established for all pupils from Years 3 to 9, and this is having a beneficial effect on the consistency of teacher’s planning and the good standards of achievement in both English and mathematics.
33. The provision for careers education is very good. Pupils learn of the world of work from Year 9 onwards. The school works in close co-operation with the careers service which gives good support through interviews and discussions with Year 10 and 11 pupils as well as resources, information and advice in developing the school’s careers library. Pupils in Year 10 develop their ideas about their future through the City and Guilds course and by early in Year 11 are ready for two weeks of work experience. Later in the year there is an industrial awareness day and all pupils will have the opportunity to visit the local colleges of further education before they choose their next placement. Last year many pupils took the opportunity to attend the Gateway initiative which gave them additional experience of college life during the summer break, and hence the majority of last years’ leavers went straight to the college of their choice.
34. Provision for activities outside lessons is good. Since most pupils come to school on organised transport it is difficult for the school to arrange activities out of school hours. Despite this, an after school club meets once a week for sports, art, cookery and rural studies. Lunch-time clubs include music, choir and football. Older pupils in Years 10 and 11 are encouraged to come to school independently and early morning activities are available for them in their classrooms. The school has a long tradition of residential trips, often staying in Youth Clubs and involving adventurous sport. These

are very popular, and linked with the local Upper school. Pupils have enjoyed visits to the Globe theatre and Stratford upon Avon. Sports events competing against other special school include swimming, athletics and football. The football team missed being the East of England Special School champions by a whisker, losing the final only on penalties!!!. The school celebrates their success on its own web site.

35. The school's links with the community are good. The school welcomes visits from the community particularly for school events and to visitors, such as the allotments association, to the school farm. A well-established link with a local society for the disabled (DADDS) share sports activities with Years 10 and 11 in the local leisure centre. The school uses places of historical and geographical interest to enrich those subjects as well as local museums and churches.
36. The school has good relationships with partner institutions, which support both curriculum opportunities for pupils as well as professional development for teachers. Links with the local colleges of further education are well established, as are those with employers and organisations who accept pupils on work experience. Pupils learn riding thorough Riding for the Disabled, and on occasions pupils from Weatherfield join other local schools for musical and social events. Teachers have developed useful links with local schools and colleges to share expertise and ideas, and the University of Luton now supports a teacher in training at the school. There have as yet been few examples of pupils being included in joining a class in a mainstream school. This is an area to be developed, so that pupils can benefit from meeting and working with others to widen their academic and social experience.
37. The spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils is overall very good and a strength of the school. The school is like a family, in which pupils have first hand knowledge and acceptance of the realities of birth, life and death, and the awareness of nature. The farm and gardens tended by the pupils provides rich experiences woven into the curriculum and ensures the curriculum is extended.
38. Spiritual development is good. It is fostered through the social and moral development. As pupils enter school with low self-esteem and confidence, the school nurtures individuals, as they develop a better self-image and an awareness of others and the environment. Through the joy of dance, listening to music, prayer and reflection they learn to appreciate things that are beyond the mundane. In some assemblies and RE lessons, opportunities are used well to reflect on events or actions but at other times those moments are missed. In a primary assembly, the theme of Grace Darling was used well to link into the awarding of the 'Spider Cup' for effort, and then woven into the theme of the prayer.
39. There is no doubt that pupils know right from wrong and the provision for moral development is very good. Values are promoted well by staff within

and outside of lessons, where the importance of self worth is stressed through the praise and encouragement of staff. Pupils throughout school are encouraged to help in practical ways, and take responsibility for jobs within the community. Most pupils are therefore respectful of their environment and of others' efforts.

40. Pupils have very good provision for social development within this caring community, which helps to give pupils a sense of ownership. Teachers provide very good role models to foster mutual respect. Pupils are actively involved in caring for animals, and the gardens, keeping the areas clean and litter free and in contributing to displays of artwork. There are good opportunities through day and residential visits to practise social skills and to learn about people from the past. From time to time they are involved with pupils from other schools in joint projects. A number of pupils are involved in lunchtime clubs such as for music. Pupils who have additional problems have access to successful music therapy by specialist teacher.
41. Although the school is not a multicultural community, RE, humanities and special interest days make a good contribution to raising pupils' awareness of a multicultural society. In Year 11, as part of City and Guilds pupils study the multicultural community in Luton. There are regular planned visits to the school from people invited from other cultures. In RE, the main world religions are introduced and there are visits to places of worship of other world religions as well as the range of Christian denominations. Other cultures are promoted effectively through art, music, history, geography and RE.

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

42. The overall provision for the care and welfare of the pupils is very good. It is a strength of the school, and the resulting safe, caring environment for learning has a very real impact on raising the pupils' achievement. Child protection procedures are known to staff, who have regular training in, for instance, awareness of danger signs suggesting child abuse. One of the deputy headteachers is, appropriately, the named officer.
43. Teachers and support staff know their pupils well, which helps to support the sound formal procedures for monitoring their learning and personal development. All staff display a high level of care and concern for the pupils and there is much evidence in the high quality relationships within the school of the rapport and respect that exist between pupils and staff. The team teaching in some classes, and the smooth integration of classroom assistants, are further positive factors.
44. Pupils and adults in school are aware of the need to work safely and contribute to a safe environment. All staff consistently display good health and safety practice, whether during lessons at school or during trips off the premises. No significant health and safety concerns were noted during the

inspection, and the issues relating to the supervision and use of transport raised in the last inspection report have been fully addressed. However, the governing body is not complacent and continually seeks to keep ahead of relevant legislation.

45. The school has been involved in an attendance initiative, set up as a result of disaffection in some groups of pupils in the local secondary schools. As a result, practical procedures for monitoring and promoting good attendance are good and this has had a beneficial effect on the school's attendance figures, which have gone up this year. The practice for daily registration of pupils fully complies with statutory requirements.
46. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting behaviour are good, and generally work well in the context of what is rightly considered by the school community to be a "family" environment. A good system of rewards and sanctions is in place, and these contribute positively to the very good attitudes to learning displayed by the pupils. Pupils understand right from wrong and are clear that behavioural expectations are high. Parents confirmed this at the meeting prior to the inspection. No evidence of any oppressive bullying or harassment of pupils was seen during the inspection, and pupils reported that occasional past incidents had been effectively dealt with by the staff. Appropriately, such issues are discussed in formal settings such as circle time and PHSE (personal, health and social education) lessons. The weaknesses leading to the minority of lessons where unsatisfactory behaviour becomes disruptive usually relate to the staff having limited strategies to deal with particularly challenging behaviour. The school is aware that some specialised training in this area would be beneficial.
47. Overall, the school has satisfactory procedures for monitoring pupils' academic and personal development. Since the last inspection, the school has improved in the way it uses assessment to inform curriculum planning and passes information between Year groups and phases in the school. Procedures for the annual review of pupils' statements are satisfactory; they fully meet the requirements of the Code of Practice. However, there are minor weaknesses with the targets on annual reviews and pupils' individual plans.
48. Most annual reviews say what pupils have achieved, but some of the targets are not challenging enough. On most there is not enough mention of the progress pupils have made; for example, 'He tries hard but needs to complete his work'. Individual education plans vary in quality; some have clear targets but others lack specific reference to the previous review targets. In the sample of individual education plans scrutinised, some lacked precision, clarity and continuity. Targets were often imprecise; for example, 'Read and check through spelling in all written work', and 'Develop strategies for deciphering words'. Some of the better features of assessment are the setting in English and mathematics for pupils in Years 10 and 11, and the development of self-assessment in a number of

subjects. However, the procedures currently in place lack the necessary rigor to systematically track pupils' progress as they move through the school. This is important in order to ensure pupils are learning effectively and consistently throughout the school.

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

49. Parents have a very positive regard for the school, and particularly the way it meets its aims in helping their children to progress, both academically and personally. At the meeting before the inspection, all parents present held very positive views in this respect, demonstrating that the school has the confidence of the full range of its parents, regardless of background and specific special need. Weatherfield is a popular school, with more applications from parents each year than it can satisfy with places.
50. The impact of parents' involvement and the contribution they make to children's learning is satisfactory. Parents are made to feel welcome – 97 per cent said on questionnaires that they would feel comfortable approaching the school with questions or a problem. Whilst the large size of the catchment area makes communication difficult, the school tries hard to involve the parents as partners in their child's education. In the case of annual reviews, for instance, only about half the parents are able to attend, but the school keeps good records of who was missing and is thus able to follow up with individual telephone calls and, if necessary, home visits. This aspect was also commended in the last inspection. Although no parents were seen helping in school during the inspection week, this is partly because several former helpers are now on the staff and pursuing relevant professional qualifications, which is a very positive reflection on the school's success. As at the time of the last inspection, the Friends association raises valuable funds for the benefit of the pupils and social events involving the wider community, such as the summer fayre, that is well regarded and usually successful.
51. Homework was one of the few areas where parents expressed concern on the questionnaires; 29 per cent felt that the amount provided was inappropriate. However, the school's policy on homework and the levels provided are judged to be appropriate overall; homework in English is used particularly well and is pitched at the right level.
52. The quality and regularity of information provided to parents is satisfactory overall. This includes informal telephone communication and newsletters as well as the more formal open evenings, which are again attended by about half the parents, and the more formal statutory documents. The "Information for Parents" brochure and the governors' annual report to parents are informative, but are not presented in a way that makes them accessible to parents, lacking, for instance, pictures and some statutory requirements. The pupils' annual reports, similarly, give appropriate information on progress and often contain useful targets for improvement,

but are in an unattractive format. Home school agreements are appropriately in place, though the school accepts that in areas such as this, more could be done in terms of taking parents' views into account.

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

53. The leadership and management of the school is good overall. The headteacher provides a clear sense of purpose and direction, with an emphasis upon standards, achievement and preparing pupils for the future. The school's aims are very well reflected, with a strong focus upon developing the pupils' confidence, self-esteem and personal and social skills. There is considerable emphasis upon the needs of individual pupils, and all pupils are included fully into school life, regardless of their backgrounds or differences. The deputy headteachers have strong and complementary skills to those of the headteacher. They make a very positive contribution in their different areas of responsibility. Other senior managers, including heads of departments are similarly effective, and have a comprehensive understanding of the school. All members of the senior management team provide very good role models for others to follow in their leadership and teaching. Teachers with responsibilities for developing subjects have a clear understanding of the trends in standards in their areas, and the necessary priorities for further improvement.
54. The governing body is active in the school's life. Governors fulfil their responsibilities satisfactorily. They have a sound understanding of the school's relative strengths and areas for development. Governors organise themselves efficiently and have a range of appropriate committees to oversee the school's work. The curriculum committee for example takes an active role in developing the curriculum, and reviewing the impact of initiatives such as literacy and numeracy. The finance committee has a clear understanding of the budget and priorities for spending. Governors seek to ensure best value in their decisions, use of resources and finances.
55. The headteacher and other senior managers have a systematic schedule for monitoring the quality of teaching. This is set alongside much informal discussion with teachers about their work, and regular visits to classes. The formal documentation for recording such visits is brief. Comments are not sufficiently evaluative or consistent in some cases. This means it is not always clear how teachers could improve, for example from satisfactory teaching to good teaching. The senior management and other staff spend time regularly discussing and reflecting on their work. This ensures that new initiatives are evaluated, and plans revised where necessary. The activities for monitoring and evaluation are satisfactory overall, but not well documented in the school's improvement plan. As a result, governors cannot be sure of the methods used for monitoring and evaluation, or be in a position to ask more strategic questions about the school's work. There is an appropriate strategy for assessing the performance of staff.

56. The school's priorities for its development are good. There has been suitable action taken to meet objectives in the school improvement plan. There is a very good level of commitment amongst staff throughout the school, with a strong sense of team, cooperation and support. The strength of the team means there is very good capacity for further improvement. Staff who have considerable experience and length of service at the school remain enthusiastic and determined to improve further. More recently appointed staff are similarly keen to learn, and contribute their skills and expertise. New staff have a good programme of induction, ensuring they are well briefed about the school's policies, procedures and practices. The school also provides training for students and new teachers, with a detailed and effective schedule of support and monitoring for their professional development.
57. There is good use of resources including effective deployment of staff, and efficient use of finances and accommodation. The budget is allocated carefully and ensures there is a close match to current educational priorities. This information is not included in the overall school improvement plan and remains an outstanding item from the external audit. The finances carried forward from the previous year's budget are allocated carefully for the purposes of improving the accommodation and enhancing resources further. There is good use of educational technology by the school, for example in curriculum planning. This helps to minimise wherever possible the bureaucratic demands on teachers in their planning and preparation work. The school uses ICT most effectively, for example in developing its management information systems. Specific grants are well used, for example the rural studies and farm unit makes a significant impact in all areas of school life.
58. There is a suitable number of well-qualified teachers. Many have specific and additional training in their subjects, and this is particularly beneficial for pupils taking external examinations. A high proportion of support staff has additional qualifications for their work. This ensures they understand the special needs of the pupils. The accommodation is satisfactory overall. Some aspects, for example the quality of the environment, are very high quality. There are areas that remain cramped, for example a classroom for pupils in Year 6 is small and means that they are restricted in practical activities. The specialist room for music is a significant improvement from the last inspection, but is very small for a whole group to work comfortably, for example with keyboards. The library is in a small room with little space for pupils to sit and read comfortably. The school makes best use of all the available space within these limitations. Learning resources are adequate overall.
59. There have been good improvements since the last inspection. Strengths identified at that time have been sustained effectively and in some cases further improved.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The governors, headteacher and staff should continue to improve the school further by:

**(1) \*Further improving assessment procedures by:**

- Tracking rigorously individual pupil's achievements and learning
- Ensuring targets in individual education plans are precise and measurable

As referred to in paragraphs 11,22,47,80,86,90,132

**(2) \*Setting whole school targets for raising standards further**

As referred to in paragraph 11

**(3) \*Improving planning and provision for pupils with additional special educational needs by;**

- Identifying and implementing effective strategies for managing behaviour

As referred to in paragraphs 1,5,15,21,29,46,63,97,100

The school may also wish to address the following aspects for further development:

- Further developing procedures for monitoring the quality of teaching
- Formalising methods and procedures for evaluating the impact of actions on standards, teaching and pupils' achievements
- extending the range of reading resources for older pupils

As referred to in paragraphs 55,63

\* Indicates the school has identified these areas in its school improvement plan

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	99
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	30

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	3	32	32	31	1	0	0
Percentage	3	32.5	32.5	31	1	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	149
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	35

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.0

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.2

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

**Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 2 for the latest reporting year	Year	Total
	2001	22

National Curriculum Test / Task Results		Level W	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Numbers of pupils at each NC level	English					
	Mathematics			1	10	1
	Science			2	1	

Teachers' Assessments		Level W	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4
Numbers of pupils at each NC level	English		8	12	2	
	Mathematics		11	11		
	Science		3	12	7	

*\*Includes pupils who were not entered for the National Curriculum tests/tasks, or were absent.*

**Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3**

Number of registered pupils in final year of Key Stage 3 for the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	13	7	20

National Curriculum Test/Task Results		Level W	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5
Numbers of pupils at each NC level	English		5	14	1		
	Mathematics		3	7	9	1	
	Science		1	7	9	3	

**Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4**

Number of 15 year olds on roll in January of the latest reporting year	Year	Boys	Girls	Total
	2001	12	9	21

Certificate of Achievement		Distinction	Merit	Pass
Numbers of pupils achieving the standard specified	English	4	14	2
	Mathematics	9	4	6
	Science	12	6	3
	Design and technology	4	1	2

Other qualifications			
City and Guilds vocational studies		20 passes	

**Ethnic background of pupils**

**Exclusions in the last school year**

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	147
Any other minority ethnic group	0

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	4	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

#### **Teachers and classes**

##### **Qualified teachers and classes: Y3 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	17.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	8.4
Average class size	8

##### **Education support staff: Y3 – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	12
Total aggregate hours worked per week	209

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

#### **Financial information**

Financial year	2000/2001
----------------	-----------

	£
Total income	844,228
Total expenditure	822,304
Expenditure per pupil	5,557
Balance brought forward from previous year	16,367
Balance carried forward to next year	16,000

#### **Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	6

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	145
Number of questionnaires returned	36

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	56	36	0	8	0
My child is making good progress in school.	63	29	3	3	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	43	51	0	3	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	40	23	6	0
The teaching is good.	76	18	0	3	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	66	26	6	0	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	83	14	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	69	29	0	3	0
The school works closely with parents.	66	26	3	0	6
The school is well led and managed.	66	31	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	77	14	3	3	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	49	29	14	6	3

Other comments may be found under Parents' and Carers section in the summary.

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

**ENGLISH**

60. Pupils achieve very well in English overall. The rate of improvement in English since the last inspection has been good. There have been significant advances in the teaching of phonics, pupils' achievements have been raised in reading and writing, the high standards in speaking and listening have been maintained and co-ordination between different parts of the school has improved.
61. In statutory assessments at the age of eleven, results over the last four years have shown steady improvement. Pupils' attainments at this age are significantly above the average for schools of this type. Their achievements in all areas of the English curriculum are very good. Statutory assessments over the same period at the age of fourteen reveal a much more uneven pattern. In 2001, the results indicated good achievement in the subject overall. By the age of sixteen, pupils perform well in external Certificate of Achievement examinations, with a significant proportion attaining the highest grades.
62. Pupils who enter the school at age seven have very low levels of basic literacy. Most, for example, cannot write their own names independently or read a simple text without significant levels of support. These skills develop rapidly, however, as a result of the very effective teaching of literacy in Years 3 - 6 and the pupils' keenness to improve their basic skills. The successful adoption of the National Literacy Strategy is an important factor in this. The very skilful use of "Big Books" has done much to promote pupils' enjoyment and confidence in their reading. A particular strength is the quality of oral work that teachers achieve through very good questioning of pupils and very effective reinforcement of their growing vocabulary. This makes a major contribution to the very good development of pupils' speaking and listening skills. In one lesson, for example, Year 4 and 5 pupils were talking enthusiastically about the story they were reading, using terms such as "author", "title" and "illustrator", describing the characters and commenting confidently on words which rhyme or sound the same. There is very good planning to support work in all areas of English. In writing in particular, a very well-structured programme of activities, from basic handwriting and copying to the development of more independent writing in the later Primary years, means that pupils' written work shows very good levels of achievement in areas such as spelling, punctuation and sentence construction. Higher-attaining pupils in Year 6, for example, were observed hard at work on their spelling books achieving very good levels of accuracy as they tested themselves on more complex letter-strings and very much enjoying the challenge of the work.

63. The National Literacy Strategy continues to be used effectively in the Secondary classes of Years 7,8 and 9 pupils. Their writing shows good development of the skills established in Years 3 - 6, with a growing range of work seen in their books and folders, such as longer pieces of narrative writing, diaries and poetry. On a few occasions, however, the development of speaking and listening skills in some of these classes was hampered by the unsatisfactory behaviour of a small number of pupils, and by the difficulties staff had in controlling it effectively, which prevented sensible or sustained discussion. Generally, however, pupils respond well to a variety of interesting tasks which require them to work more independently. One Year 9 class, for example, was researching the life and times of Charles Dickens as preparation for their reading of "A Christmas Carol". One of the strengths of the teaching of English for these classes is the way it provides well-planned opportunities for pupils to use resources such as dictionaries. Reference books were used effectively to improve their skills in reading for information and in note-taking, which also, of course, benefits their work in other areas of the curriculum. Pupils' reading shows good development in its accuracy and comprehension. All Secondary pupils are given a standardised reading test each year and in most cases good gains are apparent in the reading ages recorded. Opportunities for the higher-attaining pupils in Years 7 to 9, however, to develop the higher level skills of reading, particularly in responding to fiction, are unnecessarily limited by the school's decision to continue with the use of a reading scheme which does not reflect their age, interests or reading ability. One Year 8 pupil, for example, in discussing his reading book from the scheme, said that he found it very easy and, when asked to read from a randomly chosen example of a novel written for teenage readers, did so fluently and with expression. This indicated that he was capable of responding well to a text at this level.
64. Year 10 and 11 pupils talked and listened with impressive levels of maturity in many of the lessons in which they were observed. Year 10 pupils, for example, contributed very confidently to a discussion of what skills and qualities are needed for different jobs. Year 11 pupils showed that they could sustain careful attention over a long period as they listened to and answered questions during a detailed explanation of fire safety issues they were likely to meet in the workplace. Teachers make good use of topics such as these to promote the practical application of pupils' reading and writing skills, for example, in writing formal letters of application. Standards of presentation in the pupils' written work continue to benefit from exercises and practice in spelling, punctuation and the lay-out of their writing but at the same time their folders contain evidence of good achievement in more imaginative composition. Examples include retelling parts of the story of Macbeth through letters and dialogues, writing the diary of an evacuee in the Second World War and devising their own holiday brochures. Their reading continues to show good gains in accuracy and confidence in most cases, both in English and other subjects, but, as with younger Secondary pupils, more could be done to promote reading for pleasure outside the examination syllabus followed.

65. Information and communication technology is used effectively in the subject throughout the school, both in the form of specific literacy programmes and in the development of pupils' word processing skills.
66. The subject is efficiently co-ordinated, with good organisation of resources, medium-term planning and the transmission of information between year groups. Weaknesses exist, however, in some aspects of assessment. Literacy targets in pupils' individual education plans often lack precision, and pupils' achievements are not clearly or consistently linked with National Curriculum levels. Insufficient attention is given to the analysis of data such as that resulting from the annual reading tests or statutory assessments and no targets are set for attainment on a whole-school or group basis. These relative weaknesses, when addressed, should ensure even further improvements in English for pupils across the school.

## **MATHEMATICS**

67. Pupils' achievements in mathematics by the ages of 11 and 13 are good and by the age of 16, their achievements are very good. Results of teacher's assessments of national tests at the age of 11 (Y6) show that half of pupils are achieving National Curriculum Level 1 and the other half Level 2. By age 13 in similar assessments, pupils' achievements have improved and about half of that Year group are achieving Level 3 or above. This is in line with other similar special schools. Pupils in Year 11 study the syllabus of the Edexcel Certificate of Achievement and in 2001, 5 pupils gained pass level, 5 pupils gained merit and 9 pupils gained distinction. In addition a pupil who sat the GCSE (Foundation level) was successful. These achievements show a good level of improvement since the previous inspection.
68. The National Numeracy Strategy is well established in the school and forms the basis of the mathematical experience for pupils from Years 3 to 9. The youngest pupils in Year 4 are able to count to at least 20, and use correct vocabulary to describe wider and narrower objects. By Year 5, pupils are able to use a range of tools, such as number lines and hundred squares to find missing numbers in a number sentence. They use computers to practice their number bonds to ten. They have been using their mathematical knowledge in a practical task to do with writing and posting letters, thinking of the cost of stamps and times of posting on each day of the week. By Year 6, pupils are becoming confident to solve harder addition and subtraction problems and were seen working on categorising three- dimensional shapes depending on their properties. This is a good level of achievement.
69. In the senior part of the school pupils begin to widen their knowledge and in Year 7, a group who had learnt the points of the compass enjoyed a game where they had to use that knowledge navigating around a map accurately. By Year 8, pupils were estimating the perimeter of two

dimensional shapes like squares and triangles and then measuring in centimetres. With encouragement they were then able to use their knowledge of these shapes to find a 'quick' method of computation. By Year 9, pupils who were estimating longer distance in metres, gradually over the week's exercises were able to compare their first attempts with later estimates and hence produce more accurate expectations and then test them with full measurement. By doing this task outside they were able to realise the relevance of the need for good estimation skills. The careful planning for this age group includes work at a suitable pace depending on the attainment levels of the pupils. This has ensured steady improvement in the width of pupil's knowledge and the range of skills and methods they have to solve problems. The consistent use of correct vocabulary means that pupils can explain themselves well and so they are gaining a real breadth and security to their mathematical thinking.

70. Older pupils in Years 10 and 11 are preparing for national awards, and their work is focused on developing a range of thinking skills and strategies to solve practical problems. One group used the computer very effectively as they compared different measuring scales such as a ruler, bathroom scales, a clock and a measuring jug. Another group, now secure in understanding fractions, were transferring that knowledge to decimals and were able to work to 2 places of decimals by the end of the lesson. By Year 11, pupils are successfully exploring difficult concepts. One group looking at ratios could understand how a gear ratio worked on a bicycle and managed to work out the distance travelled by one rotation of the peddle. In another excellent lesson when pupils were working on a tricky problem about visualising the view on a building from above as well as in front and to the side, pupils were able to use a range of thinking skills, discussion and strategies to solve the problem. The level of achievement of this age group is very good.
71. Pupils use their numeracy skill in many other subjects. It is the responsibility of Year 7 pupils to take daily readings of temperature and rainfall in the schools meteorological station, and in science, pupils record their results using tables and charts. In Year 3, a geography group made a bar chart to show how pupils came to school. Many ICT lessons are linked to other subjects so that a geography task in ICT used co-ordinates and a traffic census developed the pupils' knowledge of data collection and graphs. Time lines are used in history and art history, and there is of course counting in PE and Music.
72. The pupil's attitudes to their lessons are invariably good and often very good, and for older pupils excellent. All pupils enjoy this subject and are keen to take part and older pupils show high levels of concentration and perseverance. Their ability to collaborate means that often a difficult problem can be solved by sharing ideas and possible strategies. Work is always neatly presented so that pupils can refer back to their results and use them with accuracy. They can also quickly identify patterns and use these to realise a general rule. Pupils in Year 7 working on multiples of

twelve could, for instance see that  $(3 \times 4)$ ,  $(4 \times 3)$  and  $(6 + 6)$  all gave the same result.

73. The teaching in mathematics is never less than satisfactory and for those pupils between Years 7-11 more frequently good or very good. There were also some examples of excellent teaching. The pupil's learning follows the same positive pattern. All teachers have secure knowledge for teaching mathematics which gives them the confidence to use a range of methods so that pupils learn to think creatively. Teachers explain the work clearly and check out pupils understanding of the task so that they are well supported to succeed first time. There are high expectations from all teachers so that pupils are used to working hard and thinking for themselves in mathematics lessons, and they are enjoying that challenge. Teachers group pupils very effectively both for those pupils up to Year 6 when work is carefully prepared within the class to meet different learning groups and for older pupils who have sets for mathematics lessons. The use of pairs and trios is carefully arranged so that pupils can share skills and learn to collaborate effectively. This means that all pupils cover the necessary work at their pace. There were many good examples of practical activities which helped pupils learn difficult concepts. One class for instance learnt about ratio through mixing two colours of paint in different proportions and compared results. In the examples of satisfactory teaching, learning objectives were clear and suitable resources helped the pupils to achieve the intention, but the lessons lacked the challenge and pace of better lessons. In good and very good lessons, teacher's planning built effectively upon previous work, and during the lessons, graduated activities of increasing difficulty enabled pupils to surprise themselves at how much they could develop their skills. A Year 9 group learning about estimation started by making wild guesses of distance, but gradually managed to develop the skill to use one measure to gauge another distance and hence make their estimate more useful. In the examples of excellent teaching, teachers challenged the pupils to really think for themselves and through skilful use of comments and questions helped pupils to come to their own conclusions and to have the confidence to check them and explain them with clarity.
74. Teachers who lead the subject have worked very effectively through establishing the National Numeracy Strategy. There has been a good level of improvement since the previous inspection. There is now good collaboration throughout the school and the quality of the planning is the foundation for the good and very good achievement in mathematics in the school. In the junior department (up to Year 6) assessment is satisfactory. Teachers assess pupils against the key objectives for the Numeracy Strategy and make their own assessments against national curriculum levels at the end of Year 6. The school realises the need to develop this system further and intends to do so in the near future. In the senior part of the school assessment is good with regular testing recorded in such a way that it is easy to see the rate of achievement for each pupil. This information is used at present as the basis to group pupils and will be used

to set group and whole school targets for mathematics. Both subject leaders are very supportive of their colleagues but teachers lack sufficient opportunities to watch other teachers and hence share expertise.

75. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection in raising pupils' levels of achievement. They now show enthusiasm and confidence in the subject. Teaching is more consistently of a high quality and resources are now good. ICT has been integrated into teachers planning at all levels so that it is used to support and consolidate learning and teachers use ICT very well for planning as well as recording their assessments.

## SCIENCE

76. The achievement of pupils in Years 3-6 is very good and in Years 7-11, it is consistently good. The inspection of pupils' work, shows overall good achievement throughout the school, which is consistent with their performance in English and mathematics. There is no significant difference between the performance of boys and girls. Since the last inspection, accredited courses have been introduced for all pupils in Years 10 and 11. Last year, two higher attaining pupils gained GCSE passes in science and 12 pupils gained distinctions in the Certificate of Achievement (Edexcel) examinations.
77. During the inspection, pupils in Year 5, studying forces and motion, were extremely interested in predicting the distance a toy truck would travel down a ramp. Very good questioning such as, 'What do you think?' helped pupils to consider their responses, especially when the height of the incline was raised or lowered. The lesson was carefully planned to link with work in mathematics and develop pupils measuring skills. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils studying friction joined in the investigation enthusiastically. The teacher had selected well chosen materials, such as sandpaper, bottles and bricks, which helped the pupils to distinguish between high and low friction. When some pupils disagreed about their findings, the teacher skilfully used the opportunity to reinforce the pupils' learning and ensure that all understood. A group of pupils from Year 7, were learning about the life cycle of plants by studying seed dispersal. The excellent facilities of the rural studies department enabled good practical learning to take place; for example, pupils handled seeds such as runner beans, poppies, asters and marigolds. The wide selection of seeds and the teacher's enthusiasm to impart his knowledge enabled the pupils to become more secure in their learning. By the end of the lesson, most understood several different ways that seeds are dispersed. Pupils in another Year 7 class, showed their ability to follow instructions as they carried out an experiment with an ice cube, plastic bag and warm water. Most pupils accurately predicted that the ice cube would melt when heated and they realised that freezing the water could reverse the change. The higher attaining pupils had a much clearer understanding about the effect of evaporation, condensation and freezing in the water cycle. Pupils studying for the Certificate of Achievement (Edexcel) in Year 11, were looking at variation arising from genetic causes. The teacher had effectively planned for the use of information and communication technology to record the pupils' findings. This was extremely helpful in assisting them to interpret and make comparisons; for example, did people with fair hair usually have blue eyes? In another class, the pupils showed their confidence and increasing independence by the way they were able to get out equipment such as beakers, tripods and Bunsen burners and then work with minimal supervision.
78. The pupils enjoy science and have good attitudes towards work. They respond to their teachers with enthusiasm and most co-operate well together. Many pupils display a genuine interest in science. They ask questions and show a real curiosity, and the higher attaining pupils realise that first-hand evidence gathered through investigation may cause them to change their minds.

79. The quality of teaching is good overall. Of the 12 lessons observed, six were very good, four good and two satisfactory. Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection and the impact of this can be seen in the good achievement of the pupils. Key elements of the National Curriculum such as prediction, fair testing, recording and the development of scientific language are taught well throughout the school. An example of this, was an effective lesson where the teacher constantly reinforced the words, 'hydrochloric acid' and 'calcium carbonate'. The best lessons are characterised by teachers having high expectations of pupils and asking probing questions to ensure that they understand and develop enquiry skills. Teachers manage pupils well and this enables most lessons to proceed at a good pace and makes effective use of time. On rare occasions the pace slowed when pupils' behaviour fell short of the expectations demanded by the teachers. The use of information and communications technology is satisfactory. However, insufficient thought has been given to how it can be used for research by using the Internet and CD-ROMs. Another minor weakness is the lack of display in the junior school classrooms and science laboratory.
80. Science is well managed by the co-ordinators. There is a good curriculum in place, which fully meets the National Curriculum requirements. Resources are good and an extensive range of visits to places such as the Natural History Museum, Whipsnade Zoo and Redbornbury Watermill helps to support the work in science. The science co-ordinators work very well together and liaise very closely with the rural studies teacher. The work of the rural studies department has a significant impact upon pupils' achievements, particularly scientific enquiry and life processes. Since the last inspection, assessment has improved and there is now a good system in place for transferring records between year groups. However, the school recognises that there is still weakness with assessment, particularly in tracking pupils' attainment as they move through the school.

## ART AND DESIGN

81. Pupils' achievement in art by the end of Year 6, 9, and 11 is very good. By the end of Year 11, a number of the pupils gain passes in GCSE art and those who choose art as an option continue to explore and develop their talents. Throughout the school, art displays are of a high quality and reflect the study of famous artists and the influence of local artists. The corridor mural in the style of Henri Rousseau is humorous and encapsulates some of the characteristics and personalities within the school, such as the well-tended gardens, and the goats, chickens, teachers and pupils. In the courtyard, around seating areas and on outside walls, art works are much in evidence. Workshops by local artists in collage and three-dimensional work using 'junk' to create aliens and other creatures make a very good aesthetic contribution to the environment.
82. By the end of Year 6, pupils show good control of pencils, and produce drawings sometimes in their sketchbooks with some intricate detail and awareness of shading. In the garden, pupils draw from first hand observation, totally absorbed in identifying features from the lily pond, and water fountain. They make careful observations, using viewfinders to draw still life fruits such as pomegranates, lemons and kiwi using crayon pastels and skilfully blending colours. They use digital cameras to record work and afterwards talk about what they saw and did not see.
83. At the beginning of Year 7, pupils make notes and exemplify colour, shading and tones in their new sketchbooks, which form a reference of ideas for all projects. Pupils discuss the relative merits of the good range of colour mediums available to them and learn where the materials are kept in the art room. By the end of Year 9, higher attaining pupils are using the sketchbook very effectively to try out techniques, explore and develop ideas, and record research on artists. They make good use of software programmes and a good range of materials to produce designs, patterns, texture work - sometimes in 3-dimensions- inspired by Kandinsky, Brigit Riley and William Morris. Pupils work with increasing skill and confidence in clay as they progress through the school, sometimes extending topics in a cross-curricular way. For example, they make medallions in Year 8 linked to study of the Plains Indians. They produce fine pottery sculptures in the style of Henry Moore. They explore portraits in drawing, collage and paint creating Archimboldo Modigliani style portraits and develop their ideas into sculpting heads from clay.
84. By the end of Year 11, pupils are developing their own styles and researching the work of well known artists and making sketch studies to assist them to develop projects such as "Inside" which explored gardens, fish bowls, and rooms. They use the digital camera and software to explore designs, for example, of buildings, inserting, shrinking, turning, and distorting, whilst another pupils uses the same programme to develop decorative patterns In project development, students often apply their knowledge of clay to develop three-dimensional ideas.

85. In the four lessons observed through the school, the quality of teaching was very good. Teachers have good knowledge and understanding of teaching the subject, and the programme of study builds and extends pupils' skills year on year. Teachers plan well, and have high expectations of pupils throughout the school. By the end of Year 6, in a very positive, yet relaxed atmosphere, teachers guided pupils by skilful questioning and encouragement, to pay close attention to the observation of details. In return, pupils listened carefully and contributed thoughts and observations. They gave their best efforts, staying fully on task and producing work of very good quality. Teaching focused in Year 7 on giving pupils confidence and freedom to work safely and independently to research and explore. Teachers up to Year 6 have recently introduced the sketchbooks and their use is still being established. By Year 10 and 11, homework is set systematically for everyone seeking to gain a national award. The teaching focused on discussion of ideas, encouragement praise and recognition of individuals' creativity. They challenged pupils interested in poster art to explore possibilities using computer programs whilst others used picture reproductions in the very good range of reference texts to help them develop techniques.
86. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. National awards in art are well established, and teachers have clear ideas in how to guide pupils to success. Assessment, including self-assessment in art is established beyond Year 6, but requires some further development so that teachers know how well the younger pupils are doing, particularly by Year 6. The use of information and computer technology is developing well across the school. The subject is well led and managed by the curriculum co-ordinators. The pleasure, which pupils derives from art classes and art around school is obvious in the pride with which they talk about their work and respect the work of others.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

87. Pupils' achievement is satisfactory in Years 3 - 6 and good in Years 7 - 11. During the inspection a limited number of lessons were observed. However, the scrutiny of work, conversations with teachers and photographic evidence were all used to make judgements about pupils' achievement. The National Curriculum is well covered; since the last inspection accreditation has been developed in resistant materials and food technology. This provides a good focus for the work in Years 9 - 11 and has a positive impact upon pupils' attainment.
88. The pupils observed in Year 7, were engrossed in a focused practical task as they cut and assembled parts for a wheeled vehicle. Good instructions from the teacher helped them to mark out their work accurately and hold it using a bench hook before sawing. Several pupils, who used a tenon saw for the first time, required assistance from the support staff and teacher to develop this skill. In a food technology lesson, the pupils were carrying out

a product analysis and comparing the taste and texture of packet, canned and fresh potatoes. The teacher gave clear instructions and a good demonstration of potato peeling, which enabled the pupils to work safely. The rules of safety and hygiene were stressed. The pupils knew that they must wash their hands and put on aprons before work and that knives and potato peelers should be used cautiously. In another lesson, Year 10 pupils were working towards the Certificate of Achievement (Edexcel) and were making Herman bread. Higher attaining pupils followed the instructions written on the board and worked independently mixing together ingredients such as flour, sugar, baking powder, cinnamon sultanas, salt and mixed spices. Lower attaining pupils required more help. They received very positive encouragement from the teacher and support assistant to read the recipe, weigh, measure ingredients, and select appropriate tools. Very good opportunities have been identified in the food technology curriculum for pupils to apply and reinforce mathematical skills and concepts. Year 11 pupils were evaluating clock faces that they had designed and made using wood and plastic materials. With help from the teacher, a sound discussion developed about how the different surfaces and materials were joined together. When the pupils talked about the tools they had used the teacher encouraged them to look closely at a pair of old garden shears and compare them with some modern ones. Most expressed their opinions well, noting improved design features such as balance, weight and grip.

89. Teaching is good overall. In the four lessons observed during the inspection; three were good and one satisfactory. The best features of teaching are the planning and secure subject knowledge of the teachers. Overall, the design and evaluation aspect of the work has improved since the last inspection and is now satisfactory. Learning objectives are clear and the modules of work are well structured to develop pupils' skills, knowledge and understanding of design. Information and communication technology is not used enough in design and technology lessons; this is a relative area of weakness of which the school is aware. The management of behaviour is good and support assistants have clearly defined roles and provide effective support.
90. Design and technology is well managed. Assessment procedures have improved and are now satisfactory. Opportunities for pupils to assess their own skills are increasing. However, the school is aware that the system in place is not effective enough to track the development of pupils' skills and their understanding of the design process as they move through the school. Currently, no time is allocated to the subject leaders to monitor teaching, and this leads to some inconsistencies between teachers and the way they deliver their lessons.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

91. The level of achievement of pupils varies as they move through the school. Overall it is good. By the end of Year 6, pupils' achievement is very good.

From then until the end of Year 9, it is satisfactory, and by the end of Year 11 it is good. Although there is no separate examination taken in geography, the City and Guilds certificate in pre-vocational education foundation level course includes geographical inquiry. Pupils who are entered all reach the required standard.

92. The youngest pupils quickly begin to have a sense of place. They can recognise a map of the United Kingdom, and know their own address. They understand that rivers run downhill and that there is a water cycle. All of them are beginning to compare different environments and make judgements on them, for example picking out 'a safe place to play'. By the end of Year 6, pupils describe accurately the differences between a town and a village. They can recognise symbols and land use on local maps and can follow a plan of the school and the rural studies centre and farm. They make group decisions about the best location for facilities in a village and use geographical language in their work.
93. By the end of Year 9, the pupils have all learned more about maps and are able to use co-ordinates to pinpoint places. They use compass directions and take recordings from the school weather station, entering the data on the computer. The lower attaining pupils are still using a mix of symbols and pictures on their maps. Their understanding of the wider world has developed through visits to contrasting landscapes in this country, studying village life in a developing country, and the impact of tourism. They have varying levels of knowledge about where other countries are on a world map. They are aware that the earth is constantly changing through their study of volcanoes, earthquakes, the coast and rivers. By the end of Year 9, higher attaining pupils produce longer pieces of writing. All the pupils are able to use the proper geographical terms.
94. There are no separate geography lessons beyond Year 9. However there is some geography taught as part of European Studies and pupils learn to challenge some of the stereotypes about landscape and people. However this course does not lead to any examination in geography. Pupils taking the City and Guilds course tackle local geographical issues. These include studying the multi-cultural community in Luton, and investigating the need for a by-pass in Dunstable. These pupils develop their skills of working co-operatively and apply their geography to solve real life problems.
95. Pupils' learning is good overall and reflects the quality of teaching. It is often very good in lessons for the youngest pupils. As they move through the school, pupils develop their vocabulary and are able to write longer pieces of work. Learning is satisfactory between Years 7 and 9 where there are a lot of facts to absorb. Between Years 10 and 11, where work is based more on solving problems and investigation, learning is good.
96. In the best lessons, between Years 3 and 6, there is a very clear structure, and the pupils are involved in discussion and activity. Teachers have high standards for behaviour and provide a secure atmosphere for learning.

Pupils do not have to copy notes but the teacher keeps clear records of what they have learned. The teacher relates the topic to things the pupils already know about, and knows the individual capabilities of the pupils very well.

97. Between Years 7 and 9, lessons depend too much on the teacher talking and pupils listening for long periods, and then filling in worksheets or copying notes. They cover a lot of the National Curriculum but find it hard to remember. Opportunities are sometimes missed to get across the excitement and drama of geography. The Internet is not used enough for research. In some lessons, there are no effective systems set up in the school to handle a small number of pupils with challenging behaviour.
98. Between Years 10 and 11, the teaching of European Studies is done enthusiastically. The geography element of it keeps the pupils interested in the subject, but some opportunities are missed for developing higher geographical concepts, for example to show the nature and power of glaciers. The folders of pupils doing the City and Guilds course show well-organised lessons with a clear purpose. A variety of activities lead to pupils assessing their own progress and planning how to improve on their work.
99. Throughout the school there is a strong thread of care for the environment, and this is not just promoted in lessons. Some tutors use their pastoral time to reinforce an interest in and respect for different landscapes and wildlife. Pupils show respect for the school and grounds, which provide many opportunities for incidental learning, for example in the use of sustainable energy.
100. Pupils enjoy geography. Their attitudes and behaviour are very good and sometimes excellent between Years 3 and 6. The majority of the older pupils behave well. In the best geography lessons pupils were totally attentive and worked very hard. Where there was work to copy, the pace of the lessons suffered. There is a small minority of pupils in Years 7 and 8 with challenging behaviour who take a large amount of the teacher's time.
101. Geography is led by a subject specialist in Years 7 to 9 who has a very good grasp of the curriculum, and by a trainee teacher for the youngest pupils. The subject would benefit from one overall co-ordinator responsible for monitoring teaching and ensuring continuity of pupils' work right through the school.
102. Since the last inspection, the teaching resources for geography have improved, but there is still no Internet connection, or adequate blackout in some classrooms. The youngest pupils are now making very good progress due to talented teaching and good coverage of the national curriculum. In the last inspection report the examinations for older pupils was criticised. The City and Guilds certificate is appropriate; it provides practical experiences of geography and improves pupils' personal development.

However some form of accreditation should be pursued for the European Studies course so that pupils' achievements can be recognised.

## **HISTORY**

103. Due to timetable arrangements, history was observed in Years 7 to 9 only at the time of the inspection. Evidence suggests those pupils' achievement is satisfactory by the end of Year 6 and Year 9. A number of pupils go on to successfully complete modules of work for City and Guilds, based on local history. From the evidence of video film and photographs, pupils have good opportunities to visit and participate in role-play linked to the periods of history that they study, such as the visit to the Medieval Bradwell Abbey or on a residential visit to Ironbridge where they study the Victorians.
104. Pupils in Year 9 have a sense of time passing and awareness of changes in farming over time. They try hard to envisage how it would be to have to walk between their field strips and higher attaining pupils remember from discussion why farmers might not be happy to exchange land. They work neatly in their written tasks, but become distracted if they find them difficult. Year 8 pupils know what 'confirmation' and 'baptism' mean and understand that the church was very important to people's lives four hundred years ago.
105. Teaching in one out of three lessons observed was good, and satisfactory in the two other lessons. A feature of good teaching was the use of questioning which encouraged pupils to think of ideas, to use the evidence of the pictures in front of them, their own observations of local fields, and for example, the remnants of mediaeval strip farming. Where teaching was less effective, the text of worksheets was beyond the reading level of the majority of pupils so that they were limited in working with independently. As a result, pupils were off task, for periods of time and the teacher had difficulty managing the behaviour of a small minority of pupils.
106. Improvement since the last inspection is satisfactory. Assessment of pupils' work has yet to develop to influence teachers' planning, and at present records only what has been covered in the National Curriculum. Resources are satisfactory as at the last inspection, and the programme of study has been updated to recognise changes in the curriculum. The current priority is appropriately directed to include elements of citizenship. The use of Information and communication technology is developing appropriately in the subject.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

107. Pupils throughout the school are achieving very well in information and communications technology (ICT). All pupils have a separate ICT lesson once a week. ICT is also used in many subjects to enhance the pupils' learning. By the end of Year 11, pupils take an examination in practical ICT skills, the RSA National Interaction Computing Award Scheme. All pupils

pass at foundation level, and some at intermediate level. This prepares them well for work or college. Staff have also taken this examination, and this has impacted on the pupils' learning as more adults have a wider range of skills to teach.

108. By the end of Year 6, pupils have experienced not just word processing, but are able to produce graphs, pictures, charts, compose music and describe how ICT can be used to control equipment. They can work out the instructions for programming a Roamer and explain any differences between their intention and the results. They go on to modify their program. Pupils learn to work in a team and to apply logic. Some however have to get over the hurdle of which direction is left and which is right! Pupils are confident users of computers. In English lessons, ICT is used effectively to help pupils record their work, and to help them improve their spelling. The youngest pupils listen to talking books independently, while pupils in Year 6 have produced their own talking books, using their own speech and importing graphics.
109. By the end of Year 9, pupils produce a simple database and search it for information. They understand the branching structure of databases. They can set out a spreadsheet and higher attaining pupils can alter data and predict what will happen. They are familiar with a variety of drawing and writing software, and can produce work for different audiences. Lower attaining pupils can plan a simple route for the Roamer but find it hard to explain how they would change instructions for a different route. Pupils follow instructions accurately for producing a flow diagram to show the sequence of operations for traffic lights, but do not understand clearly what they are doing.
110. By the end of Year 11, pupils are familiar with decision trees, and have had more practice with spreadsheets and databases. Lower attaining pupils produce a simple spreadsheet but cannot predict what would happen if they changed data. They also search databases, for example 'People of Rome' to find an individual, or to find the real name of Father Christmas. Higher attaining pupils write reviews of software they have used, and are able to experiment with programs independently. The pupils' limitations in literacy skills prevents them reaching high levels with their ICT. Sometimes for example, they cannot read the instructions that go with a program, and some pupils copy data inaccurately.
111. Learning and progress is good for pupils between Years 7 and 9, and very good in the other classes. In the best lessons, progress is very clear. Pupils learn new skills and are able to share their learning at the end of the lesson. In Years 9 to 11, ICT makes a very good contribution to preparing pupils for the world beyond school. They consider the impact of technology on the world, and for some of them, this links with their work experience placements. They learn to research, for example how to make a complaint on the Trading Standards website. Where learning is less good, this is due to pupils either finding the instructions on the screen difficult to read, or

having to work with abstract programs without first having practical experiences. While record keeping is good, the transfer of information between classes shows pupils' skills but not what software they are familiar with, and this can lead to some repetition.

112. The quality of teaching is very good overall, and good between Years 7 to 9. It is sometimes excellent. Teaching assistants provide excellent support in ICT lessons, not just helping with instructions, but working with groups, questioning their results and promoting logical thinking. Support staff and teachers work well as a team. In the best lessons, teachers plan their time well, know what the pupils have already done and provide just the right level of challenge to keep the class motivated. They know the subject very well, ask questions skilfully and have high expectations. Where lessons are less good, the teacher directs the pupils closely, not allowing time for experimentation.
113. All the pupils enjoy learning about computers. Behaviour is always very good, and in some lessons it is excellent. Pupils treat equipment with respect and use them efficiently. They listen, follow instructions, discuss and explain what they are doing. They concentrate well and most show a high degree of persistence. By Year 11, they are confident computer users and can transfer what they have learned in one program to a similar program.
114. The school has an excellent policy for ICT, clear strategic planning, arrangements for staff training, and a generous budget for ICT. The subject leader provides highly effective leadership. The separate ICT lessons relate well to topics from across the curriculum but need to be timed to link with the schemes of work in other subjects. There is insufficient emphasis on pupils using e-mail, and using the Internet for research. Opportunities are sometimes missed in other subjects where ICT would make new ideas clearer, for example learning about three-dimensional shapes in mathematics. In subjects with high literacy demands, such as history and geography, pupils would benefit from using ICT to provide easier ways of recording their ideas.
115. At the last inspection, ICT was judged to be very good. Those high standards have been maintained. Since the last inspection, pupils' skills have broadened to cover the whole national curriculum for ICT. Resources were excellent then, and are still high quality. The range and quantity of equipment is excellent, but some of the equipment is ageing now and needs planned replacement. The mix of two different types of computers in the ICT suite causes problems, where groups are using different software with different levels of challenge. Not all rooms have Internet connections and this limits the range of teaching, in geography for example. Furniture for ICT is generally not well matched to the size of the pupils. There has been more staff training and this has had an impact. Teachers now use ICT for planning their lessons, and some use it for keeping records of pupils' progress. There are still some areas of the curriculum that would benefit

from using more ICT, for example for research in science lessons. The school has an excellent website, produced by pupils.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

116. In the three years prior to 2001, pupils' achievement in national tests of French by the end of Year 9 was good. Evidence from the inspection is insufficient to judge the current pupils' achievement in French. Because of timetable arrangements, only one lesson was observed. The remainder of evidence is drawn from talking with pupils, some of whom had not had French lessons since before the summer half term and had forgotten much of the language. Because of recruitment difficulties, French was taught by a succession of supply, temporary and cover over the last two terms.
117. Pupils enjoy French but have found it difficult with different teachers over recent months, and this has slowed their rate of learning. Year 8 pupils meet and greet with confidence *Salut or Bonjour*. Higher attaining pupils have a small vocabulary, whilst others were rather hazy about French words. Mutually supporting each other, they count to twenty, know some of the days of the week, and colours. Although some find difficulty reading the French language, they use examples to compose brief letters to friends in French introducing themselves, and saying which sports they like *J'aime le football. C.'est super!* With assistance they tape record themselves making introductory exchanges working with a partner.
118. In the one lesson observed, the teaching was satisfactory. The teacher is new to working with pupils with special educational needs, and overestimated how long pupils could be expected to work independently, given their tenuous grasp of the language. The intention to record speech in pairs whilst others carried on with written work was a suitable activity. But other opportunities for pupils to practise speaking and listening to the language are limited.
119. Due to the recent instability in the teaching of French, resources are incomplete, although new resources are on order. Standards of French have deteriorated at this school over the last year, but in a new period of stability the intention is to build up the pupils' achievements again and already tentative plans are drawn up for a visit to France.

## MUSIC

120. Achievement in music over time is very good for pupils by the end of Year 6, and good by the end of Year 9. Pupils clearly enjoy lessons because they have exciting, broad ranging experiences, which clearly enhance their musical and spiritual development. They particularly enjoy listening to pieces of music such as *Mars, the Planet Suite* by Gustav Holst and composing their own music using computer software. All pupils learn to play the ocarina and some buy their own instruments on entry to school.

They have ocarina and choir practises. The whole school practises hymns once a week, but the singing is somewhat restrained.

121. Year 3 pupils are keen to sing 'the register' and know that an echo is when the sound 'comes back'. They know that the bigger ocarina makes sounds 'down low ' whilst the small ocarina 'goes higher'. Everyone begins to read notation for the ocarina. They know the actions used to make music such as 'scrape' and 'hit'. They take turns when playing, choose instruments to simulate quiet and loud noises in a sound story, and most change loudness without changing pitch, improving their skills noticeably within a short time.
122. By the end of Year 6, they have a file of work, showing groups; names and playing action for tuned and untuned instruments. They know musical terms and their meanings such as diminuendo, crescendo, ostenato and have some knowledge of notation. All read from an ocarina score and most observe rests. Pupils with their own instruments and music books, practise ocarina tunes for homework. When they regularly listen to music by famous composers, they record an evaluation of the music, give an emotional response and draw a mind picture of their thoughts.
123. By the end of Year 9 they are singing tunefully, in unison and especially enjoy rhythmic songs such as calypso. They experience accompanying singing with instruments, record, listen to and improve performance. Many are confident to internalise and echo accurately the range of 'click, zoom, ta, ta, tee,' sounds from the tape recorder as a warm up activity. Decisions are made independently when pupils use computer software to compose tunes of 8 phrases, using pictorial representations and selecting appropriate phrases, a cadence for the ending and preferred instruments to play the tune such as flute. Using a more advanced program, this work is translated into musical scores which pupils read and play on a keyboard.
124. Teaching is very good overall. In the five lessons observed, teaching was satisfactory in one lesson, good in two lessons and very good in the remaining two lessons. The teachers' expertise and lesson planning was of a high quality, and gave pupils opportunities to listen, appraise, sing and perform, using voice, ocarinas, instruments and recordings within each lesson. Where the teaching was less successful the management of pupils within lessons was insufficiently firm .A few pupils became too excited, and were unable to control playing of instruments as well as they needed to. This slowed the pace of the lesson and made learning less effective.
125. There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. A specialist, who has over the last five years built up resources to a good standard, now leads the subject. There is now a designated music room, which is however, cramped for space. Computers and software are available in the next door room, but can be used only when the teacher has a classroom assistant. Keyboards are plentiful, but absence of splitters and headphones makes pupils' practice very difficult, both for the pupils to listen to their playing and the teacher to monitor what they are doing.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

126. Achievement in physical education (PE) is good throughout the school for pupils of all ages. This shows a good level of improvement since the previous inspection. All pupils have the opportunity to experience the full range of the National Curriculum including gym, dance, athletics, games and for the younger pupils swimming. The school employs a dance teacher from the Royal Academy of Dance and pupils learn riding and horse management through the Riding for the Disabled group. This enhances pupils' opportunities in these areas very successfully.
127. The younger pupils in Years 3 and 4 showed that they knew the importance of 'warm up' exercises to loosen their arms, legs and back. They are able to watch demonstrations and copy them carefully so that they run, hop, skip (including sideways!!) with increasing control and precision. They are developing a good sense of balance and in a dance lesson showed that they could use skills learnt in the gym lesson in moving in a creative and imaginative way taking consideration of the mood of the music. By Year 6, pupils are able to perform more complex shoulder balances and headstands through following the careful guidance of the teacher. They are also able to vary their shape and position in interesting ways. Pupils in Year 6 were also seen in a swimming session. The majority of these pupils can already swim and all are working towards the Amateur Swimming Association certificates in distance and swimming skills such as floating and breathing out into the water.
128. Pupils in Years 7 to 9 were seen working on fitness activities. They also know the importance of warm up - stretching muscles gently, and how to raise and then measure their heart beat. They are learning how to be strategic in simple 'tag' games and hence are realising the importance of good sportsmanship and team work. By Year 9, pupils show an excellent level of persistence in their work on extending their balancing and ball skills at the same time! They were encouraged to work independently and to develop a combination of balanced positions combined with bouncing and catching a tennis ball from foot, arm and head. No mean feat but all had a very good try and many achieved the task after practice and analysis of good techniques.
129. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 go to the local leisure centre on a regular basis and are able to take part in a wide range of activities there. Their attitude to this opportunity is exemplary and they all take full advantage of the facilities, playing games such as tennis and indoor football as well as swimming, gym and line dancing. The school has developed an important link with a local group for disabled people (DADDS) and so wheel chair football is a popular option. Pupils show a real enthusiasm for this approach to leisure sports and all are developing their skills and talents over the range of options. The school also offers outdoor challenge experiences on residential visits to Wales and parts of England. Here older pupils can try their hand at abseiling, cliff traversing, gorge walking and canoeing. The very exciting results are recorded with a digital camera and

can be seen on the school's web site. The school's good links with Riding for the Disabled means that all pupils have the opportunity to ride and some older pupils have achieved the RDA certificates in riding and stable management at level 1 and 2.

130. Pupil's attitudes to their PE sessions are rarely less than good and for older pupils in Years 9, 10 and 11 very good or excellent. They are sensible and quick to change for PE and all are in the correct kit. They develop a purposeful atmosphere with the intention of working hard and enjoying themselves. They are able to work independently and also show good team work and pairs work. Even the younger group in Year 6, out on the field on a windy day, trying to improve their catching and batting skills, showed perseverance and good humour and attention to the teacher's instructions.
131. Teaching is very good overall. Teaching is never less than satisfactory, and more frequently good or very good. There were examples of very good and excellent teaching for older pupils in Years 7 to 11. Pupil's learning follows the same pattern. Teachers have good subject expertise and are able to demonstrate clearly and correctly so that pupils learn quickly to get the skill or movement correct first time. Health and safety and fitness are frequently explained by teachers and hence pupils have a sensible and safe attitude to sport and follow known routines. They know the importance of maintaining fitness. In the very good and excellent teaching the continual keen observation by the teacher takes note of the potential areas for improvement in individuals. The high level of subject expertise is then used to help pupils identify that potential and gives a specific skill to be developed to achieve it. Praise and challenge gradually build pupils' confidence for them to exceed their own expectations.
132. The planning for PE follows the National Curriculum programmes of study and is used throughout the school. There is good collaboration between the two subject leaders who have both worked to achieve the good level of improvement since the previous inspection. Assessment of pupil's achievements is satisfactory and being developed since subject leaders realise the need to have a system which records not only pupil's experiences but also how they have improved and could develop in the future. The co-ordination of the subject is very effective. There is a clear direction for improvement and high expectations and commitment to raise standards for all pupils. There is a real determination to make PE relevant to all pupils with opportunities for extra football in the lunch time and after school clubs with an emphasis on sport for fitness and fun. Competition is not forgotten and pupils take part in inter school events in swimming, athletics and football. The heroes of the football team came very close to being the East of England Special School champions. !!
133. The good level of improvement in PE since the previous inspection has been brought about through the close collaboration between the junior and senior parts of the school, enhancement of resources which are now good

and particularly the development of whole school planning which supports the high quality of teaching.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

134. Pupils' achievements in RE are satisfactory throughout the school. By the end of Year 6 most pupils have developed an appreciation of Christianity and a range of other religions, including aspects of the Jewish faith, Buddhism and Hinduism. They are aware of the special books and places of these religions. They know the significant days and stories of the Christian faith and some of the festivals and Gods of other religions. In addition they have studied the meaning of friendships, feelings, lifestyles and choices in their own environment and in other cultures.
135. By the end of Year 9, pupils have built on their earlier achievements, and extended their knowledge of all faiths. They learn in more detail the lifestyles associated with different faiths and their beliefs. They are taught to make comparisons between their own lives and the teaching of other religions. In Years 10 and 11, pupils explore prejudices and discrimination and a range of religious and moral issues that effect every-day lives such as gender, marriage, abortion and environmental issues. The curriculum also focuses on work and vocational studies, the appropriate use of leisure time and the law.
136. Teaching is satisfactory throughout the school. Lessons are always well planned. Lesson objectives are clear and usually achieved. Questioning is well used to encourage discussion and test understanding. In the most effective lessons, teachers approach pupils in a sensitive manner that encourages discussion, listening and understanding and tolerance of the opinions of others. These lessons were planned in a way that did not overwhelm pupils with too much new information and had frequent changes of activities that allowed learning to take place through a variety of different approaches. One such lesson was an appropriate mix of a recap of the previous lesson, new information (Festival of Tabernacles), a well prepared reinforcement activity (making a model Sukkah) and a plenary that reinforced and tested pupils understanding. In the less successful lessons, teaching relied too heavily on the teacher talking and pupils listening, with too little opportunity for well directed discussion, questioning and well thought out alternative reinforcement activities. This resulted in deterioration in behaviour as pupils becoming restless. Teaching of RE is enhanced by the use of visitors that represent different Christian denominations and other faiths. The school also has a developing programme of visits to a variety of places of worship of both Christian and other faiths.
137. The subject is well managed. There are separate subject leaders for the primary and secondary parts of the school. They work well together. The schools RE policy and schemes of work are based soundly on the locally agreed syllabus. All staff have topic files linked to the schemes of work that

provide them with a range of information and teaching materials, lists of artefacts and other resources, ideas and further contacts. The primary co-ordinator has had access to limited in-service education and has attended a one-day co-ordinators course within the last two years. The secondary subject leader has only recently joined the school.

138. Resources for RE are adequate. The use of ICT was not evident during the lesson observations or the scrutiny of work and therefore made no contribution to teaching and learning. The school does however have a range of ICT resources for Religious Education. Acts of collective worship are held daily for all pupils. These are broadly Christian in character. Assemblies take the form of class, Key Stage or whole school assemblies. These are planned to follow themes of study being followed by the pupils or to mark particular religious festivals or current events. Assemblies make a positive contribution to pupils' attitudes, values and personal development through teaching and reflection on respecting the differences in people, in particular the different feelings, values and beliefs of others. Empathy with the feelings of others was well illustrated by an assembly on the theme of the September terrorist attack in New York. This assembly also provided pupils with an opportunity to reflect on the feelings of others. Another class assembly focussed well on the range of ethnic diversity in the country and the differences in their beliefs and values.
139. Since the last inspection the quality of teaching has been maintained. Resources have been extended and satisfactory improvements made overall.

## **RURAL STUDIES**

140. The rural studies department has been developed over the last 22 years, mainly due to the exceptional dedication and hard work of the deputy headteacher. A small annual budget is received from the local education authority to maintain the farm unit. Local schools are encouraged to make use of the excellent facilities and look at the wide range of animals such as chickens, ducks, geese, sheep, goats, guinea pigs, hamsters, rabbits and various pond creatures.
141. Lessons in the rural studies department are an integral part of the school curriculum. It is a first-class resource and extremely well used for the teaching of science, although the work of the department permeates all other areas of the curriculum. The facilities are utilised extensively by the art, food and design and technology departments. Pupils have the opportunity to learn through practical experience; for example, in Years 10 and 11 the specialist group undertakes the tending of animals, plants and land. For the higher attaining pupils this can lead to accreditation by the award of the City and Guilds Diploma of Vocational Education. The rural studies department is very involved in maintaining and improving the school environment. A recent project, completed in conjunction with the

design and technology department, has been establishing a very attractive garden within the closed quadrangle, which features a pond and fountain.

142. Apart from the room adapted as a classroom, facilities are good. Over the years, the school has built animal housing and erected two greenhouses, one of which is heated. Pupils and members of staff have done the majority of the building work; for example, 'Guinea Pig City' was designed and built by the design and technology department. Money to build a small animal house was given to the school by the Children in Need Appeal.
143. Weatherfield School was selected as a 'pilot school' by the National Energy Foundation for the installation of a wind generator and solar panel. The energy produced by this is recorded using a data logger and it effectively powers a water pump for a small pond. The project is very well managed by the rural studies coordinator. Rural studies makes an excellent contribution to all aspects of school life, including the pupils' academic, personal and social achievements.