

INSPECTION REPORT

ELMFIELD SCHOOL

Bristol

LEA area: Bristol

Unique reference number: 109385

Headteacher: Ros Way

Reporting inspector: George Derby
25349

Dates of inspection: 8 – 11 October 2001

Inspection number: 191451

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	3 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Greystoke Avenue Westbury-on-Trym Bristol
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Keith Evans
Date of previous inspection:	December 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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13807	Helen Barter	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Attendance; The care the school has for its pupils; Partnership with parents; Links with business and the community.
32055	Glan Davies	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography; History; Physical education.	Finance.
17530	Chris Lewis	<i>Team inspector</i>	British Sign Language; Personal, social and health education.	
10099	Sue Lewis	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Foundation Stage.	Assessment.
11642	Carol Parkinson	<i>Team inspector</i>	Art and design; Design and technology; Personal, social and health education; Deaf Studies; Equality of opportunity; Special educational needs.	The curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils and students; Spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
14943	Eric Peagam	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics;	Attitudes, behaviour and personal development; Staffing, accommodation and learning resources.
10781	Robert Thomson	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science; Religious education.	Leadership and management.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Elmfield School is a 62-place community day school for deaf pupils who have severe or profound hearing losses. The school has a sign-bilingual approach, considering British Sign Language (BSL) to be the pupils' first language and English the second. There are, currently, 49 full and part-time pupils on roll between the ages of three and sixteen years. The school has an increasing numbers of pupils with cochlear implants (CI with just under a quarter of pupils having these. Twenty pupils have additional learning difficulties. A half of the pupils on roll are boys and a third of the pupils are eligible for free school meals. A quarter of pupils have English as an additional language and come from homes that are bilingual or have BSL as the main language. Pupils' attainment on entry to the school is below average compared to that expected for their age. The school has had major staffing difficulties over the past few years and temporary closure of some classes was considered at one point. More than a half of the school's teachers were newly appointed in the last two years or were on temporary contracts. There have been long running discussions with the local education authority (LEA) about the future of the school's secondary provision. This uncertainty has led to considerable parental anxiety and some parents removing their children from the school. The LEA has now provided additional funding to secure the staffing and the immediate future of the school. The school is divided into three age-related departments - early years (Foundation Stage), primary (Key Stages 1 and 2) and secondary (Key Stages 3 and 4). Occasionally pupils of different ages can be in these departments to meet their needs more effectively. There is a deaf adult support worker in every early years and primary class in order to facilitate the development of BSL and deaf culture.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Elmfield is a sound and effective school. It very effectively promotes pupils' self-esteem and deaf identity. It is successful in providing particularly good quality support for pupils' learning of, and through, BSL. There is a very strong ethos of care and concern for all pupils and a great sense of valuing their efforts and contributions. As a result, pupils' responses in lessons and their enthusiasm for school are very good. The quality of teaching and pupils' learning is good with some very good features. The school is well led and managed by the headteacher and key staff. Staffing difficulties have been dealt with effectively, but some school development has inevitably slowed. There is a strong partnership between the headteacher and deputy headteacher. The management team has recently been strengthened by the addition of the two assistant headteachers. However, the curriculum, although improved, does not meet statutory requirements and is narrow in parts, with not enough time spent on some subjects. Consequently, the potential of the good teaching is not wholly fulfilled and pupils make satisfactory progress, rather than good progress. It provides sound value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- The school is well led and managed and there is a very good, shared commitment to improvement.
- Pupils' attitudes to their work, their behaviour and their concentration in lessons are very good.

- Moral development is strongly promoted by staff and high standards of behaviour are demanded.
- The school makes very good provision for BSL and promotes deaf culture through deaf studies well.
- Teaching is good overall. It is very strong in the early years department and Key Stage 3.
- The school's strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy are good and have begun to impact positively on pupils' skills and interest in these areas.
- The provision and support for children's learning in the Foundation Stage by all staff is particularly strong.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- The curriculum, including its breadth and balance, and the governors' role in ensuring that all subjects are fully taught and have enough time allocated to them.
- Pupils' progress in information and communication technology (ICT), art and design and technology.
- The quality and range of information to parents, especially about how pupils' achievements are measured, the progress they make and the work they cover each term, and the school's policies.
- The secondary provision and accommodation overall, including the clarification of its future.

**The Foundation Stage covers all children to those rising four years old as well as those rising five in Reception. Key Stage 1 has pupils in Years 1 and 2. Key Stage 2 pupils are in Years 3 to 6. Year 7 to 9 pupils are in Key Stage 3 pupils Key Stage 4 pupils in Years 10 and 11.*

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made satisfactory progress since its last inspection in December 1996. The quality of the teaching has significantly improved. The curriculum has been broadened with deaf studies and BSL as specifically taught subjects. Some other subjects whose learning opportunities were previously narrowly planned, such as English, mathematics, science, history and geography, now have well-defined, broad programmes. Pupils' opportunities are enhanced by college courses and the accredited courses studied in the schools into which they integrate. However, music and some aspects of design and technology and art are not taught. The curriculum does not, therefore, meet statutory requirements. This is partly due to the school's staffing difficulties, the limited provision and the priority given to these subjects. Assessment is now good. The planning for pupils' progress has improved considerably and is now thorough and well thought out. The co-ordination of the curriculum has improved and is satisfactory. Staff roles are clear and well understood, although not all subjects have leaders whilst some have two. Governors are more involved in the development of the school, although they are not meeting their statutory obligations in ensuring the National Curriculum is fully taught. The religious content of collective worship has been satisfactorily improved.

STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by Year R	by Year 6	by Year 11	Key	
speaking, listening, signing and watching	C	C	C	<i>very good</i>	A
Reading	B	B	B	<i>good</i>	B
Writing	B	B	B	<i>satisfactory</i>	C
mathematics	B	B	B	<i>unsatisfactory</i>	D
personal, social and health education (PSHE)	B	B	B	<i>poor</i>	E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in their individual education plans (IEPs)	B	B	B		

Pupils' achievements are satisfactory. In some subjects they are good. However, pupils' progress overall is limited by weaknesses in the curriculum. This results in unsatisfactory progress in music and design and technology. In ICT pupils are beginning to make progress but their attainment, even when taking into account their special educational needs, is considerably far from what it should be. Pupils' make good progress in their acquisition of BSL and in deaf studies (part of PSHE), through the very good provision in lessons and the support from deaf role models. Although most teachers promote pupils' use of spoken English supported by sign very effectively, there is some inconsistency in this practice and this affects the progress of pupils in this area. Overall, pupils make good progress in English, which is well supported by the school's approach to teaching literacy. In mathematics their progress is good and well supported in the primary department by the numeracy strategy. In science pupils' progress is good and the new, high quality, secondary provision is having a very positive effect on pupils' learning. Pupils make good progress in PSHE. Pupils in Key Stage 4 often have the opportunity to follow additional GCSE courses at a mainstream school as well as GCSE and other award nearing courses at Elmfield. Although results vary from year-to-year, according to pupils' needs and abilities, in 2001 pupils' GCSE grades ranged from A with the higher grades achieved in the practical subjects. Pupils make good progress towards their individual targets, which are appropriately weighted towards communication and literacy. Whole school targets (*performance goals*) have been set in relation to raising pupils' achievements. However, there are no clear criteria for measuring the success of these. The targets for achievement in literacy and numeracy are better and are met successful.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are very interested and responsive in their lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils behave very well around the school and are courteous to staff and visitors.
Personal development and relationships	Good. The school council helps pupils take responsibility for the school life and relationships are very good in the school. Not enough is done to help pupils to be responsible for their own learning and the staff often does too much for
Attendance	Satisfactory. A few pupils have long-term absences.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 6	Years 7 - 11
Lessons seen overall	very good	good	good

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

The quality of teaching is good and has some very good features. This positively contributes to pupils' good learning in lessons. As a result of the interesting ways of teaching and the good quality individual support, pupils attend very well and try very hard in lessons. No unsatisfactory teaching was seen. The teaching is very good for the small number of pupils in the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1 and also very good at Key Stage 3. Teachers have a particularly good knowledge and understanding of the needs of the pupils at these stages, even though some are new to their roles. Overall they are very committed to providing worthwhile and interesting experiences to help their pupils learn. The teaching of English, including literacy, is good and strongest in the secondary department, where it is very good. On the whole, pupils' communication skills are very well promoted resulting in pupils becoming effective communicators through sign. British Sign Language is taught well through formal lessons, informal exchanges and through story-telling activities. The teaching of mathematics, including numeracy, and science was good. Good teaching was seen in PSHE in the secondary department. Only one lesson could be observed in the primary department and the teaching in this deaf studies lesson was excellent. Geography, history / humanities and physical education are very well taught. Pupils are managed well; staff have clear and effective discipline. This contributes well to pupils'

learning of right and wrong. The teaching of ICT was satisfactory. However, the use of ICT in the teaching of most other subjects was limited. The school meets the diverse needs of its pupils well but more attention needs to be given to the promotion of spoken language for some pupils within the school's bilingual approach.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Although the curriculum is satisfactory overall, not all subjects are fully taught or have policies or planning. As a result, the statutory requirement to teach the whole of the National Curriculum is not met. Staffing difficulties have hindered provision and development in some subjects. Subjects which are taught are planned very well and this helps pupils to make progress. Activities are made very relevant for pupils to meet their needs and there is a richness in the programmes provided, especially additional subjects such as BSL and deaf studies. The Foundation Stage programme is very strong.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Spiritual development is satisfactorily promoted through assemblies (although these are variable in the spiritual content), lessons and the celebration of festivals. Staff members are very good role models and pupils have a very good sense of right and They have very good relationships with pupils, talk about a range of matters sensitively, and promote moral development very well. The provision for social development is good. Pupils have very good opportunities to respond to staff and to other individuals, through the high levels of support they receive. Access to a good range of cultural experiences helps pupils to appreciate their own culture, including deaf culture, and that of others.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides good quality educational and personal support and guidance and monitors pupils' academic performance and personal development well. There is very good attention to health and safety and the monitoring of any risks within the school. The staff knows the pupils very well and they work well as a team to promote the pupils' personal welfare and to make them feel safe and secure. Assessment procedures are good although some teachers could make better use of this information in their planning and target setting.

The school's links with its parents are sound and it works closely to support them and their children's progress. Most parents have positive views of the school's work although information about the school's work could be improved as parents often feel unclear about what is happening in the school. They continue to be concerned about the future of the secondary provision and have been disappointed about the quality of the provision on the Elmfield school site. They are even more concerned about the LEAs proposed transfer of the secondary department to a mainstream school, which, because of its weaknesses, is in special measures. There is a satisfactory amount of involvement by parents in their child's education but some parents feel isolated because of the distance they live from the school and the fact that they are unable to communicate with their children through BSL. Some say they would like more assistance from the school to help their child improve communication, through for instance, videos with key signing vocabulary. However, classes in signing, organised by the school, have been poorly attended by parents. A home-school link worker has been employed, funded as part of a project, to improve contact with parents.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher provides a clear educational direction for the school. The strong senior management team has clear lines of delegation, support the school's aims and values well and manages individual areas effectively. Staff changes have been managed very well, resulting in high quality committed staff team with a very good commitment to improvement.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors support the school very well. They meet their legal obligations, except in the provision of teaching the full National Curriculum. Their attention to health and safety is very good, although some issues identified are still outstanding, because of discussion with the LEA over funding. Governors have a reasonable understanding of the school's strengths and where it needs to improve. They have a clear view of how their responsibilities contribute to the school improvement.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The headteacher and deputy headteacher have been instrumental in checking on the quality of teaching and pupils' standards. They know the strengths and weaknesses of their staff very well and give very good support to them. Co-ordinators' roles are mostly well developed and they too check on quality and standards in the subjects. The school's induction programme for new staff is good. However, whole school target setting needs more development and, at present, all targets do not have clear success criteria.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. There are clear procedures and financial planning is well tied in to school improvement priorities. Some subject co-ordinators are insufficiently involved in the financial aspects of subject development. Governors regularly monitor budgetary spending. Specific grants are used well.

Accommodation is satisfactory. There are significant strengths for younger pupils and an excellent new science facility in the secondary department. However, there are significant shortcomings for design and technology. Considerable staffing problems have occurred but staffing is now much more stable and good overall. Although there are some new and inexperienced teachers most staff have a good level of competency in BSL. There are very good levels of experienced, and highly skilled, support staff. Learning resources are good. The school soundly applies best value principles.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children are keen to come to school. • Children make good progress in communication. • Children show improving independence, maturity and confidence because the school promotes their social development and gives them self-esteem. • Parents feel welcome in the school. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More activities outside lessons. • Better working relationships with parents. • The standard of pupils' behaviour. • The stability of the school, particularly, the secondary department.

The inspection team agrees with the positive views of parents. Pupils have very good attitudes to school, which have a significant impact on how well they achieve. The headteacher and staff work hard to encourage parents to join in school life and to support their children. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities, including residential visits. Inspectors find that pupils' behaviour is very good throughout the school because there are clear and consistent policies for promoting good behaviour and for dealing with any bullying. However, the school needs to clarify these policies further for parents. The school does work closely with parents but could provide them with more information about what their children are learning. The inspection team feels that some of the negative views expressed by parents are as a result of the recent staffing changes and the continued concerns that parents have about provision for secondary education.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

Pupils' achievement across the school

1. The characteristics of the pupils for whom the school caters make it inappropriate to judge their attainment against age-related national expectations or averages. The report does, however, give examples of what pupils know, understand, and can do at the end of key stages. Judgements about progress and reference to attainment take account of information contained in pupils' statements and annual reviews. References to higher and lower attaining pupils and those with additional needs are made within the context of the school's population.

2. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall. Children in the Foundation Stage make very good progress and achieve very well. This is because of the very good teaching and the very good range of opportunities provided to underpin their learning. In Key Stage 1, pupils' achievements are good. The curriculum's limitations begin to have an effect in Key Stage 1 and in Key Stages 2, 3 and 4, pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall. Teachers set specific targets in relation to what pupils should learn and achieve next in English (including communication), mathematics, and personal, social and health education (PSHE). Targets are produced from a range of information, including the school's own assessment data, and the National Curriculum programmes of study and test results. However, some subjects are not underpinned by a sufficiently broad and balanced programme of work or by planning and this does not enable pupils to make the progress they could. For example, there is insufficient time for the teaching of art and design and technology and not enough time in the secondary department for learning in ICT. Pupils' achievements are limited by the lack of a coherent programme of study for teachers to follow and plan from in art and design and technology. Literacy and PSHE including Deaf Studies are given large amounts of time within the curriculum. While this is rightly so for the majority of pupils, the balance of time means that some subjects only receive a small amount of the course of a week.

3. The school has a sound range of award bearing courses at Key Stage 4, which meet the needs of its pupils well. The school finds the range more increasingly difficult to expand when pupil numbers in the secondary department are dwindling. Awards include GCSE as well as Certificate of Achievement, and the Award Scheme Development Accreditation Network (ASDAN), particularly for lower attaining pupils. The school provides some of these courses in conjunction with local secondary schools. Pupils work towards a range of GCSE courses, which vary from year-to-year dependent on the needs of the pupils. In 1999 one pupil achieved seven GCSEs with grades ranging from B to D. Four of the eight pupils in 2001 took GCSEs in art, design and technology (resistant materials), science, photography food studies and English (at Elmfield). Pupils achieved the highest grades in the practical subjects.

Pupils' achievement in subjects

4. Pupils' achievements in English are good. They are strongest in reading and writing and satisfactory for speaking and listening. Support for pupils' communication has been strengthened, and work in English is generally well supported through other subjects. However, throughout the school, ICT is used insufficiently for developing pupils' writing. Where it is used, they find the experience productive and motivating, and some achieve well. Drama, role-play, story telling and

music make significant contributions to pupils' progress in listening and watching, literacy and self-expression.

5. Pupils' use sign well to support their English expression. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory in relation to their signing, watching, speaking and listening in English. Progress is satisfactory at all key stages but is weaker at Key Stage 2 because some teachers are inconsistent in their use of spoken English, with or without sign support. Some pupils, including those with cochlear implants do not always have sufficient opportunities to hear and use spoken English. Progress in reading and writing is good overall, although it is strongest in the primary department, where the introduction of the school's literacy strategy has already begun to impact on pupils' skills, understanding and attitudes. Progress in writing is good at Key Stages 1 and 2. Progress in writing at Key Stages 3 and 4 is satisfactory overall and has good features. Pupils are systematically exposed to a range of texts and coverage of a range of writing opportunities is provided. Progress is evident in all aspects of pupils' writing, including spelling. The school's literacy strategy and current emphases in writing have yet to impact fully on the English skills of its secondary aged pupils.

6. Pupils make good progress in mathematics. Their achievement over time has been somewhat, variable, however, which partly reflects the staffing difficulties the school has had. As pupils get older the vocabulary demands becomes greater and although this is well promoted progress is best at Key Stage 2 and slower, but still good, at Key Stage 3 and 4. There is a strong emphasis on practical activities to help them learn, and well chosen and adapted materials are used by staff in order to engage the pupils and make learning fun.

7. In science, pupils' achievements are good. Improved planning which is now good, and the appointment of a specialist science teaching, together with excellent facilities, has helped to strengthen pupils' achievements. The impact of some of this is too new to have had a full effect, despite very good quality teaching.

8. In ICT, pupils make unsatisfactory progress during their time in the school. There is a high level of focus and support for individuals, but pupils have only just begun to learn the subject in a consistent way. They make satisfactory progress in lessons but over time this is unsatisfactory and pupils' attainment, as a result, is too low.

9. Pupils make good progress in personal, social and health education. This is a result of the high priority the school gives to the subject and the inclusion Deaf Studies in the curriculum has strengthened pupils' Deaf identity well. Pupils' learning about deaf culture helps their self-esteem.

10. A combination of specific teaching in personal and social development lessons, and good promotion of the subject in all other lessons ensure their good progress. The very good signing provision for pupils in lessons and at other times the interchange between Sign Supported English (SSE) and BSL is smoothly managed supports pupils' communication well and pupils' good achievement in BSL.

11. Pupils' achievements in physical education and their progress in physical skills are very good, and are very well supported by the Portway secondary school's skilled specialist teacher, and the Elmfield support staff. There is a wide range of physical

activities and a very broad curriculum in place. Swimming, team games and dance, are strong areas of the curriculum, and effectively support pupils' progress.

12. Pupils' achievements are unsatisfactory in art, music, and design and technology. The subjects are either too narrow, do not have enough time for the pupils to learn the skills or, as in the case of music, are not taught at all, except for the pupils in early years.

13. From work seen, pupils' achievements are very good in geography and history / humanities. Pupils achieve well in religious education. Pupils are disappointed from learning a modern foreign language.

Pupils' achievements in relation to their personal targets

14. Overall, pupils make good progress in relation to the targets in their individual education plans. Targets are being more precisely set to identify the most important things pupils need to learn in subjects, although some still need to improve in clarity and have better success criteria.

Target setting

15. The school is committed to raising pupils' individual levels of achievement. A range of assessment information is collected, especially in relation to personal targets, and pupils make good progress towards these. The school has begun to analyse whole school assessment data in order to set whole school targets but these do not have specific criteria for measuring their success. Literacy and numeracy targets are set for the pupils' achievement in the various key stages. These are more specific than the school's performance targets and many pupils have made good progress towards these. Although better than the whole school targets some of these still lack specific criteria.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

16. The school has maintained the high standards of behaviour and the very positive attitudes that pupils were displaying at the time of the previous inspection. Pupils continue to display a high level of commitment to the school and their work, and relationships throughout the school are very good. Pupils enjoy school life and participate as fully as they can in lessons and other activities.

17. Pupils' attitudes to school and their work are very good. They take part in activities very enthusiastically. Pupils try very hard in lessons; in assemblies and in oral work or where lessons include class or group work conducted in BSL; they are keen to contribute to demonstrate their knowledge and understanding. They listen or watch carefully when they are being given instructions. In particular, they focus very well in BSL story sessions as when the youngest pupils demonstrate that they have followed the detail of Mr Gumpy's Outing by re-enacting the story accurately. They understand and explain what is expected of them and what they have to do to achieve it. When given individual written work, they concentrate very well on tasks and take pride in their work. On the occasions when they do not have immediate access to adult support, they show a limited capacity for individual initiative and restricted independent learning skills.

18. Pupils' behaviour is very good and they demonstrate highly socialised attitudes in lessons. They show respect for others' efforts and celebrate one another's achievements. There is a high level of mutual support, and when working together pupils help each other with consideration and sensitivity. They show a high level of empathy with one another and extend this to characters in the stories they are told. They enjoy practical activities, sharing resources sensibly and using equipment carefully. For example, pupils showed excellent concentration and enthusiasm in Year 9 art and design lesson when they used the work of Hiraki, a modern Japanese artist as a model for producing their own collages. Occasionally, individual pupils find it difficult to sustain the high standard of behaviour in lessons and act in silly ways. When this happens, the school's behaviour code is implemented by teachers and the inappropriate behaviour is not prolonged.

19. Outside lessons, pupils' behaviour is also very good, contributing to a calm, orderly atmosphere around the school. Pupils are polite and friendly to visitors and approach them appropriately. They form appropriate friendships although their capacity for doing so is limited at the secondary stage by the small number of pupils. At times, there is some boisterous behaviour in the playground when pupils play chasing games, but, in general, they gather in groups to hold conversations with one another or with the staff on duty or play well-organised games of football. Younger pupils in particular enjoy playing on the climbing equipment outside where they take turns, help one another and respond well to an adult offering support or advice on how to use the apparatus safely. Lunchtime in the dining hall is a good social occasion and pupils respond to this both in the way they behave while eating and in helping to clean and clear the tables. When taking part in the extra-curricular activities offered, they show a good awareness of the rules of games and take turns well.

20. While the great majority of parents feel that behaviour is good, some parents expressed concern about it; however, no significant misbehaviour was seen during the inspection to support their view that this is unsatisfactory. Only on a rare occasion has serious misbehaviour lead to a short period of exclusion and the support given on the pupils' return was sufficient to ensure that there was no further requirement for exclusion. The school acknowledges that there was a problem with bullying by one pupil towards the end of the last school year, but no bullying was evident at the time of the inspection and pupils report that it no longer occurs. This appears to have coloured some parents' views and the school could look at ways of better informing parents of the steps they take to prevent bullying.

21. Overall, pupils show good levels of personal development during their time at the school. They relate and reflect on issues in an increasingly mature way as when well-informed older pupils showed a very high level of sensitivity and moral awareness when they discussed complex issues in current events. They identify well with the successful deaf adults around them whom they see as role models and who play a significant part in developing and sustaining high levels of self-esteem. When, as part of the daily routine, pupils undertake small tasks of responsibility they carry them out willingly. They participate in the school council where they put forward serious suggestions and arrive at agreed conclusions and recommendations. Older pupils successfully integrate into classes in other schools, such as for physical education and mathematics. Overall, however, the limited opportunities they are given to develop their independence weakens this area of their development and they continue to show a high level of dependence on the hearing and non-hearing adults around them. This is compounded at Key Stage 4, as the small number of older pupils does not have sufficiently different rules and structures to those for younger pupil

Attendance

22. Pupils' attendance is satisfactory overall. There are a few pupils who have long-term unauthorised absences or who have to be kept on the school's roll even though they do not attend. In a small school, this distorts the attendance figures. Most pupils attend well which enables them to make good progress.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

The quality of teaching in key stages and across the school

23. The quality of teaching is good overall and has some very good features, especially in the Foundation Stage and at Key Stages 1 and 3 where it is very good. Teachers have a particularly good knowledge and understanding of the needs of the pupils at these stages, even though some are new to their roles. It is good at Key Stage 2 and 4. In nearly four tenths of lessons the teaching was very good or excellent and it was good or better in just over eight tenths. There was no unsatisfactory teaching. This positively contributes to pupils' good learning in lessons. The quality of teaching shows significant improvement since the last inspection when 15 per cent of the teaching was unsatisfactory.

The quality of teaching in subjects

24. The teaching of English, including literacy, is good overall and strongest in the secondary department, where it is very good. Pupils' communication skills are very well

promoted overall. British Sign Language and Deaf Studies are taught well. In BSL this takes place in well taught formal lessons, informal exchanges and through story-telling activities. The teaching of mathematics (including numeracy) and science is good. Good teaching was seen in PSHE in the secondary department. Only one lesson could be observed in the primary department and the teaching in this deaf studies lesson was excellent. Geography, history / humanities and physical education are very well taught. Only a very small amount of teaching was observed in art and design and technology and it is not possible to make an overall judgement. The teaching of religious education is good.

The features of teaching

25. Teachers are very committed to providing meaningful and interesting experiences to help their pupils learn. Lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives, which are shared with pupils. Some teachers present these very well, in 'pupil friendly' language, although in some subjects they are stated in a more 'adult' way, which does not always help the pupils to understand what they are to learn. The lessons are usually well structured with an introduction which recaps on what pupils have done and learned previously, a practical middle part and a plenary at the end. Plenary sessions are sometimes too short as not enough time is left by the teacher for them to be fully effective. Occasionally, introductions are too long leaving insufficient practical time. The school is aware of these weaknesses and is monitoring and providing good support for teachers to improve.

26. On the whole teachers' knowledge of their pupils and of how to provide for the needs of deaf pupils is good. Although there are teachers with varying degrees of experience in the school most have good signing skills; newer teachers are learning these skills quickly. The school successfully supports its new teachers with some having 'communication' assistants for signing purposes. A teaching strength is in the quality of the explanations given to pupils to help them understand. These are well thought out with techniques and ideas based on experience. Occasionally, some less experienced teachers do not use enough visual or 'concrete' materials and the explanations become somewhat abstract and meaningless. An example occurred in an ICT lessons when an explanation of how an email was sent and received, left pupils unsure of the process. Some teachers lack confidence in the use of ICT and are beginning to improve their knowledge through the New Opportunities Fund training using the Deafax provider.

27. Teachers promote the basic skills of literacy and numeracy very well and, in particular, key subject vocabulary is usually well promoted and emphasised in lessons. This is particularly strong in humanities, English, mathematics and science although it is less strong in art and design and technology. The school makes very good signing provision for pupils in lessons and the interchange between Sign Supported English (SSE) and BSL is smoothly managed. Pupils' communication skills are very well supported. SSE is used effectively by most teachers in literacy lessons, with BSL support for explanations.

28. Pupils have trusting relationships with staff and these are particularly strong in the Foundation Stage where children grow very quickly in confidence and maturity. Mutual respect is clearly evident throughout the school and there is an emphasis on 'listening to' and 'sharing' with others. The safe, secure environment in the Foundation Stage, together with the trust pupils have, means that they are willing to try out new experiences. In many areas of the school, the strong relationships between pupils and their teachers means that most pupils listen to what they are asked to do and respond positively when they are asked to pay attention. Overall, pupils are managed well and they behave well as a result.

29. Activities are well organised and meet the pupils individual needs well. The pace of most lessons is brisk and this maintains pupils' interest and attention. Pupils' interest is also maintained well because activities are made relevant and enjoyable. For example, by teachers dressing up in role to act out characters in the 'big books' primary pupils read. However, materials are not always sufficiently adapted for the needs of visually impaired pupils. The school has rightly identified the need to look carefully at the spoken English opportunities offered in some classrooms for all pupils, but particularly for those with CI. It is also examining how visually impaired pupils can have more appropriate materials.

30. Support staff are a highly skilled group who understand the needs of pupils and make a very positive contribution to the teaching. Deaf staff provide very good role

models for pupils' development of BSL and also contribute to the pupils' Deaf identify. Most support staff use their initiative and intuitively support the pupils with the most needs well. There are some weaknesses apparent in some support staff's knowledge such as how to use ICT to support learning. Other activities are occasionally carried on for too long particularly when there is little direction or monitoring of the activity by the teacher responsible for the class. Sometimes they are too quick to direct pupils instead of allowing time for choices and in some whole-class parts of lessons they do not appear to have a clear role. Support staff are most effective when the lesson plan and the intended learning outcomes are shared with them in advance of the lesson so they are clear on their roles. They are particularly good at supporting pupils' communication and extending their involvement with others. At other times, they are used very well for observation of pupils and assessment. In the Foundation Stage, Key Stage 1 and 2 they are used fully and teachers make really good and efficient use of their time and expertise. Assessments made by teaching and support staff are well considered and are used well to subsequently plan the next lessons or stages of development. They are used very well for the youngest pupils and the staff's expertise in the assessment of these pupils' needs is a particular strength.

31. The ways teachers have of helping pupils to learn are good and consist of a variety of individual, group and whole class teaching. Activities are frequently changed to maintain interest and very regular role-play, drama. Overall, however, little use of ICT to systematically support pupils' learning in other subjects. Occasionally, in whole class activities, there is too much waiting while support staff work with one pupil while the rest of the class watch and wait their turn. This slows the pace of the lessons and sometimes pupils' interests wane.

32. Homework is regularly provided, is challenging and contributes well to pupils' learning.

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

The range and quality of pupils' opportunities for learning

33. Overall, taking into account the school's considerable staffing difficulties and the lack of improvement of secondary subject provision beyond the school's control, there has been satisfactory improvement in pupils' opportunities for learning since the last inspection. At that time, there were significant deficiencies in the curriculum and the school has addressed the key issues identifying these.

34. The curriculum remains narrow in parts, and statutory requirements are not met in aspects of the provision for art and design, design and technology, particularly at Key Stage 3, and the whole of music. However, the addition of BSL, Deaf Studies, and the programme in Deaf-Deaf group for Foundation Stage children, as formally taught aspects has strengthened the curriculum and improved its relevance for these deaf pupils. The quality and range of learning opportunities over the whole curriculum is satisfactory. It is very good for Foundation Stage children and good in Key Stage 1 where the needs of the pupils in the planning are very well considered. It is satisfactory elsewhere in the school and has many good and some very good features. It is very relevant to the needs of the pupils and is balanced in all subjects except design and technology at Key Stage 2. Planning is usually good and is very good in English at Key Stage 1, history, geography

and personal, social and health education. Religious education is included and the programme follows the locally Agreed Syllabus successfully. Personal, social and health education is taught separately and provision for sex and drugs education is made within this as well as in science and religious education. Policies and planning for all three areas are very good and are reviewed and developed within the school and in conjunction with the local education authority. The Deaf Studies curriculum is a valuable addition to the pupils' opportunities for learning. They gain self-esteem and a sense of identity as well as specialist knowledge and personal development.

35. The curriculum, as required by law, is not fully in place. The pupils' statements of special educational needs do not require them to learn a modern foreign language. This decision to disapply pupils from the formal programmes of study was taken after appropriate consideration of their needs. There is no provision for music in the secondary department and no regular teaching of music in the primary department. This does not meet statutory requirements because no formal decision has been made in this case to disapply pupils from the programmes of study. However, pupils have experience of a wide range of music when they take part in dance and drama festivals and during arts weeks. They take part in signed singing regularly at school. However, this does not allow them to learn the required elements of the National Curriculum in music and enable them to make satisfactory progress. Children in the Foundation Stage have a good range of musical experiences and make good progress. The school has depended on external teachers and programmes in the past but has not formally made music part of the Elmfield curriculum. Curriculum provision is good for English, mathematics, science, geography, history, physical education, personal social and health education and religious education. Information and communication technology is not used sufficiently in some subjects and it is very limited in art and design or design technology. The curriculum for art is good at Key Stage 3.

36. Limited time for art and design technology in the primary department, and ICT in the secondary department reduces pupils' opportunities for learning and does not enable pupils to be sufficiently prepared to take on a range of subjects at higher levels. Certain elements of subjects, such as resistant materials part of design and technology, are not taught. However, the school has introduced a number of curricular initiatives to extend and improve the content of programmes of study, including the use of the Qualification and Curriculum Authority (QCA) programmes, and more systematic monitoring of planning and of evaluation to sustain and improve the quality of the curriculum. Pupils take a range of awards, including GCSE through their links with mainstream school. They also have the opportunity to take the Certificate of Achievement, Foundation levels in GNVQ, Oxford and Cambridge Royal Society of Arts (OCR) English, Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) and single science. The range of awards is satisfactory, but pupils take a limited number of subjects. The small numbers of pupils in Key Stage 4 make it difficult for the school to provide a wide range of subjects, but there are sound arrangements with secondary schools to make provision for different subjects such as physical education and GCSE mathematics. Taught time at Key Stage 1 emphasises English very heavily (45 per cent of the timetable) and although other subjects are taught through this area, it limits time dedicated to them. Taught time at Key Stages 3 and 4 follows recommendations, and links between primary and secondary departments are good.

37. The need to improve arrangements for the planning and co-ordination of the curriculum was a key issue in the previous inspection. Satisfactory improvement has been achieved through the introduction of the National Literacy Strategy and the National

Numeracy Strategy at Key Stages 1 and 2, and QCA two-year rolling programmes in other subjects. However, planning is weaker in design and technology and art and design where the school has no scheme of work and no subject co-ordinator. The policy for design and technology is dated from the time of the previous inspection and has not been reviewed, and there is no policy for art and design, music or ICT. Information and communication technology has only just begun to be taught in a consistent way. The breadth of the subject is weak at Key Stages 3 and 4, and the curriculum is not satisfactorily monitored for its use across the curriculum with the result is that new technology is not used effectively in all subjects. Where curriculum planning is good, such as in geography, history and physical education, it enables teachers to assess progress to help pupils build on previous knowledge and improve subject-related skills. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage has improved its high standard and is judged as being very good.

38. The school's strategy for teaching English is good. However, the school has not identified subject specific language in other aspects of the curriculum in a consistent way which would help pupils with their home work and enable their families to support them in the acquisition of new subject related vocabulary.

39. The school makes very good provision for British Sign Language. Its successful teaching in the primary department enables pupils to make good progress towards CACDP Stage 1 and 2 in the secondary department. These awards are for adults, although pupils take them, but so far there are no other examinations or awards especially designed for deaf pupils. The acquisition of British Sign Language enables them to express their feelings and perceptions well, for example, in story telling or poetry quite apart from social settings where pupils express themselves fluently. The school's approach to communication is carefully measured and enables pupils to have access to British Sign Language and to English, as appropriate to pupils' identified needs. Pupils are admitted to the school because of parental choice or because they need British Sign Language as their first or equal first mode of communication. Their needs are very carefully assessed on entry to school and their progress thoroughly monitored to ensure they make the best possible progress in communication. Learning support assistants and teachers work well together to ensure that pupils understand and that they identify communication and learning difficulties. Although British Sign Language is the school's first language, English is used effectively and adequately across the school, and pupils are suitably exposed to English as an additional language. The school's approach to communication supports the curriculum very strongly, and as well as giving the majority of pupils a first language, makes knowledge accessible to them.

40. Provision for pupils with additional special educational needs is satisfactory overall, but is very good in the Foundation Stage and good at Key Stage 1. Pupils' needs are very carefully assessed when they enter the school and there is good liaison with outside agencies so that information is properly used to help pupils make progress. A multi-disciplinary approach is taken to improve pupils' communication skills and this strategy is effective. Structured communication programmes and targets are set out in individual education plans (IEPs) and these are carefully monitored. Evaluation within the IEPs is unclear, but teachers monitor pupils' progress through their own records and these are used at the annual review of the pupils' statements to set the next targets.

41. The equality of access to the curriculum and opportunities for learning is sound. The school's statement on equal opportunities concentrates on all members of the school valuing each other, an awareness of the society in which they are growing up and the

absence of bias because of differences of race, sex, culture, disability or religious beliefs. Pupils are admitted because it is considered that they will benefit from the bilingual approach promoted by the school, central to its ethos and delivery of the curriculum. Some of them have British Sign Language as their first language, and others come from a conventional English speaking background and a small minority come from backgrounds where their family's spoken language is other than English or British Sign Language. The school makes very good provision for British Sign Language. Some pupils other than those using BSL may have acquired no useful language before they come to school. The school, through its careful assessments of pupils' needs, is able to support pupils by using British Sign Language and sign supported English (English signed in conventional English word order) as appropriate. Pupils with cochlear implants (CI) who can make successful use of their hearing have access to this, and also to deaf culture and BSL. They have appropriate access to both modes of communication and sense of identity, as a deaf or a hearing person. Conventional English is taught well through the literacy hour and individual listening and watching programmes, and gives BSL users good opportunities to have access to standard English. The school meets its own aims effectively.

42. Provision for extra-curricular activities is satisfactory. There is a range of lunchtime clubs for pupils of secondary age, and these include information and communication technology, pool, table tennis and darts. There are no lunchtime clubs for pupils of primary age. Because of the long distances many of the pupils have to travel there are no study support facilities or after school clubs. Through the local education authority, the school is trying to obtain a grant to enable it to make plans to offer these facilities, although some parents feel that this is taking too long. Pupils are offered a good range of visits through the curriculum to enable them to visit art galleries, museums and to take part in dance and drama festivals. There are also residential visits to help pupils become more independent and extend their range of experiences.

Careers and the world of work, community links, links with other institutions and integration

43. Overall, the school's links with the community and partner institutions are satisfactory. The school makes good use of regional arts festivals to give pupils opportunities to perform with deaf and hearing people; for example, as part of the Bristol Schools Dance Festival. It makes sound use of visitors to enrich the curriculum, such as coaches from Bristol City Football Club and the Lawn Tennis Association. The school frequently welcomes visitors from the Centre for Deaf Studies. There are good links with the Bristol Service for Sensory Impaired Children pre-school team which ensures that parents and children are well prepared for starting school. The integration of some children into the Deaf-Deaf Group gives them good opportunities to work with deaf adults within a fully signing environment.

44. There is a sound careers programme in place from Year 9 with pre-transition reviews involving a specialist careers advisor and the school's careers co-ordinator works closely with the 'Connexions' careers provider and other agencies. The school is developing a work-related learning curriculum although the number of pupils involved is very small. For example, pupils attend courses, which have a practical nature such as a certificated course in construction at a school for pupils with special educational needs. A small number of pupils have successfully participated in work experience placements, such as sports and leisure or child care programmes, and they have the opportunity to visit different colleges to see if courses are suitable for them. Some work experience is based in school, for example, supervising primary age pupils in the playground or 'work-shadowing' deaf people in local employment. The school is successful in its arrangements to find appropriate placements for school leavers. These may be at local colleges, further education departments for deaf students or directly into employment.

45. Opportunities for pupils to integrate at secondary stage in their education continue to be fairly limited. Links with Portway School for some physical education lessons make a positive contribution to pupils' social development. Each year, there are some inclusion opportunities for pupils to take GCSEs at Cotham School, for example, in mathematics and art with very good support from the community support worker. However, there is currently insufficient communication between the two schools so that both parties are clear about how the inclusion is to improve pupils' academic progress and personal development and how this relates to work being planned at Elmfield.

Provision for personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development

46. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Although it was judged as good in the previous inspection, promoting the spiritual development of pupils, particularly by strengthening the religious content of collective worship, was made a key issue. The school has made satisfactory improvement in its provision for pupils' spiritual development and the religious content of assemblies and has maintained its standards in moral, social and cultural development.

47. Satisfactory opportunities for pupils to develop spiritual awareness are provided in a significant number of lessons. However, this element of the school's provision still lacks appropriate and deliberate planning, and examples in lessons appeared by chance rather than design, in most cases. Assemblies are variable in their spiritual content and

demands but meet statutory requirements and are well managed. They are challenging for pupils on some occasions, for example, when pupils are asked to consider sharing both food and ideas, and how the water to make food grow also enables humans to grow in body and also in mind. There is a tendency for assemblies to resemble lessons rather than collective worship; although they are interactive, thought-provoking and help pupils to reflect, there are few occasions where groups act in unison, either in worship, or prayer. There are good examples of wonder and curiosity in

lessons. For example, when pupils see the effect of hydrochloric acid dropping on to a range of rock samples, they say “look, it’s bubbling!” in amazement. In a lesson on Deaf Studies, when pupils are learning to tell the difference between telling a story and a poem, pupils were able to share their ideas of calm, beauty and surprise and hold the attention to a very marked degree.

48. Provision for pupils’ moral development is very good. The school demands high standards of behaviour, and implements those standards consistently. Relationships between pupils and staff are very good. There is mutual respect and trust and this provides a good background for discussion of difficult moral issues. Religious education and the school’s programme for personal, social and health education including citizenship, makes a major contribution to the school’s provision for moral development. For example, in one lesson, the pupils consider the relationship between politics and religious beliefs and are able to offer cogent arguments against bombing in Afghanistan. They show a high level of moral awareness and this was evident in pupils’ choice of pictures and captions in a wall display of the 11 September terror attack on New York. In PSHE, one pupil begins to realise that her wishes, while they might make her happy, could cause others pain and be unacceptable in society. Pupils make very good progress in learning to consider and predict the effects of past and future actions on others. They are often thoughtful and perceptive towards each other, and are encouraged to have insight, both through the PSHE curriculum and other lessons. They know the difference between right from wrong. Pupils have restricted opportunities for independent work and learning and this reduces their development of self-discipline to some extent.

49. Provision for pupils’ social development is good. It is fostered well through the school’s PSHE lessons and Deaf Studies which are designed to develop pupils’ self-awareness and self-esteem. Circle time and drama enable pupils to share ideas and consider different relationships. All pupils in the secondary department are encouraged to become involved in personal target setting and reviews of their own progress. The secondary department school council, which has its own chair and secretary and meets regularly with the headteacher. The pupils raise funds for a variety of charities, such as Red Nose Day, and are aware of the needs of others less fortunate than them selves. They are able to attend clubs and benefit from a variety of residential visits, such as visits to Cornwall, and there is a proposed Outward Bound trip in Wales. There are overnight stays for younger pupils unused to being away from home. Deaf members of staff at school set a good example and they give pupils successful role models. Pupils meet visitors through the centre for Deaf Studies and the Reading University Drama Group, and this extends their range of contacts and experience effectively. Some pupils of secondary school age attend mainstream secondary school with their hearing peer group, and Key Stage 4 pupils benefit from their experiences in their work placements.

50. The school makes good provision for cultural development through its Arts Week and its connections with dance and drama locally. Some pupils attend three-day drama workshops and pupils have performed in all the theatres in Bristol. During Arts Week, pupils meet musicians, artists and storytellers. They take part in the Signed Singing Challenge, and perform signed singing at school. The school hopes to develop its links with a local secondary school and its specialist arts provision and resources. Pupils make visits to a number of places of worship of different religions. They attend some local exhibitions of art and sculpture and also visit museums. Older pupils have links with Norway through their social studies, and hope to make links with a group in Heidelberg. They have made a film in their work on media studies and hope to see it being played as

part of an exhibition of productions by deaf people. Provision for multi-cultural education is good across the curriculum. Pupils experience Indian, Aboriginal and Irish music as well as work by African drummers and seeing samba bands in their arts week. Collective worship, Deaf Studies, geography, history and art have very clear components to teach pupils about different cultures. For example, this term, pupils at Key Stage 3 are learning about Japanese art, and this is supported in the Deaf Studies curriculum. Pupils discuss the crisis in Afghanistan and this is reflected in religious education and collective worship. The school's commitment to multi-cultural education is an integral part of its curriculum.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

Procedures for child protection and ensuring pupils' welfare

51. The school provides pupils with good quality educational and personal support and guidance. Effective monitoring of their academic performance and personal development makes a strong contribution to pupils' progress as they move through the school. Parents are pleased with the quality of pastoral support in which their children are taught to value themselves as deaf people in school and the hearing community. They feel that the increase in deaf staff in the school raises their children's self-esteem and helps them to become more confident in their use of sign.

52. There are sound procedures to monitor and promote pupils' attendance and to follow up any unexplained absences. The reasons why these procedures are not always reflected in better attendance are sometimes beyond the control of the school. All staff have a good understanding of pupils' backgrounds and the difficulties that they may experience in their lives. Child protection procedures are sound and all staff have good awareness of issues affecting pupils' well being which may need to be recorded, monitored and reported to outside agencies.

53. There is a good health and safety policy in place. A very comprehensive report has recently been compiled listing a number of concerns about specific areas of the school which present a possible risk. As part of their monitoring procedures regular checks of the premises are carried out by the governing body and maintenance staff to ensure that pupils and staff are safe. The school is very clear about those who are responsible for ensuring that these are dealt with and is closely monitoring the progress at which these are rectified. There are good procedures in place for regular fire drills and for first aid.

54. There is a good approach to monitoring and improving pupils' behaviour. The staff has reviewed the school's behaviour policy and put in place consistent strategies in all key stages to reward good behaviour and attitudes and to sanction inappropriate behaviour. Staff have a card system whereby pupils have warnings about their behaviour and may be excluded from lessons if note is not taken of the warnings. However, each teacher starts afresh in lessons, so if there has been a problem in one session, it is not continued to the next. The very good relationships between staff and pupils have a significant impact on pupils' behaviour. Pupils are treated with care and respect. Bullying is not tolerated and there are good systems in place to monitor and review any incidents that take place. Nevertheless, some parents express concern about how the school promotes good behaviour and deals with bullying. The school recognises that it needs to better inform parents about its new behaviour system and its 'no-blame' bullying policy. Although records are kept, the school has not yet formally adopted a policy for the use of control and restraint of pupils. This is a statutory requirement.

55. Pupils' personal development is promoted and monitored well. Parents appreciate the support and recognition given to pupils' deafness and the contribution that deaf staff make to helping pupils' develop confidence and maturity within a happy and caring environment. Pupils value the class systems of reward such as points and certificates and the celebration of their achievements and successes in assemblies, effective in so raising their self-esteem. There is good reporting of pupils' progress in personal development in annual review and academic reports. The small number of pupils in Key

Stage 4 has the effect of reducing the development of their independence. The very good numbers of support staff in lessons, sometimes results in pupils not doing enough for themselves in their learning and the organisation of it. Some pupils expect too much to be done for them. By contrast, the promotion of independence in the Foundation Stage is excellent and even the youngest children can be seen organising their own materials and putting their equipment away in specific locations.

Support for audiological and additional special educational needs

56. The audiological provision in the school is good. At school, the speech therapists and the visiting educational audiologist, work closely with the school to provide valuable support for pupils' skills in speaking, listening and comprehension, as well as identifying communication difficulties. The school has a full-time equivalent speech therapy post. The speech therapists have a range of experience with deaf pupils and work well with pupils, parents and staff. They support communication programmes and the work of the visiting cochlear implant team, through in-class and withdrawal support. A multi-disciplinary audiology clinic has been set up at the school. This enables prompt responses to problems, such as the need for new ear moulds or to deal with middle ear problems. It also reduces the number of visits pupils make to local hospitals and involves teachers and other staff at the school more in the assessment process. Hearing aid management and provision at the school is good and a wide range of listening aids is available to help staff make the most appropriate use of pupils' hearing. These listening aids include radio hearing aids, a sound field amplifier and amplification with headsets and these are used conscientiously by pupils and staff alike. There are also tactile aids to help give extra information useful in communication to pupils who are unable to benefit from sound. All auditory equipment is checked regularly and its usefulness assessed. Most staff use the equipment well, although in individual classes and lessons some opportunities to support pupils' listening skills are lost.

57. Support staff are used to help pupils with additional special education needs. Sometimes these pupils receive extra time to practise what they are already unable to do, rather than an on the spot analysis of the problem they face and how it might be overcome to help them make better progress. However, there is little provision for pupils with visual impairment, and there is a lack of equipment and enlarged print, for example to help these pupils to improve their progress. Some older pupils with cochlear implants (CI) do not have access to enhanced sound field arrangements, such as that, for example, provided for Key Stage 1 pupils; not all teachers plan activities to support these pupils' listening needs, although some good practice was seen, for all pupils, in all departments of the school.

Assessment and the monitoring of pupil's academic performance

58. The need to develop the school's arrangements for assessment, reporting and recording was a key issue in the last report and the school has made good progress in addressing it. The school has worked hard to develop its assessment procedures, policy and practice and there are now clear guidelines given to staff as to the place of assessment in the school and the forms of assessment used. Arrangements for assessment and monitoring academic progress in most subjects are now good overall but unsatisfactory in design and technology because of the narrowness of the curriculum and in ICT because they are so new. Previously assessment has been in summary form only with no ongoing records kept of pupils' progress. In art and design assessment and systems for recording and monitoring pupils' progress are satisfactory. In all other subjects they are at least good and are strongest in geography, history and the Foundation Stage. Assessment and monitoring continues to be particularly strong in the Foundation Stage where a range of observational procedures are carried out as well as some very good day-to day monitoring of pupils' response to lessons. Individual education plans now contain academic targets, in particular for English, mathematics, science and PSHE. The quality of targets set is good, although not all have specific

success criteria, and set time lines to enable progress to be clearly evaluated against them. Most teachers use the assessment information that is available to set targets in IEPs and to guide their planning, although there is some inconsistency, particularly in relation to the way pupils' English targets are supported in other subjects.

59. The Annual Review process, in relation to pupils' Statements of Special Educational Need meets statutory requirements annual review meetings for statemented pupils are in line with the Code of Practice. The reports associated with these have been strengthened further. Reports to parents describe what pupils know and understand although there is still some inconsistency between teachers in the amount of detail they include about pupils' progress and the skills they

identify that pupils will go on to learn next. Although the school does report pupils' National Curriculum levels appropriately at the end of key stages, the gains the pupils have made since their last report are not always made clear; some parents do not understand how the school makes judgements about whether progress is 'good' or not.

60. Assessment in BSL has been strengthened through the use of standardised tests and the school's own profiles. The school has taken much advice about this aspect of their work and works in collaboration with other schools with similar approaches to establish yardsticks for measuring all aspects of pupils' progress in BSL. Assessment procedures for written English have been strengthened considerably as a result of the school's literacy strategy, work with a partner beacon primary school and work with the LEA. The school now has good systems for moderating pupils' work and keeping work samples. There is now a sound marking policy but not all teachers follow its guidelines. Some very good examples of marking were seen in English in the secondary department which told pupils what was good in their work and what they had to do to improve it.

61. Baseline assessment is in place for children of Reception age and this is supplemented by the use of 'P' and National Curriculum levels for older pupils. In addition, a range standardised and other tests are used to help assess individual pupils' progress and plan programmes for them. These include specific BSL receptive and story telling assessments, the trialing of reading tests, Elmfield's own high frequency word lists in relation to writing, spelling and reading and numeracy vocabulary and a range of procedures used in conjunction with the school's audiologists and speech and language therapists. These are generally used well to help identify pupils' targets and to focus teachers' emphases in subjects. Teachers and support staff are particularly aware of pupils' targets and competencies in BSL and work hard to provide consistency in support across the curriculum in this area of the school's work. They are less consistent in their assessment, monitoring and support for pupils' spoken language skills in subjects other than English although some good examples were seen in geography, history and physical education. The school has already identified this as an important area for development and is aware that it needs to look carefully at the ways in which it identifies progress and assigns National Curriculum levels for this aspect of pupils' development.

62. The school has put in place very good systems for assessment and recording, for collecting evidence of pupils' work and for moderating standards. Staffing changes and illness have slowed down the consistency with which this has been implemented. The senior management team have recognised this and have done well to address all the key issues identified in the last inspection and to plan for further development. For example, it carried out its own audit of IEPs and has identified the need to involve pupils' more in the process of target setting and to sharpen up some targets and success criteria. Its internal review of the marking policy clearly identified good practice, but also recognised the inconsistencies in staff marking. A subsequent review noted improvements. The school's self-review in 2001 noted that knowledge of pupils' progress and development is strong. The findings of the inspection confirm that to be true for almost all areas of the school's work. However, there is a need to continue to audit the quality of IEP targets and success criteria and to ensure that parents understand how judgements about their children's progress are made, particularly in relation to previous progress and to other children.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

63. The school has sound links with parents and, on the whole, works closely with them to support their children's learning at school and at home. Parents support the school but remain concerned about its future in terms of the provision for secondary education. They are also very concerned about the LEAs consultation on a proposal to move the secondary provision into a nearby school that has required special measures. The result of this uncertainty, together with the staffing problems, and limited facilities, which restrict the secondary curriculum, is that a number of parents have removed their children from the school. Others have followed because parents

are concerned about the reducing peer group size for their children and the impact that this has on their social development. Parents realise the school is not responsible and most are very positive about the provision made for pupils in the Foundation Stage and primary departments.

64. Parents show particular appreciation of the caring ethos of the school and the impact that this has on pupils' progress in communication and literacy, and in the gains that they make in their social development. They say that the headteacher and staff make them feel very welcome and support them well when they have concerns although, conversely, some feel that the school does not work closely with them. This is, in the main, due to their worries about secondary education.

65. The quality of information provided for parents is satisfactory overall. The school recognises that some parents find communication difficult and others rarely visit the school, other than for annual reviews. It keeps them well informed through the prospectus, a starting school booklet, home-school books, telephone contact and regular newsletters. There is good communication and support for families through the temporary home-school link worker. Although most parents feel that annual reviews and reports are thorough, a small number of parents at the pre-inspection meeting said that they are not sure how well their children are doing because they do not know how their achievements are measured. The inspection team agrees that the quality of pupils' annual reports is inconsistent. While some clearly identify pupils' strengths and weaknesses, particularly in literacy, reporting of achievement in other subjects is weaker and often refers to attitudes to the subject rather than what a pupil has achieved and where improvement needs to be made. Parents are also not clear about the school's policies for behaviour and bullying. The school recognises that these need to be made clearer to parents to help them understand the school's behaviour management strategies and its approach to bullying.

66. Involvement of parents on the work of the school is satisfactory. Some parents feel isolated either because of the distance that they live from the school or they cannot match their children's signing fluency. Although the school and Family Centre (Deaf Children) offer signing and reading courses for parents, not many attend, although some grandparents have taken up this opportunity. Parents say that they would like to have more assistance from the school to help them to help their children at home and to improve their communication; for example, the provision of short videos with key signing vocabulary linked to the work being studied. Pupils' annual reviews are well attended by parents. The school makes every effort to help them; for example, by providing a crèche. Workshops held for curriculum information, such as those arranged on mathematical games and reading, are less well attended and fewer parents attend parents' evenings than the annual review meetings. Support for the Parent Teacher and Friends' Association is dwindling. However, some parents give active support as parent governors, with the school library and in ICT lessons, as well as through their links with the Family Centre for Deaf Children.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

Leadership and management

67. The effective leadership and management of the school by the headteacher, identified in the last report have improved and are now good. This has been achieved in

the face of great adversity. The school has gone through a long period of severe staff illnesses and absences, and in a climate of indecision regarding the future of the secondary provision, causing several parents to withdraw their children from school. These factors have had a negative effect, impeding the rate of progress the school has been able to make since the last inspection. The governing body, together with the headteacher, has fought hard to ensure the survival and future of the school. At times, it was not clear whether the school could maintain all its classes because of staff illness. The headteacher, through all this, has worked extremely hard, teaching the classes herself, to ensure continuity of education for the school's deaf pupils. The school found that it was impossible to find suitable qualified teachers of the deaf to work on a temporary basis. Although the headteacher and governors wanted the school to be further ahead in its development, it is a significant achievement and a credit to the headteacher that it is in its current state.

68. The headteacher provides clear educational direction for the school and is well supported by a strong senior management team. The majority of parents believe the school is well led and managed. The inspection team supports this view. The governing body, the headteacher and senior management team offer very good support to all staff. Staff development is strong, and unqualified teachers of the deaf are taking opportunities to qualify. The literacy and numeracy strategies have been implemented successfully and the quality of teaching across the school has improved significantly. Staff appointments have been very well made, and these have impacted positively on the standards in the school.

69. The senior management team of the school has been recently extended. This now comprises of the headteacher, the deputy headteacher and two new posts of assistant headteachers. This group meets weekly to discuss strategic development and routine school business. Regular whole school staff meetings and briefings, departmental and inter-departmental meetings are held and there are efficient channels of communication to ensure that all staff are kept well informed about the work of the school and its future. Staff feel that their views are included in the school development planning, and they value the headteacher's approach and the efforts she makes to ensure provision for the school.

70. The governing body is well placed to help shape the future direction of the school. Many governors are new to the school. Overall, they have a sound overview of the school's strengths and weaknesses. They feel that the management of the school, the teamwork and shared commitment to succeed are particular strengths of the school. They also realise that the school must work hard to ensure parents are sufficiently engaged and informed of the workings of the school. Governors have received both literacy and numeracy training and identified literacy and numeracy governors have visited classrooms informally to observe lessons.

71. The new chair of the governing body is particularly supportive of the school and is keen for all governors to receive further training and advice from the Local Education Authority (LEA). However, as music, and parts of art and design and technology, are not taught in the school, the governing body does not fulfil its legal duty to provide the full National Curriculum.

72. The management team and governors are clearly focused and determined to ensure the day-to-day work of the school reflects its overall aims and values. This includes meeting pupils' diverse communication, hearing, medical and therapeutic needs, as well as raising standards across the school through the high quality of education it

provides. Regular meetings are held to ensure statement provision is met, and termly meeting are held to review individual education plans.

73. Satisfactory arrangements have been made to implement performance management. Team leaders have been identified and teams allocated. Initial objectives and targets have been set and time scales agreed. All appropriate committees are in place and the governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities.

74. The school has clear procedures to monitor and evaluate other aspects of its work and performance. Teaching and learning is formally monitored and evaluated by the headteacher, senior team members and subject co-ordinators, as well as observational visits from governors. The headteacher and deputy headteacher, as a result, have a very clear understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the teaching and learning and where improvements need making. Subject co-ordinators have clear roles, which are well understood. They are responsible for monitoring teachers' planning as well as classroom observations focused on identified issues. They then link to an identified curriculum governor to discuss their action planning, and resource development. This is good practice and has a positive impact on the quality of teaching across the school.

75. The school is in the early stages of the use of analysis of information to identify better what it needs to do to improve standards further. The school has used Performance and Assessment Data (PANDA) for special schools, but found this of little use due to the lack of comparative data. It has made contact with similar schools for deaf children in London and Birmingham, a Consortium of Sign Bilingual Schools and Services, in an attempt to compare performance data, but these schools only cater for primary aged pupils.

76. On entry, pupils in foundation are initially assessed using the Bristol Baseline assessment procedures. To support this, the school is using the differentiated performance criteria ('P' levels) for young pupils in an attempt to track progress in small steps. This is useful at the Foundation Stage and primary department of the school, but as these scales only extend to the early levels of the National Curriculum, they have limited use as pupils soon exceed this level.

77. Performance goals are set for pupils in the school's strategic development plan. However, these lack clear criteria for success and the school has found that it is not useful to compare year groups of pupils as the groups are too small and the ability of year groups vary significantly year-by-year. It is more important to evaluate the progress of individual children as they move through the school. This is done successfully through annual reviews and regular monitoring and evaluating pupils' individual education plans.

Staffing, accommodation and learning resources of the school; induction and professional development of staff

78. Since the previous inspection, because of the highly specialised nature of skills required, the school has experienced considerable difficulties in attracting and retaining sufficient suitably qualified teachers. However, these difficulties have now been largely resolved. There are sufficient staff for the numbers of pupils and there is a good match between the skills of teachers and support staff to the requirements of the curriculum and the needs of the pupils. At present, there is no specifically qualified teacher to provide the full secondary curriculum in music or design and technology, but this is not the main deciding factor in the limited provision for these subjects. There are good arrangements for the induction of staff new to the school, which ensure that these staff are enabled to play a full part in the life of the school immediately on arrival. Priorities in staff training are directed towards ensuring that all teachers are qualified teachers of the deaf and are fluent in BSL. Arrangements for the continuing professional development of staff are appropriately based on teacher's performance management targets or school needs. These are identified through school development planning, are well structured and their effectiveness is systematically monitored.

79. The school has worked hard to overcome accommodation issues. Since September the school now has two terrapin buildings. One is very well equipped and designed for science, the other is good accommodation used for more general teaching of older pupils. This works well and has a positive impact on standards.

80. Accommodation is now satisfactory overall with significant strengths. This is particularly the case for younger pupils. It is well used and both indoor and outdoor facilities support the curriculum well in most respects. There is now a dedicated ICT room but its location is problematic as staff has to pass through it to access another room and

this is distracting. The existing provision for the Foundation Stage has been developed well and there is well advanced planning to provide a substantial covered outdoor play area together with opportunities for tending and observing plants in garden areas in the courtyard. There is good provision for play with an appropriate balance of hard and grassed surfaces. However, there are significant shortcomings in the accommodation for design and technology. The standard of décor and maintenance in the corridor in the old school building which pupils have to use is poor. It has damp and decaying plaster and does not reflect well on those responsible for the fabric of the building or their concern

for the well being and self-esteem of Elmfield pupils. There are a number of health and safety and security issues which the governors have brought to the attention of the responsible bodies but which have not been yet been attended to. Discussions are taking place over the responsibilities regarding the shared site and the proportions of payment required by the LEA of the school.

81. Resources for learning are good overall in quantity, range and quality, for example, resources for religious education are very good. However, for design and technology they are inadequate to support more than a very narrow range of activities within the subject particularly at secondary level. Throughout the school, pupils have good access to appropriate resources although for primary aged pupils there is unsatisfactory access to ICT within classrooms. They do have access to the ICT suite but, for younger pupils, the positioning of the equipment is totally inappropriate. The school makes effective use of community and other resources to ensure that shortcomings in subjects such as physical education are overcome. For design and technology at Key Stage 4, some pupils have access to teaching and resources in other schools, but this is not available to all pupils. In most subjects, curriculum experiences are extended well through visits to places of local interest and by visitors to the school.

Financial planning and management

82. The strategic use of resources is sound. The finance and building committee of the governors meets regularly and undertakes detailed regular monitoring of the budget. This is well constructed in response to the indicative figures given by the local education authority. Resources are allocated in line with the priorities identified by the senior management team in the school development plan. There are clear procedures and appropriate controls in place for ordering books, materials and equipment. The school has a reasonable under spend partly as a result of prudent accountancy and good housekeeping as well as the fact that the expected school rolls have not materialised. After a strong deputation by the chair of the governors the local education authority agreed to fund additional secondary department pupil places to maintain staff and provision in this department.

83. Curriculum allowances are the responsibility of the deputy headteacher and subject co-ordinators who make their bids for resources for their subject taking into account of the priorities identified in the school improvement plans. However, the co-ordinators do not take a full enough role in the financial management of their subjects. For instance, although ICT is a priority for the school, the co-ordinator only has a very small budget for consumables and no budget for development. There is little knowledge of the previous grant funding for equipment, how this has been spent and formal planning for replacement equipment.

84. The school's administration assistant ensures the smooth running of the school's financial transactions and procedures. New technologies are used to support financial planning and monitoring spending. The accounts are audited annually and submitted for approval to the governing body. A best value statement is submitted to the LEA with the approved budget annually. The school buys into the LEA's advisory service, which includes a wide variety of support on personnel matters as well as the finance and budget service and curriculum.

85. The use of the standards fund is good and grants are used for specific purposes, for example, a large proportion of this year's grant has been earmarked for the extension of the Key Stage 3 literacy and numeracy schemes. Another proportion of the grant has been allocated to staff development, in particular the training of staff for British Sign Language (BSL).

86. The school implements a consistent policy of tendering for services, where appropriate, and supplements its finances through fund raising and voluntary support. Small sums of money raised by the school in this way are used to purchase learning materials in areas of the curriculum that are identified as having a shortfall of apparatus and equipment, for instance to provide small items in the new secondary classrooms recently provided. This fund is audited annually by a private company.

87. The school soundly applies the principles of best value soundly. Senior managers and governors show an increasing understanding of all the elements. The headteacher uses contact with other schools for the deaf using BSL as a mechanism for comparing pupils' performance at the end of key stages as well as external accredited courses. The school has joined a Consortium of Sign Bilingual Schools and Services. This consortium has not yet been able to make any conclusions or recommendations and there is no other all-age day school that uses BSL. The school has worked hard with the LEA to reduce cost and are being vigilant about cost effective and prudent. The low pupil roll and the high staff cost involved to meet their needs, however, have resulted in the unit cost being relatively high.

88. The principle of challenge is also applied in a number of ways. The senior management team and the governors constantly and rigorously monitor and evaluate their performance across all areas of the school. This is reflected in the school improvement plan and strategic planning.

89. As part of their consultation process they seek, record and evaluate the views of the pupils and parents. The school council is one way in which they listen to the views of the pupils. On a personal level, the role of the class teachers and the form tutors is a strongly developed one. The very good relationships between pupils and the staff and the discussion that occurs during the tutorial time means that pupils' views are very well considered and taken account of by the management. There is no parent teacher association but parents are welcomed to school or to telephone the school to discuss any problem. Parents also have an opportunity to express their views at the annual review meetings. The parents are invited to the school three times a year to discuss their children's progress. First to discuss the IEP, secondly to discuss the Annual Review of the child's Statement of Special Educational Need and in the summer term to discuss the school's annual report. This gives the parents good opportunities to discuss the pupils' education. In the last year's review meetings almost all the parents attended.

90. The school competes to maintain its place in the 'marketplace' of deaf education by promoting the work and the successes of the school. It seeks to develop its facilities as a centre of excellence and a regional resource centre. The staff is working hard to promote the school's positive image to attract new admissions, especially from other Local Education Authority's in order to develop this concept of the school. These arrangements are having an impact on the education provided by the school through the contacts that it has made with a number of local schools, for instance, the successful integration of Key Stage 3 pupils in the physical education programme.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

91. In order to improve the educational standards and rectify the weaknesses the headteacher, senior management team and governing body should:

- Improve the curriculum by:
 - * ensuring that art, design and technology, and music are fully taught as the law requires;
 - * there is a better balance between the subjects of the National Curriculum and that they have sufficient time allocated to them, within the context of the whole curriculum provided;
 - * ensuring curriculum policies and planning exist for all subjects** and are regularly reviewed using included identified monitoring and evaluation procedures.
- Improve pupils' progress in ICT**, art and design and technology by:
 - * ensuring that a full programme of study is taught throughout the school and that sufficient time is allocated to the subjects;
 - * ensuring all documentation to support the subject and pupils' learning is in place and fully used, especially to inform future development and planning;
 - * improve the role of the co-ordinator in monitoring and evaluating the school's work in the subjects, especially with regard to financial arrangements for developing the subject.
- Improve communication with parents so:
 - * they have clearer information about what pupils are going to learn;
 - * that reports to parents are consistent in identifying what their children know, understand, and can do, and they are clear on how their attainment is measured;
 - * that policies, such as for behaviour and measures against bullying, are explained in a clear way;
 - * that increased ways are provided for parents to communicate with their children and involved in their learning.
- In conjunction with the LEA, remove the uncertainty of the future of the secondary provision and secure its quality.

92. In addition to the key issues above, the following less important issues should be considered for inclusion in the school's action plan:

- * clarify and monitor further, the policy and practice in relation to the use of spoken English within the school's bilingual approach;
- * improve communication with partner schools where pupils are integrated, so that all the staff are clear on what pupils are to learn, plan together and monitor pupils' progress more effectively.

*** identified in the current school development plan.*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	97
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	43

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	34	44	17	0	0	0
Percentage	2	35	45	18	0	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	49
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	18

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	13

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	7

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.0

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	4.9

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

Attainment

Because of the very small number of pupils, it is not possible to report on pupils' attainment as assessed by teachers or through tests / examinations.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	2
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	40
Any other minority ethnic group	5

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	1	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: YR – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	12.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	4.3
Average class size	6

Education support staff: YR– Y13

Total number of education support staff	10
Total aggregate hours worked per week	306

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	720533.00
Total expenditure	739805.00
Expenditure per pupil	12540.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	56224.00
Balance carried forward to next year	36952.00

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	5.6
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	1
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
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	48
Number of questionnaires returned	26

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	23	4	8	0
My child is making good progress in school.	33	54	7	4	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	32	24	32	0	12
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	23	46	15	0	15
The teaching is good.	42	35	0	12	12
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	39	39	19	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	54	27	12	8	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	42	46	12	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	32	36	24	8	0
The school is well led and managed.	36	40	12	8	4
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	40	40	12	8	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	20	28	8	32	12

Other issues raised by parents

Some parents' written comments indicated concern over the uncertainty of the secondary provision but were very supportive of the school and all it aims to do. Bullying was also mentioned as a concern as well as a lack of information for parents on the curriculum and children's progress.

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

93. The provision for children aged five years and under is very good. This is because of the high quality teaching and learning, the strong links with families, the quality of learning opportunities provided and the careful assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress. Improvement since the last inspection has been good. The provision has been strengthened by the now very good teaching by all staff and the clear linking of learning opportunities to the Early Learning Goals and guidance regarding Foundation Stage curriculum and to the National Curriculum and literacy and numeracy strategies when appropriate.

94. Children enter the school with varying skills and needs. Many have very limited self-expression on entry in both spoken English and sign and this has often interfered with their learning in other areas. Children's progress during the Foundation Stage years is very good in all areas of learning. In language, literacy and communication it is strongest for BSL and early literacy skills and more limited for spoken English and listening, in line with the school's approach to communication, some children's Statements of Special Educational Need and the resultant emphases in curriculum. By the end of their Reception year, individual children achieve the Early Learning Goals in mathematics, pre-literacy skills, knowledge and understanding, physical development and in their personal and social development.

95. On entry to the school, the early years staff, the speech and language therapists and the BSL instructors make very careful and detailed assessments of children's levels and needs. This information is used well to help to devise pupils' individual plans and targets, and strongly influences the ways in which teachers plan and deliver their lessons. All staff involved with children, including support assistants, contribute to the assessment process. They have a very good understanding of what the children know, understand and can do, and may next achieve. Formal and informal observations are used well to track children's progress, and detailed records are kept of their responses to experiences. Retained samples of work and photographs are supported by written comments and reports that explain clearly what a child has achieved, and how it was achieved. This ensures that children's progress is meaningfully documented over time, and helps plan future work and set targets. Children of reception age are assessed using a local education authority baseline package, and a range of other profiles and assessments. Some higher attaining reception age children are taught within the school's Key Stage 1 class in order that their communicative needs be met more effectively. This works well, because of the high quality of teaching and planning in this class. In addition, careful support is provided by the deputy headteacher, who is the early years co-ordinator there is a close working relationship with early years staff. The curriculum provided for children in the Foundation Stage is very good. It is planned with close reference to the *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA), 2000) and to the National Curriculum and literacy and numeracy strategies where appropriate. Planning is highly effective and enables staff to focus clearly on what children should achieve individually as a result of their lessons. Skilful deployment of staff and careful target setting in the children's individual education plans, ensures there is a very good curriculum balance that none the less addresses children's communicative and personal needs very strongly.

96. In every area of learning, the quality of teaching and learning is very good. Teachers and support staff have uniformly high expectations of children's behaviour, attention and contributions. Lessons have very good pace, and support staff are used effectively. The use of classroom routines, including music, song, sensory experiences, visual aids, signs and symbols, keeps all pupils involved in group and individual sessions. Teachers and support assistants are particularly skilful in managing children's behaviour and retaining their attention. They provide strong support for children's communication, language and literacy and their personal and social growth. The safe and secure environment, and the praise and support that children receive, encourages them to respond very positively to their learning experiences. They trust the adults around them. The Deaf-Deaf group promotes pupils BSL and deaf culture well.

97. The school has very strong relationships with parents before children's entry, and after they are admitted to the Early Years department. The home-school contact books, and regular meetings, keep them involved and informed, and enable the school to build effectively on home experiences. High quality Annual Review and end of year reports make clear what children have learnt, and what they need to do to progress further.

98. Accommodation for children in the Foundation Stage is good. There is a safe, outside play area with a satisfactory range of play equipment. The outside environment is used to well to stimulate children's interest and curiosity. The indoor environment is well used and cared for. Lively interesting displays and good quality resources are used effectively to motivate children and gain their interest; they reinforce children's learning well.

Language, literacy and communication

99. The children's achievements and progress in language and literacy are very good overall and are particularly strong in the children's use of BSL and their early literacy skills. This is inline with the school's approach to communication at this stage, which emphasises BSL as the first language and English as a second language, with the main emphasis being support for written English. Separate 'auditory sessions' and staff's use of voice and sign supported English for some activities help children to develop an interest in voice and sound. Some can discriminate between colours using lip reading and listening. Staff are sensitive to the specific needs of individual children in this area and used voice significantly more with a child on an assessment placement due to leave the school in December.

100. The teaching of language, literacy and communication skills is very good. Most children enter the Foundation Stage with very limited expressive language, and some have very little interest in what others say and do. The very good teaching and the clear adult models support children's developing interest and co-operation very effectively. Staff are highly skilled at interpreting, extending and supporting language. They have established an environment that is sensitive to children's communications, which are acknowledged and respected. By the end of their reception year, lower attaining children have extended their use of sign to indicate their needs and give simple information about what they are doing. They remember characters in stories their teachers have told and are extending their sign vocabulary. All are interested in the story telling of their teachers, and listen with interest to their teachers' voices. Higher attaining pupils express themselves more fluently in sign and comment on their learning, asking their teachers simple questions and remembering the key events in a story. Some recollect more detail

and retell the story accurately. Role-play and dramatic story telling is used well by staff to reinforce children's understanding of stories such as *Mr Gumpy's* outing. Most children enjoy role-play and require only limited prompts to play their character's role. There is systematic support for pre-handwriting skills and most children have age appropriate skills in this area. By the end of the Foundation Stage children have progressed significantly in how they handle books and higher attaining children have a small bank of words that they recognise and can spell. Most recognise their name and those of their classmates. Some can spell these and finger spell the initial letters of other words they encounter.

Mathematics

101. Children's mathematical understanding is carefully and systematically developed through their everyday experiences of song, counting rhymes such as Five Little Ducks and regular mathematics sessions. Their achievements are very good in relation to their starting points. Through action songs and matching games, children develop an early mathematical vocabulary, such as *more*, *same* and *different*, begin to count. They learn about capacity through sand and water play activities. They sort a range of objects into colours and sizes. They can find and

match similar objects and shapes and make simple comparisons, such *bigger, smaller*. By the end of the reception year most are achieving at age appropriate levels in their counting skills and know the signs for a range of mathematical vocabulary. Some identify shapes using the appropriate sign and can match the written word to it.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

102. The children achieve very well in developing a knowledge and understanding of their world. The use of daily routines enables them to gain an early understanding of time. Introductions to sessions tell children what they will do and to remind them of what they have done before. The outside and inside environments are used well to develop the children's observational skills. Children have many planned experiences to try out, feel and look carefully at materials and at themselves and others. These support their awareness of the world around them and the people in it. Staff skillfully talk the children through the activities, which are carefully thought out to offer challenge. For example they explore a range of tastes, such as honey and marmite, in a sandwich making session and think carefully before they answer their teacher's questions as to what it tastes like and describe the texture.

Creative development

103. Music, art, role-play and a range of sensory experiences provide good support for children's creative development and they make very good progress in this area. Music and song is used to develop the children's awareness of sound and their voices and they show enthusiasm and interest in the sounds that they make. In other creative development sessions, the use of various materials and textures enables children to making of marks, and to use simple constructional toys. Extensive conversational support enables children to develop their constructional work further and they learn to share and discuss ideas for building with their teacher. Teachers' and support assistants' expressive story telling stimulates children to engage in role-playing activities and enjoy dressing up. The use of topics such as the hospitals theme at the time of the inspection both extends children's knowledge and understanding and develops their role-play skills.

Physical development

104. Children's physical development is well supported in the nursery through separately timetabled hall sessions, and outdoor and indoor play and learning experiences and they attain at levels similar to those of other children of their age. These are carefully planned. Very good attention from support staff encourages children to try out new movements. This they do with increasing confidence. They try their best and take pride in their successes. In all teaching, careful support and well-chosen activities help children to develop their movement skills, and take more conscious control of their bodies. In games such as 'Simon Says' children took great care and pride in leading the activity. They watched and adapted their movements very well when they were copying others. Children's fine motor skills are carefully supported, through a good range of practical and creative activities. They learn to use scissors effectively and gain good hand control skills in their painting and early writing activities.

Personal, social and emotional development

105. There is very good support for the children's personal and social development, and their achievement is very good. Personal and social development permeates all activities and there are many opportunities provided for children to make choices and to learn to take responsibility. Children are expected to tidy up after an activity; this they do this carefully, helping and encouraging each other. A good balance of support and freedom is allowed in most activities. The children are learning to wait their turn, to attend to each other and to watch and listen carefully to adults. At lunchtime and breaktimes they share well and show good regard for each other. Staff provide excellent role models in the way they listen carefully to and respect each child's contributions. Careful use of praise encourages children's flexibility, co-operation and willingness to try out new activities. Deaf support assistants and the deaf-deaf group make a strong contribution to children's understanding of themselves and others. All staff use praise very effectively to reinforce appropriate behaviour and children are quick to also celebrate each other's successes.

ENGLISH

106. At the time of the last inspection the school's provision for English was judged satisfactory, with pupils' attainment and progress being judged as sound and often good. At that time, the school's sign bilingual approach was just being implemented and a need for coherent assessment for BSL and English was stressed. Schemes of work for English were only just being devised for the primary department, although strengths were observed in the support for BSL and its use. There has been a good improvement in the school's provision for English since the last inspection. Indeed, in some areas it has been very good. The sign bilingual approach is now more fully embedded in the school and the majority of staff is very clear as to when BSL is to be used and when English, with or without sign, is to be used. However, this is not so in all classes. Although some classes use spoken language and support pupils' listening skills effectively, a small group have inconsistent access to hearing spoken language and this limits the progress they make in this area. Provision for reading and writing development has improved considerably since the last inspection. This is as a result of the school's very good response to the literacy strategy. In addition, it has a close working with the LEA and with other sign bilingual schools to document good practice and to explore appropriate assessment procedures. BSL is used effectively throughout the school by deaf and hearing staff to support pupils' understanding of the texts they read, for discussion of ideas and to compare the two languages.

107. At the beginning of Key Stage 1 most pupils have a very limited English skills and most are still acquiring basic skills in BSL on which to base their English language development. As they move through the school, pupils make good progress in their English skills overall in relation to their starting points. In line with the school's emphases, this is stronger for reading and writing than for speaking, listening, signing and watching in English. The results of National Curriculum tests confirm that at the end of each key stage pupils achieve significantly below national levels, although there are individual pupils at each key stage who achieve closer to these national averages. A range of accredited courses are available to pupils, although most take Certificate of Educational Achievement courses and Basic Skill courses, individual pupils have taken GCSE in the past. The school is particularly successful in motivating pupils in their reading and writing work, particularly where these pupils have had very poor self-images as to their abilities in these areas in the past.

108. Progress in speaking and listening, signing and communicating in English is satisfactory overall. It is strongest for the pupils' use of sign to support their English expression and satisfactory for their use of spoken English and listening skills. Progress is satisfactory at all key stages. It is weakest, but still satisfactory, at Key Stage 2. This is because at this key stage some teachers are inconsistent in their use of spoken English, with or without sign support, and some children, including those with cochlear implants, do not have sufficient opportunities to hear and use spoken English. The use of a sound field system at Key Stage 1, plus very carefully thought out opportunities for hearing and using spoken language, with sign support, supports pupils' progress in speaking and listening further. There are a high percentage of pupils with cochlear implants in this key stage and staff pay particular attention to meeting their listening needs. At Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils' listening needs and exposure to English are appropriately catered for in English. However, support for using, listening, signing and watching English in other subjects is variable. The school recognises this and has just begun to introduce 'Live' English sessions as well as specific auditory training sessions for individual pupils. It is strongly committed to maximising pupils' English skills and using pupils' residual hearing. It recognises that its population is changing as more pupils receive implants and that it needs to clarify its policy regarding the use of spoken language so that the use of spoken language is extended in some classrooms. It is also looking carefully at language and literacy practice across the curriculum to strengthen this aspect of provision further.

109. Pupils at Key Stage 1 increasingly use their voice when identifying letter sounds, reading back their work to their teacher and contributing to the whole group parts of the literacy session. They are gradually extending their vocabulary of signs for English words and some make appropriate lip patterns as they sign. By the end of the key stage higher attaining pupils learn to adapt their signing for different audiences, for example switching to sign supported English when talking with an inspector or reading back their work. All can recount the key events in a story they have read or heard. They can give simple reasons and explanations for their likes and dislikes. Pupils in Key Stage 2 use BSL confidently and appropriately to discuss their work and contribute freely and more relevantly in group work. As a result of the strong support given through the literacy hour work, their language shows an increasing use of subject specific terminology in English – author, fiction, non-fiction, word, image, character- and they quickly take up the words and signs their teachers introduce to them. They understand what an adjective is and can give examples from their own experience and from the literature they are reading. They refer often to other books and texts that they had read as a group and talk about characters and events in stories that they know with increasing attention to detail. They understand that English and BSL are two different languages and 'switch' between both smoothly for different parts of lessons.

110. Pupils at Key Stage 3 continue to develop in their confidence and competence in speaking and listening, signing and watching and in their ability to adapt their talk and use of BSL or English language for specific contexts and individuals. They extend their use of subject specific vocabulary, using words like *literature*, *evidence*, *facts*, and *information* and their ability to offer explanations and judgements. They are sensitive to others' needs and use their radio aids and hearing aids to help them listen. Although spoken language is grammatically very immature, the systematic support given for this helps them to think carefully about how to say things - and to learn about English grammar and sounds. For example, they know that 'a' is used before a noun, when there is only one thing and they know words such as *abbreviation*, *verb* and *preposition*. Their

listening skills are supported by their teacher's expressive reading and they listen intently to identify stress patterns and 'mood' in what is said and make judgements about people's emotions and feelings as a result. In other lessons, they learn how to present an argument and to make their point. Higher attaining pupils can define the difference between *debate* and *discussion* and identify key indicators of others' points of view. At Key Stage 4, speaking and listening, signing and watching is consistently supported by the work programmes they follow in English which expect them to have points of view, to evaluate and offer explanations and reasons and most respond appropriately. Sensitive use of probing questions by staff and some good extension of the pupils' own responses supports the pupils' appreciation of different contexts and requirements. Other subjects such as aspects of the Youth Award Scheme, careers and work experience preparation, personal and social education and basic skills work further supports pupils' experience and help them to broaden their application of their English skills. Lower attaining pupils in Key Stage 4 have made progress in how they attend to, listen to and share others' points of view, use the information they are gaining and communicate what they are learning. Some pupils still have very restricted grammar and speech intelligibility, but have made considerable gains in their attitude and use of English and the strategies that they have for helping others to understand them.

111. Progress in reading and writing is good overall, although it is strongest in the primary department, where the introduction of the school's literacy strategy has already begun to impact on pupils' skills, understanding and attitudes. Although most pupils read below the levels of other children of their age, some higher attaining pupils at each key stage read at levels closer to national averages. Strong links with the Foundation Stage and close co-ordination of programmes means that many pupils arrive in Key Stage 1 with a very sound basis for their literacy skills to be based on. They have very positive attitudes to books, enjoy stories and share books readily with their teachers. During Key Stage 1 pupils make good progress in their reading skills. Higher attaining pupils can read back their own work with expression and read simple texts from the school's reading scheme. They comment on what they are reading and have a small repertoire of letter sounds that they know. Lower attaining pupils know and recognise the names of key characters in the reading scheme and have a growing bank of single words that they recognise, though they need support to understand the meaning of sentences that they have read. During Key Stage 2 pupils extend their reading skills further. Sensitive discussion in BSL and in English enables them to think about the fiction and non-fiction books that they are studying.

112. The very good teaching at Key Stages 3 and 4, and the carefully planned programmes, means that pupils make good progress during these key stages in their literacy skills, even though some have not had the benefit of the school's response to the literacy strategy in their earlier education. Deaf staff are used well to explore the meaning of text in BSL, before pupils' skills and understandings of how these meanings are expressed in English is developed – as in a lesson on biography. Pupils are helped to identify the most important words in a sentence through their teachers' expressive reading and are encouraged to pay attention to how the sentences are formed. The more fluent readers at each key stage use their reading skills well to support their reading in other subjects and to access information via the Internet or CD ROM's. Pupils make strong gains in their confidence and willingness to read and to attempt difficult text during this time. The very good support of their teacher provides them with a range of strategies for attacking new words, including the use of *context*, *dictionaries* and *illustrations*. Individual pupils also have some word blending skills, particularly for initial sounds.

113. Progress in writing is good at Key Stages 1 and 2. At Key Stage 1 pupils learn to use simple writing and story frames and progress from copying under their teacher's writing to using word bank, and writing around the room to write simple sentences by themselves. They read back their reading with enthusiasm and are proud of what they have written. At Key Stage 2 pupils' writing communicates meaning. It progresses steadily in form and content, although the grammar is often still very immature. Pupils write descriptively about their own experiences, for example, their holidays, and write short poems and narrative accounts and stories. Their writing shows increasing awareness of punctuation marks such as full stops, apostrophes and commas. Over time, they make progress in the length of their work and their ability to structure it into a narrative. By the end of Key Stage 2 higher attaining pupils know about and can identify speech marks and are beginning to plan their writing. They use more extensive vocabulary and understand the process of drafting and redrafting. Most pupils develop a legible handwriting style by the end of Key Stage 2.

114. Progress in writing at Key Stages 3 and 4 is satisfactory overall, pupils are systematically exposed to a range of texts and coverage of a range of writing opportunities is provided. Progress is evident in all aspects of pupils' writing including spelling. The school's literacy strategy and current emphases in writing have yet to impact fully on the English skills of its secondary aged pupils. Although the teaching is very good at these key stages, pupils' achievements by Year 11 are only satisfactory over time. This is because the current secondary school pupils did not have the benefit of the school's literacy strategy. At Key Stage 4 the design of the curriculum and the accredited courses mean that pupils have a range of opportunities to develop and extend their writing skills and their presentation of their work. In English itself they draft and re draft work effectively for their course work. They respond to text, media articles and communicate information that they have identified from CD ROM's. They write business and personal letters with more attention to style and format. As part of their Youth Award Scheme work they record their experiences and visits. Higher attaining pupils in their Certificate of Achievement or GCSE work display a better grasp of story structure, set the scene, use more complex and formal language and inject atmosphere into their extended stories and writing. Their work includes longer and more grammatical sentences, though these are often immature in grammar. Pupils often make increasing use of word processing, spelling checks and other ICT applications to enhance their work.

115. Teaching in English is good and has some very good features. It is very good at Key Stages 3 and 4, when taught by the specialist teacher who has a very good grasp of both the subject and the pupils' special educational needs. This teaching is underpinned by a very strong and motivating scheme of work, planning which takes careful account of pupils' IEP targets and good support from the classroom support staff. In the primary department teaching is good. Most teachers have a good understanding of English programmes of study and skills at this level. Some are very new to the school, however, and are still developing the skills of making their lessons accessible to all pupils. Where teaching is good or very good it is firmly located within English programmes of study and the pupils' individual needs. It supports pupils' skills understanding and knowledge in English rather than focussed simply on completing the task and assessment opportunities are clearly available within the lesson or the theme planned. In weaker teaching there are often missed opportunities for reinforcing pupils IEP targets or for pupils to do something for themselves. For example, in one lesson a teacher read too readily for a group, text that some were well able to read for themselves. Pupils' respond well to English teaching. They attend well and work well together in any co-operative work planned. They understand the value of the subject and say that they want to do well in it.

Throughout the school they try hard to remember finger spelling patterns for words and pupils make good gains in this area. Their handwriting and presentation also systematically improve. The school recognise that although some teachers use ICT to support some pupils' learning, more could be done in this area.

116. There is a good English policy and good detailed schemes of work that are clearly located in both the National Curriculum and the literacy strategy. The school is currently reviewing these to accommodate to the government guidance on the *Framework for Teaching English at Key Stage 3*. Very detailed medium and weekly planning supports this and any day-to day- assessment opportunities are identified well.

117. Assessment procedures in English are good and have some very good features. A range of reading spelling and speaking and listening assessments and records are used in addition to National Curriculum level descriptors and 'P' levels. The school regularly collects writing samples and most are annotated clearly. The school has recently introduced a more diagnostic approach to assessment in writing and is trailing a specific reading test, to help it monitor standards, as well as identify difficulties. All pupils have English targets in their IEPs and progress towards these is very carefully monitored. There is valuable and close work with the speech and language therapists. The school is aware that it now needs to look carefully at the ways in which it provides for speaking, listening, signing and watching, experiences, given the significant minority of children who now have access to sound because of cochlear implantation and other advanced hearing aid technology.

118. English makes a positive contribution to pupils' cultural and moral development through the literature explored, the use of role-play and drama and the discussions in some classrooms that explore characters and motives, as in the discussion around a video debating the future of the school. Reading is effectively supported in most classrooms and across curriculum subjects. However, opportunities are lost for developing writing further across the curriculum and for extending pupils' understanding of spoken language, particularly at Key Stage 2. Resources for learning and accommodation for English are satisfactory. Although some very good teacher made resources, including videos, were seen more use could be made of ICT resources to support and reinforce learning.

119. English is very well led and managed by the primary and secondary co-ordinators, who have very good specialist knowledge, a clear vision for the subject and of areas for development. They have worked well together with the senior management team, to introduce the literacy strategy into the school and on the implementation of the school's new writing policy.

MATHEMATICS

120. There has been a good improvement in mathematics since the last inspection, in terms both of the provision for the subject and the achievements of pupils. Although for the most part, pupils attain at levels below those expected for their age, a minority in each key stage attain at, or even above, the expected levels.

121. Pupils' achievements are good in all key stages, although over time, the progress pupils have made has been somewhat variable, partly reflecting the staffing difficulties the school has experienced and partly reflecting the extent to which pupils' access to

mathematics is governed by the extent of their understanding of the vocabulary required. Progress is best in Key Stage 2, when pupils have acquired a basic vocabulary and apply this to help them in understanding mathematical ideas. It is slower in Key Stages 3 and 4, where, increasingly, pupils need more sophisticated vocabulary to determine how to solve problems that are posed in words. However, recent improvements in the arrangements for literacy, including the identification of the vocabulary needed for mathematics is already reducing this effect so that, over the last year, progress has been good overall.

122. The youngest pupils at the beginning of Key Stage 1 sign and vocalise the numbers from one to 16; they know the order and indicate which numbers are out of order when they are transposed on the 'washing line'. They are acquiring the language of mathematics as they distinguish 'big' and 'small' objects. By the end of the key stage, they find the answers to problems involving numbers to 20, checking their answers using a number line. They recognise the basic coins, calculate using money and work out the change in shopping exercises. They measure heights and distances using non-standard measures such as the length of their hands. They recognise and name numerals and three-dimensional shapes. Higher-attaining pupils use co-ordinates on a grid to plan a route and know a number of the standard units used for measurement.

123. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils read, write and order numbers and solve incomplete mathematical equations. They multiply two and three-digit numbers by a single digit and know that multiplication and division are inverse operations. They use their ability to read from a scale to work out the cost of sending first and second-class post and have an understanding of reflective symmetry. Higher-attaining pupils compare fractions and decimals, and work with ratio and proportion, scaling numbers up and down. They solve problems using their knowledge of metric measures, calculate the perimeter of complex shapes and work out the probability of events such as selecting a black ball from a bag with one black and three red balls.

124. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils work confidently with standard units converting them, for example, from metres to centimetres and working with mixed units. They know their multiplication tables to 10 and respond accurately when asked multiplication facts out of order. They have a good knowledge of regular shapes and find the area of a rectangle or square from the length of the side. Higher attaining pupils use practical methods to demonstrate the relationship between the height and base of a triangle and its area. They show understanding of rotational symmetry and know the names of three-dimensional shapes, which they build using two-dimensional nets. In geometry, they demonstrate that the sum of angles where lines intersect adds up to 360 degrees and that the internal angles of a triangle add up to 180 degrees. They increasingly conduct investigations, for example, looking for the rules to explain the properties of 'palindromic' numbers produced when the digits of a two-digit number are reversed and the result is added to the number, as in $35 + 53 = 88$. They handle positive and negative numbers as in temperature scales and solve practical problems such as the number of pieces of turf required for a lawn of a given shape.

125. In Key Stage 4, pupils are given an opportunity to follow a GCSE course at a nearby secondary school and last year, four pupils obtained a 'D' grade. Other pupils use mathematics as part of the work related curriculum, including problem solving within the Youth Award scheme. In addition, three pupils passed the AEB numeracy test at level 2 last year. There are currently only three pupils in this age group, one of whom is attending mathematics lessons at another school.

126. Pupils successfully use mathematics skills in other areas of the curriculum and this is particularly strongly seen in science where pupils make sensible estimates and then carry out accurate measurements.

127. Teaching is good overall and pupils learn well; it is at least good in nine out of ten lessons, it is often very good and never unsatisfactory. It is very good overall in Key Stages 1 and 2 and good in Key Stage 3. In the limited amount of teaching seen in Key Stage 4, mainly arising from the work-related curriculum, it was satisfactory. Good and very good teaching builds carefully on pupils' previous learning, following a clearly understood pattern for lessons. The expected outcomes are shared with the pupil at the beginning of the lesson and checked at the end. Lessons have very good pace and oral and mental mathematics are promoted well through the use of well-directed questioning by the teacher which shows good understanding of individuals' levels of achievement and their difficulties. The constant use of informal assessment enables the teacher to know when pupils need more practice and to adapt planning accordingly as in a Year 9 group who found difficulty in converting units of measurement and working in mixed units. It also enables the teacher to take account of faster than expected progress as when Key Stage 2 pupils quickly grasped the tactic of subtraction by counting on in units from the lower number and the teacher was able to move on to adding mixed tens and units.

128. This high quality teaching results in good and often very good learning as a result of rapid progress. Pupils are highly committed to success and the good relationships and careful attention to individual needs together with the effective use of praise and encouragement supports the development of pupils' self-esteem and their confidence in their ability in mathematics. They are keen to demonstrate their understanding and show good thinking skills as they devise new strategies for particular calculations. For example, when finding the difference between 3425 and 3386, a pupil recognises that it can be done quickly by a process of adding 40 to the 3425 and then dropping 1. When engaged in individual or group tasks, they work quickly and effectively so that they make best use of time. They participate well in the plenary session at the end of the lesson and overall, make a significant contribution to the good climate for learning, which is found in lessons in this subject.

129. The mathematics curriculum is very well planned. In Key Stages 1 and 2 it makes effective use of the principles and content of the National Numeracy Strategy to provide a secure basis for ensuring that pupils build securely on previous learning without undue repetition. Setting of pupils by attainment enables the lessons to be more effectively targeted, while the high level of individual planning ensures that pupils are always working at an appropriate level with a good balance being achieved between new and challenging work and reinforcement of what they have already learned. The role of the school in piloting the Key Stage 3 Numeracy Strategy has enabled it to introduce an effective balance of 'Core' and 'Springboard' activities to support the integration of 11-14 year-old pupils into the overall programme. There is a good balance between formal teaching and investigative approaches, to ensure that pupils acquire a good ability to select the mathematics they need for a particular problem and set about using their knowledge systematically. Arrangements for assessment are good. All pupils have targets for mathematics and progress towards them is carefully monitored and recorded. At Key Stage 4, pupils who are following accredited courses have appropriate assessment structures built into the examination courses.

130. The present arrangements for managing the subject, with a single co-ordinator having responsibility across the school are working well and is already beginning to have significant benefits in terms of the coherence of the subject across key stages. There has

been some monitoring of teaching, but this is not securely established as a result of the staffing difficulties the school has experienced. Resources for mathematics are good and are very well used to stimulate and retain the pupils' interest but too little ICT work is planned on a regular basis. Strategies for acquiring new resources are soundly based on well-directed training designed to improve teachers' understanding and practice in mathematics, so that the budget is very prudently managed. In all classrooms, there are bright and stimulating displays, which encourage and support numeracy development. Overall, mathematics is taught in an environment that supports individual progress well and provides well for the acquisition of mathematical skills.

SCIENCE

131. Good improvement in the provision for science has been made since the last inspection, due in part, to the appointment of a specialist teacher to co-ordinate the subject in the secondary department. Good planning is now in place and this provides a useful framework for teaching. The policy has been revised and the scheme of work reflects the National Curriculum across the school. The newly deigned science accommodation is well used and has a positive impact on pupils' learning. Learning resources are now very good.

132. Overall, pupils' achievements are good as a result of the improved teaching, curricular provision and improved learning resources, particularly in the secondary department where progress in lessons is very good, but progress over time is good. This is because pupils have not had the benefit of the improved provision for a long enough period of time.

133. By the end of Key Stage 1 (at the age of seven), pupils understand '*why we need light*'. They carry out an experiment with three boxes to demonstrate the different degrees of light and conclude that the box with the biggest hole in allows in most light. They make comparisons of results, record their work and evaluate their experiment. They know that they need light to see objects around them and recognise and are aware of several sources of light, such as electric light.

134. By the end of Key Stage 2 (at the age of 11), pupils know which foods we should eat lots of and why. They think about their own favourite foods and how we can make healthy choices. Pupils draw conclusions about a balanced diet for healthy living. In a Year 3/4 class, the pupils also understood the importance of good hygiene when preparing food.

135. Key Stage 3 pupils, in Year 7/8, show a good understanding of how large molecules are broken down by enzymes. Good scientific language is used throughout lessons. Pupils in Year 9 understand that rocks on the earth's surface disintegrate through exposure to water in the environment which causes a chemical reaction. Immediately, pupils thought of acid rain and its effects on our environment. When experimenting with hydrochloric acid on a variety of rocks, their reaction to the '*bubbles*' was exciting and wonderful. '*Look every body! Its bubbling!*', one pupil said. This reaction was thought provoking and was taken full advantage of by the teacher to promote very good discussion.

136. By the end of Key Stage 4 (at the age of 16), pupils follow an external Certificate of Achievement course (Edexcel). They experiment and understand that there is a relationship between distance, time and speed. In a Year 11 class, pupils set up an experiment to measure the speed of a model car placed on a ramp and pre-set degrees of incline. The pupils devised a '*fair test*' and understood that the car had to be placed carefully on the ramp and not '*pushed*' to start it. The test ramp was linked to a computer and the data logged, recorded and an appropriate graph plotted. Pupils showed a good understanding of the processes involved and interpreted the test results meaningfully. They confirm that their predicted results match the actual results. Pupils demonstrate a very good use of practical mathematics, and good use of ICT when estimating, timing, and measuring accurately.

137. The quality of teaching and learning is consistently good across the school, but very good at Key Stages 2 and 3. Lessons are well planned and organised with activities matched to pupils' needs and abilities. Clear objectives are identified at the beginning of lessons. Teachers have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour. Health and safety procedures are well emphasised in all lessons and pupils respond very sensibly and maturely. The staff encourages pupils with positive comments and praise to answer questions and think for themselves. They gain and maintain pupils' interest and involvement by a very good emphasis on practical science and use correct scientific language at all times. This works well and pupils show enjoyment and enthusiasm in lessons, enhancing the progress they make. Pupils persevere to complete tasks, concentrate well and respond very well to instructions.

138. There is clear vision and development of the subject. The scheme of work has been improved and there are now opportunities for external accreditation for older pupils. As a result, older pupils make very good gains in science, and in their knowledge and understanding of science, including their investigative skills. The Year 11 pupils' work on '*data logging*' shows clearly the links between science, mathematics and ICT. Pupils' work is assessed and good records kept, enabling the co-ordinators to gain an accurate view of pupils' progress. Science makes a positive impact on pupils' spiritual, moral and social development.

ART AND DESIGN

139. Pupils' achievements in art and design are unsatisfactory throughout all key stages. There has been little improvement since the previous inspection, when the pupils' achievements and provision for the subject were judged to be unsatisfactory. Provision has improved at Key Stage 3, and Qualifications and Curriculum Authority programmes of study have been introduced in the primary department. Pupils at Key Stage 4 have access to GCSE courses in art at a local secondary school, as previously. Pupils make insufficient progress in the primary department to give them the range of practical experience and language of art they need to achieve their potential in the secondary school. This is because there is not enough time to study the subjects and learning opportunities are narrow. There is no co-ordinator to provide leadership and management for the subject. As a result, despite good progress at Key Stage 3, pupils' artistic potential is not achieved.

140. At Key Stage 1, pupils use different materials in their paintings and collage work. However, due to the high level of adult support and instruction during lessons, it is not possible to judge the level of pupils' independent achievement from examples of work. Pupils talk about their drawings but have very limited language to express their experience. At Key Stage 2, pupils arrange a variety of objects in different ways to improve their observation skills and begin to consider the construction of still life pictures. They are taught to consider the possibility of changing backgrounds for chosen images, and how to use watercolour crayons to colour in drawn shapes. Pupils carry out instructions and respond to questions, but show little knowledge of artistic knowledge and experience or the ability to work spontaneously. At Key Stage 3, pupils use rollers to make prints of Japanese theatre masks as part of the project on Japanese art being undertaken this term. They discover the different effects of uneven application of paint and the combinations of different colours. They begin to evaluate and discuss their work effectively. Other pupils in Key Stage 3 make a collage, reflecting elements of learning from previous lessons on the work on paper cutting. They show imagination and good

observational skills, and knowledge of the relationships of shapes and colours. There are some very good examples of work from Key Stage 3 exhibited in the school hall. These show that pupils have experience of looking at different styles and approaches to portrait painting. For example, examining abstract and pictorial representation of the eye: the construction of two dimensional cubist heads: the Family in Art (after visiting an exhibition): and investigations into colour.

141. Only a very small amount of teaching could be observed during the inspection and none at Key Stage 1. This ranged from satisfactory to very good and was good overall. Teaching observed at Key Stage 2 was satisfactory, well planned, but occasionally lacking in pace. Teachers in Key Stages 1 and 2 plan their work carefully and carry out some evaluations to show what elements of work are covered and major strengths and weaknesses. However, they do not have the support they need to enable them to raise the standard of their teaching so that pupils are enabled to make good progress. Teaching at Key Stage 3 is good and is influenced by the knowledge of the part time specialist teacher illustrated by very good planning of challenging work with good opportunities for assessment and evaluation. Presentation of pupils' artwork in school varies from excellent to barely satisfactory.

142. Pupils are keen to learn and eager to please, but they lack the ability to work independently, although this improves in Key Stage 3.

143. The lack of co-ordination of the subject in the school makes it difficult for staff to introduce a core of language necessary for the understanding of art, and to help pupils have an understanding of what their long-term aims in the subject might be. Lessons are carried out in a small specialist art room, and resources are adequate to deliver the narrow curriculum but need considerably extending. There is no computer or specialist software for art. Sketchbooks have only recently been introduced, and homework is at an early stage of development.

DEAF STUDIES AND BRITISH SIGN LANGUAGE

144. The school's provision for deaf studies is good with some very good features. The school includes Deaf Studies as part of its PSHE curriculum. At the time of the previous inspection, the school regarded British Sign Language (BSL) as deaf pupils' first language. The school has made good progress since the last inspection in development and consolidation of its approach to its sign bilingual policy. It has improved and extended its use of BSL very well, so that it has now a deaf studies course and a soundly based approach to BSL teaching. There is a continuing, clear view that the first language of the pupils is BSL and a strong commitment to developing pupils' BSL skills, whilst according BSL and English equal status. This level of commitment is evident in the school's Strategic Development Plan and in the employment of increased numbers of Deaf staff, including two Deaf Instructors. The school makes very good signing provision for pupils in lessons and at other times during the school day, including lunchtime where the staff serving the meals have learned some sign language. In deaf studies and through the strong models around them, pupils learn about deaf culture and gain self-esteem and knowledge from their work. This area of the curriculum and its good delivery contributes to pupils' access to the curriculum and enables them to make good progress towards attaining a fluent first language. Most teachers are very clear as to when they should use English (SSE) and when BSL and manage this transition smoothly. The

school is aware of the need to clarify and audit its practice as regards when SSE is to be used, to ensure all staff are consistent in their use of and support for English.

145. The links between the teaching of BSL and Deaf Studies are good. Continuity of teaching staff and approach help to promote the growth of a positive identity and self-confidence in pupils. There has been good progress in the development of assessment profiles in BSL skills based upon a nationally standardised measure. The school is currently exploring the matching of BSL skills to speaking and listening aspects of the English curriculum. Whilst there are no nationally agreed standards for the achievements of Deaf pupils in BSL, the school's assessments indicate that pupils, including those with additional needs, make good progress. The school is a contributory member of a consortium working to extend the range of BSL assessments undertaken.

146. Communication with parents regarding the development of language skills and the provision of information for parents, including signing classes through the Family Centre (Deaf Children) is satisfactory, although there is scope for more development work in the provision of key vocabulary signs through the use of video. Few parents have taken up the offer of learning BSL, although some pupils' grandparents have.

147. The Deaf Studies curriculum has clear aims and objectives in its modules of study. It is purposeful and constructive. In the primary school, pupils concentrate on acquiring BSL, expressing feelings and information and seeing themselves as part of a deaf community. The school emphasises the nature of the language, and helps pupils begin to understand the difference between deaf and hearing culture. Pupils' progress in communication skills and BSL acquisition is analysed and recorded very carefully so that difficulties arising can be addressed. In particular, work in the primary school emphasises drama, placement and story telling, and for example the difference between telling a story and reciting a poem. In the secondary departments, while elements of the primary curriculum remain in place, pupils go on to learn much more specific information about deaf culture. For example, they learn about Princess Alice of Greece, and the history of finger spelling. They continue to develop and refine their knowledge and skills in BSL. For example, they describe perspective in landscape and practise asking

questions. Also they learn about other aspects of the curriculum in BSL, such as elements of Japanese culture and information about where cars are made and information necessary to run them. The curriculum covers deaf history, BSL acquisition and information useful and specific to every day life.

148. Pupils' achievements and progress at the end of all key stages are good. A significant number of pupils enter the school with very little language of any kind, and the good assessment by the multi-disciplinary team makes as clear a picture as possible to provide a good basis for the teaching of BSL. Pupils at the Foundation Stage begin to develop vocabulary skills through classifying objects and identifying colours. These skills are developed and extended in Key Stage 1. Pupils by the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 are able to relate their own experiences, and make particular progress in being able to set the scene for the observer. They are often empathetic communicators in that they make allowances for the difficulties that others may have in understanding. This is a direct response to the very good signing ethos and the manner in which pupils are addressed by all staff. At the end of Key Stage 2 pupils are able to engage in discussion about their own experience and activities and gain some understanding of topical news stories during BSL discussion time at the beginning of the day. They are expressive and persistent. In Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils continue to improve their abilities, especially in their 'repair' skills, where they are learn to explain that they have not understood what was said to them, ask more questions and check for comprehension. This arises from very specific teaching, especially for those pupils who have greater difficulties in communication. Older pupils at Key Stage 3 refine their signing skills and work well on the development of BSL grammar, considering directionality in sign and the use of placement, role and character shift. All pupils are keen to communicate. Older pupils are entered for, and achieve success in, national examinations in BSL accredited by the Council for the Advancement of Communication with Deaf People.

149. The good quality of teaching results in pupils' good progress and level of achievement. Pupils become significantly more fluent, are able to make themselves understood and also understand. They gain in self-esteem and a sense of identity. Pupils have a strong sense of their own identity and are supportive of each other. The specific teaching of BSL is normally undertaken by Deaf Instructors although hearing teaching staff and Deaf support staff also work across the curriculum to develop BSL communication skills. There are clear aims for most lessons and the overall planning indicates direction and progression. In some BSL discussion groups the aim of develop communication skills remains but the content of the session is dictated by what pupils raise. The learning opportunities for pupils are good and all staff know the pupils well. Deaf Instructors have a very good knowledge of BSL and all Deaf staff provide positive role models for the pupils.

150. Sessions are carefully planned and assessed, and future aspects of lessons are adapted to individual needs. Relationships with pupils are very good and staff have very high expectations of pupils' standards of work while being quick to observe and understanding of difficulties.

151. Pupils are enthusiastic in their engagement in lessons and are well behaved and attentive. They are eager to contribute and work well both as class groups and collaboratively with partners. In one lesson pupils from Years 7 and 8 work in pairs to describe materials of differing patterns and colours and ask to see them. Pupils are confident in their communication and all respond well to the task, including one pupil with

additional needs. The BSL and Deaf Studies curriculum plays an important role in the development of positive attitudes in pupils and in their overall personal development.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

152. The provision for design and technology is not as good as that at the time of the previous inspection. The curriculum does not meet statutory requirements because resistant material technology is not taught. The lack of a subject co-ordinator and the school's own scheme of work means that the subject does not have the leadership it needs for teaching to have sufficient pace and impact or set clear aims and standards for the school. Accommodation and resources at Key Stages 3 and 4 are unsatisfactory and are insufficient to deliver the curriculum. As a result, pupils' achievements are below the level expected of them and progress is unsatisfactory. Pupils follow the QCA scheme of work at Key Stage 3. However, no pupils take design and technology at Key Stage 4, although the school brochure shows that pupils have the option to follow a GCSE course at a local secondary school.

153. There was no opportunity to observe teaching at Key Stages 1 or 2, and there were very few examples of pupils' work to enable a judgement to be made on standards. Teachers plan their work carefully from QCA schemes of work, and their planning and assessment is regular and orderly but outcomes show the rate of pupils' progress is too slow to be satisfactory in the long term. There is no indication of subject specific language taught in the curriculum. Too little time is allocated to design and technology, and teachers' evaluations indicate that pupils' progress is unsatisfactory. By the time pupils reach Key Stage 3, they have not had sufficient experience of the subject, exposure to subject specific language or knowledge of information technology to achieve the levels expected of them. One Year 9 lesson observed where pupils learned to change designs using a computer programme. They were able to select designs from pictures, copy them on to paper and draw their own designs ready for transfer to the computer. Pupils had a high level of support from the deaf instructor who helped pupils individually with work on the computer to help recall designs, move objects and change colours. One food technology lesson was seen also with Year 9 pupils. This lesson was well planned and had good support for literacy and sequencing events, as well as developing pupils' knowledge of hygiene and safety aspects when cooking and the properties of different ingredients. Teaching and assessment are good and pupils make good progress in Key Stage 3. However, because of their limited experience of the subject earlier in their school lives, they do not achieve the levels they should.

154. Pupils are eager to learn when they are given the opportunity. Their behaviour was good in lessons observed and when they have the opportunity to work independently, they are happy to do so. They want to learn from adults working with them and watch attentively. There is a very high level of valuable adult support and interaction to support teaching. However, sometimes this reduces pupils' opportunities for independent learning.

155. The school's design and technology programme and policy dates from the time of the previous inspection and has not been reviewed. However, although it states that design and technology is has an important part to play in the education of the school's pupils, it is not allocated sufficient time or resources to do so.

156. The school's accommodation for design and technology is unsatisfactory. There is no separate room for food technology and the area has a walkway through it. Although cooking utensils are adequate to allow the curriculum to be delivered in food technology, most are old and in need of replacement. Although the school has a separate workroom for design technology, there are not sufficient tools, materials or equipment to deliver the curriculum effectively.

GEOGRAPHY

157. Evidence gathered from an examination of pupils' records and workbooks indicates they make good progress over time. Pupils' progress is very good at Key Stage 3. During the inspection it was not possible to reach firm conclusions about the quality of teaching at Key Stage 1 and 2 as history and geography are taught alternatively each term. Judgements about pupils' progress and their achievements were based on evidence taken from teacher's planning and an analysis of pupils' work. At Key Stage 4 pupils are able to work towards accreditation through studying the subject in the GCSE humanities syllabus. This is a clear pathway of learning to complement progression from the Key Stage 3 programme of study.

158. In Key Stage 1, pupils have worked on a project on India and have produced a map showing its position on the map in relation to our own country. Emphasis made on the differences in clothes, houses and mode of transport results in pupils understanding that these are different in different parts of the world. The pupils also recognise that the Indian flag is different and compare it with our own. At Key Stage 2, pupils knowledge of the world is enhanced on a cross curricular basis with the project on the Second World War showing the different areas involved in the war on the map, for example, Burma due to its important role during the war. At Key Stage 3, from an in-depth study pupils identify the customs, occupations, food and clothes of different foreign countries. The present project involves the tourist resort of Valle D'Rosta and a study is made about the present and past life of the people of the resort. Pupils also study the environment, where people live and work, population changes, the weather as well as various local studies. Pupils of all abilities achieve a very good understanding of geographical concepts such as the reasons for changeable weather in this country and other parts of the world. In their workbooks they show an increasing skill in map drawing and interpreting the maps. Their writing in the present project show an understanding of the relationship between different areas of the town, the facilities that are needed for the community, for example, recreational centres, playing fields and swimming baths.

159. Four lessons were observed at Key Stage 3. The quality of teaching in these was very good overall with the teaching in one lesson being excellent. In every lesson pupils' participation was excellent and as a result pupils' interest was highly motivated, lessons were well planned with the work differentiated to meet the needs of all the pupils. Very good use was made of the teachers' assistants who made a significant contribution to the lessons. There were high expectations in the lessons and homework was set and marked with encouraging remarks to motivate the pupils. Pupils acted the part of life in the Italian resort and were expected to write about the life of the people from an individual perspective. Many other areas of the curriculum, for example, moral and social education are covered in the lessons. The routine of introducing specialist vocabulary is very good practice with clear coverage of new words written on the board.

160. Resources and accommodation are very good with sufficient display space, which is shared with history and religious education. There is evidence of very good liaison with other departments on cross-curricular work, not only in developing literacy skills, but also in history as well as personal, social and health education. At Key Stage 1 the subject is taught in the base classroom and often integrated into the whole curriculum.

161. The two co-ordinators have a sound knowledge and understanding of the subject and have planned the policy and the syllabus to meet the need of the pupils in the school. The school has a suitable policy that seeks to develop pupils' interest in the environment and the world around us. The main factors in the planning is the value placed on the language need of the pupils and each section of the syllabus contains key vocabulary essential to understand the basic ideas involved. Good use is made of ICT.

162. There has been good improvement since the last inspection, in particular the introduction of accreditation in Key Stage 4 as well as the development of a policy for teaching the subject. Recording and assessment of individual progress is very good, as is the use of this information to plan future lessons. All these factors have a direct impact on standards achieved in the subject.

HISTORY

163. Improvement in history is good since the last inspection. The new policy, schemes of work and planning as well as the appointment of two specialist teachers at Key Stages 1 and 2 and for Key Stages 3 and 4 have resulted in an improvement in the subject that is positively reflected in pupils' progress. At Key Stage 4 the subject is taught as part of the humanities programme of studies. Assessments are now used as a more precise tool for identifying the next learning objective and advice for the annual review; their impact on the teaching and learning are very good.

164. During the inspection it was only possible to see one lesson and this was at Key Stage 2. However, the examination of pupils' work, checking staff records, discussion with the teachers and observation of wall displays and artifacts used shows that pupils' achievements over time are good. At Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils understand the difference in how we live now and contrasted this with the lives of their parents and grandparents including the toys with which they played. This work has helped them to understand the passage of time and to reflect on the human life spans. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils had worked on a project on the various changes that have occurred during the period 1948 to 2001. A good display of artifacts and pictures collected by contribution from the pupils' families stimulated pupils' interest and enhanced their knowledge.

165. Pupils of all abilities make good progress in lessons and over time. The scrutiny of pupils' work in the subject gives a clear indication that by the end of Key Stage 3 they are gain an excellent understanding of complex historical issues and data. An example of this was the project on the Second World War that involved cross curricula study involving geography and English as well as other subjects such as relating to the geography of Europe and the Far East. In this project pupils were encouraged to ask their families of any suitable artifacts regarding the war that they had in their possession.

166. The quality of teaching was good in the one lesson observed. Teachers' planning shows clear aims and objectives and consideration is carefully given to different pupils' needs. At the beginning of lessons there is a good recap on previous learning using the

very good displays in the classroom. The lesson seen aimed at showing the changes in life style in British life style since 1948. In the written task that followed, the pupils' very positive responses showed how much the pupils had grasped the objectives of the lesson. For example, some pupils noted the different hairstyles and clothes, others remarked on the different music that was popular during that period.

167. The two history co-ordinators are effective managers of the subject. They provide very good leadership and as a result pupils are motivated and develop an interest in the subject. There is a clear focus on improving the range of opportunities in the subject by developing the use of ICT. Cross-curricular work is very prominent in language development, with the introduction of key words at the beginning of the lesson, as well as geographical, moral, social and cultural development. This has an impact on the quality and range of experiences, which can be offered in history lessons.

HUMANITIES

168. The school has recently introduced the new AQA GCSE course in humanities at Key Stage 4. The first group of pupils will be examined in this subject in June 2003 so it is too early to make a judgement on pupils' progress in this course.

169. The course enables pupils to explore and examine issues that are important in human societies. It enables them to apply their direct experience of the world around them at the local, national and global level. The pupils will learn a variety of concepts and ideas drawn from various aspects of the curriculum. These include elements of cultural, economic, environmental, moral, political, religious, social, spatial and spiritual.

170. It was only possible to observe one lesson during the inspection, but scrutiny of the pupils' work, discussion with the teacher and pupils show that the subject covers a wide range of topical problems. In the lesson observed, for instance, the significance of culture in society, how this has developed differently in various parts of the world. The ideas of nurture and nature were introduced; there was a fruitful discussion that highlighted the main elements involved.

171. The quality of teaching was very good as a result of good planning, careful selection of key vocabulary and high expectations from the pupils. The introduction of the subject in the school curriculum should enable pupils at Key Stage 4 to develop a mature way of expressing the complex problems in our society. In the lesson observed and in discussion with one pupil superb understanding of such issues as culture and the differing rights of men and women in different societies is developing.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

172. The school has worked very hard over recent years to improve the provision for ICT. There is now a dedicated, networked ICT suite of seven computers, relatively modern PCs in every classroom and Internet connection in most rooms in the school. The focus has been very heavily on improving the equipment and facilities although considerable network problems over the last year have resulted in disruption in pupils' access to the computers. A specialist teacher, who is also the ICT co-ordinator teaches pupils in Key Stage 3 and 4 as well as supporting staff in classes in the primary department. This is giving some consistency to the teaching and development of the

subject, although she is part time and has an enormous task to complete. A part time technician has been appointed to support the running of the network and to occasionally assist with lessons. His role now needs to be clarified further now that the network is fully installed and relatively trouble-free. Most pupils have lessons in the ICT suite as well as use computers in their classroom. However, the layout and height of the computers in the suite are not suitable for the smallest of pupils and they struggle to balance on the chairs and often need to support themselves when using a mouse. Disruption frequently occurs in lessons as staff walk through to get to another room or the technician receives phone calls in the main teaching room.

173. Pupils' achievements over time are unsatisfactory and pupils' attainment is well below what is expected. Pupils have a range of experiences using ICT and recently these have been better organised through the school's new scheme of work which when embedded should enable pupils to make progress and build on what they have learned earlier. However, there is not enough time allocated in the secondary department. Teaching is more systematic and in English lessons, part of the work on the Deafax project on communication supports pupils' understanding of the use of ICT for sending messages to people. From the beginning of term, pupils in the primary department also have specific ICT lessons in the ICT suite. There is evidence of pupils making recent and satisfactory progress in lessons but over time they have not had enough systematic teaching. Pupils' skills in ICT have been assessed infrequently basis and reports in their files are quite variable quality. Sometimes, it is very difficult to identify what pupils' have attained as these contain information about what pupils have enjoyed rather than what they have learned.

174. Pupils in Key Stage 1 are becoming familiar with using a mouse and move this accurately to fill parts of a picture with a specific colour. By the end of the key stage some higher attaining pupils have become familiar with the keyboard and can locate letter confidently to assemble simple pieces of text. Higher attaining pupils near the end of Key Stage 2 are competent at saving and finding their files, they can present their work using a word processing program. They give good attention to layout and presentation. By the end of Key Stage 2 pupils are learning what email is for and how there are different ways of communicating electronically. They are beginning to discriminate which is the best form of communication, such as email, a mobile phone (text messaging) or letter for deaf people and hearing people. The idea of communication is difficult for pupils to grasp due to their deafness and the work undertaken is helping them well with this aspect of ICT and helping them to become familiar with technology for deaf pupils such as videophones and Minicom. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils use more sophisticated ways of laying out text on the screen and in desktop publishing and word processing use text boxes to display text and insert pictures. Layout and design are well promoted and pupils give good attention to this, although their efforts are very basic. By Key Stage 4 pupils begin to change the size of pictures so that they fit into to their page layout well but do not yet have the skills or confidence to experiment with different designs and layouts. Some pupils still find logging on to the computer problematic.

175. The quality of teaching is satisfactory over all key stages. What pupils are to learn is always made explicit at the beginning of lessons and individual targets are often displayed near each computer. However, the language used is sometimes too abstract for pupils to grasp. This is helped by teachers' reasonably good and clear explanations and step-by-step guides to help them work more independently. At times, a lack of visual aids to explain a process, such as how an email is sent and received leaves pupils bemused. Sometimes support staff do too much for pupils, and rather than helping them

work through their guides, pupils are told what to do rather than questioned about what they might do or how they might solve a problem. Good attention is given insisting on pupils improving on their work and giving good attention to design and layout. This is helping them learn the skills they need to modify designs and learn what will work and what will not be successful. Pace of lessons is not particularly brisk and pupils need to be given specific guidance about how long they should take to complete an aspect of work. There are times when pupils sit and do little because they are waiting for the teacher with too heavy a reliance on adults, especially by older pupils in the secondary department. Occasionally, pupils find the font sizes or screen layout difficult, especially if they have a visual impairment; more attention should be given to pupils' individual needs in this way.

176. The co-ordinator has worked hard to develop the subject but this has been affected, to some extent by 'technical' problems with the network. However, although there are some examples of the use of ICT in the Foundation Stage, science and humanities, there is little consistent use in many other subjects. Delegation of funding to develop the subject has not yet happened and although there is a suitable development plan, finance is not tied specifically to this in the long-term and the co-ordinator has little control over a budget. Success criteria, in terms of the effect on pupils' standards, needs also to be stated. Resources are adequate and the co-ordinator is aware of the need to have a formal programme for replacement and upgrading.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

177. Pupils are not taught a modern foreign language and they do not have to learn one. A legal provision has been made in Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils' Statements of Special Educational Need allowing this. Instead they study BSL and Deaf Studies.

MUSIC

178. Music is not taught throughout the school and does not meet statutory requirements. The school has relied upon external teachers and other opportunities to provide musical experiences. Pupils have experience of a wide range of music and benefit from the cultural opportunities these provide. They take part in dance and drama festivals and during arts weeks and they take part in signed singing regularly at school. Pupils also experience Indian, Aboriginal and Irish music as well as work by African drummers and seeing samba bands in their arts week.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION

179. At the time of the previous inspection, no report was submitted on personal, social and health education. The school considers this area of work as personal, social, health, and careers education (PSHCE) because of the recent addition of careers to the curriculum. The Deaf Studies programme is included by the school as an aspect of PSHCE. The school makes good provision for the subject throughout all key stages, and the pupils achieve well and make good progress. They learn to express their ideas effectively, in line with their individual levels of ability, to argue cogently and gain mature attitudes and self-esteem as they go through the school.

180. In the primary department, the subject is delivered within an integrated programme, through circle time, drama and Deaf Studies, and in the secondary school, pupils have

time allocated to PHSCE as a subject in its own right on their time tables as well as time for deaf studies. The school has a sound policy for the subject, devised in liaison with a local secondary school. There is a good secondary programme with effective termly planning from Year 7 to Year 11 and this is supported well by the school's good education programmes and policies to teach pupils about sex and the use and misuse of drugs. This work is supported well by careers education and guidance, and the monitoring pupils receive link effectively with previous teaching to help them to reflect on their new knowledge and experience in a positive way. At present, pupils do not take any vocational qualifications associated with this area.

181. No teaching was observed during this inspection in Key Stages 1 or 2 except for one lesson where the teaching was outstanding. This helped pupils understand the consequences and results of various events and actions, and gave them the opportunity to explore alternative possibilities. However, in lessons and during collective worship, pupils have a good range of activities to help them to work and relate well with each other and with adults. Little planning by individual teachers or evaluation was seen in primary or secondary school for the subject but the lessons observed in the secondary department indicate that teachers know pupils very well. Work is being carried out in sequence and pupils know what to expect. Some of the questioning by teachers is challenging but pupils are able to respond with confidence, and other pupils treat their contributions thoughtfully and politely. Teachers' evaluations are informal but useful.

182. Teaching seen in the secondary department is good. Teachers talk to pupils about the perceived outcomes of work experience and what has been learned about practical matters, personal attributes and planning for the next events. Another lesson was about dreams and wishes and how they might be achieved. The dialogue was very well managed, and the pupils had a very useful discussion but there was no lesson plan and no evaluation seen. The teaching has good pace, high expectations of behaviour and the ability to help pupils to share ideas. Questioning is very good. However, the subject lacks evaluation to help teachers plan more exactly from assessment of pupils' progress what steps to take next. There have been staff shortages and several teachers work part-time. A lack of evaluation, formal records and a detailed coherent curriculum would reduce pupils' progress in those circumstances.

183. The subject lacks formal management and organisation of resources to improve pupils' progress. The school has plans to introduce changes indicated in the audit, but at present relies, on good teaching from those who know the pupils well instead of working from a well-monitored curriculum and system of monitoring and evaluation by the co-ordinator.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

184. The provision for physical education, and the strong inclusive links with the local secondary school at Key Stage 3, have a significant effect on improving pupils' skills and on their achievement overall. Physical education in Key Stages 1 and 2 is taught in the school itself while Key Stage 3 pupils are taught at the nearby Portway School. As a result of very good teaching and a very well planned programme, pupils' progress is very good; the element of competition with mainstream pupils and the very good quality of teaching supports their progress very well.

185. The quality of teaching in all the lessons observed in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 was very good. It was not possible to observe lessons at Key Stage 4. At Key Stage 1, the teaching in a dance lesson aimed at developing the pupils' use of space and achieved its objectives resulted in pupils responding positively. Through the use of changing lights pupils used all the space that was available to them. Pupils thoroughly enjoyed the lesson and responded enthusiastically to the instruction. A gymnastic lesson at Key Stage 2 enhanced pupil's skills in stretching, rolling and climbing. At the beginning of the lesson emphasis was made of the dangers involved and the pupils heeded these safety advice. Pupils work in teams and corporate activities are well encouraged. In all the activities pupil's attitude and behaviour was very good and it was evident that they enjoyed the activities. At Key Stage 3 a lesson at Portway School involved the Elmfield

pupils being divided into three different groups; four pupils in the rugby coaching group, five in the netball group and four in the judo group. The pupils enjoyed the activities and competed vigorously in games. In all the activities pupils compete with their peers and were relatively successful. Certain pupils have achieved levels equal or in certain case better than their peers. Progress is not only measured by their physical education achievement, but also by the development of team spirit, for example, playing as a member of a team in netball as well as developing a spirit of good sportsmanship if the games is lost.

186. Pupils' achievement in physical education overall is very good. Pupils at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 are learning a range of physical activities, which include individual and team sports. The areas of activity are gymnastics, swimming and games. During the three key stages pupils are given the opportunity to improve and develop their personal experiences and performance levels. In swimming there is accreditation for pupils in the distances they can swim. Pupils are aware of the warm-up and cool-down routines. The pace of lessons is very good with appropriate challenges to improve skill and confidence in a variety of tasks. This opportunity to compete enhances their confidence and self-esteem. Relationship between the pupils of both schools at Key Stage 3 during the lessons is very good and the inclusion of the hearing impaired pupils with their peers is very successful.

187. Teachers pay good attention to safety issues, for example, in the rugby coaching they are taught the importance of playing the ball and not too much hard body tackling. They demonstrate safe tackling using cushioned shoulder bags. They also demonstrate the importance of the head and arm positions. Staff set high expectations, and as a result pupils' achievements are very good. Techniques of good performance are emphasised. The skill levels expected are appropriate both to challenge individuals and to develop the self-esteem of the low attaining pupils. A feature of the teaching by all teachers is the good relationship built on humour, high expectations and positive encouragement between coach and pupils.

188. Resources for Key Stages 1 and 2 at Elmfield are good with ample space to organise a variety of activities as well as suitable gymnastic equipment for the older pupils. Facilities on Portway School are extensive with high quality outdoor play areas for football, netball, tennis and gymnasiums.

189. The management of the subject at Key Stage 1 is the responsibility of the class teacher, at Key Stage 2 one teacher has the responsibility. At Key Stage 3 it is a joint responsibility of the head of the secondary department at Elmfield and the head of physical education at Portway School. They discuss the organisation of the groups and monitor the progress of pupils. They are both highly committed to the process of inclusion of the hearing impaired with mainstream pupils. The contribution of the two learning support assistants that accompanies the pupils and the attitude of all the physical education staff at Portway make a significant contribution to the success of the lessons. The Elmfield staff ensures that the pupils understand the instructions given and interpret any difficult key vocabulary contained in the instructions. The staff ensures that there is equal opportunity for all pupils to all the activities available and also that every pupil should achieve their full potential.

190. Good records are kept of the pupils' achievements and these are included in the annual report for the pupils' annual review meeting. The provision for physical education shows good improvement since the last inspection.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

191. Overall, pupils' progress in religious education is good. During the inspection, because of timetabling arrangements, only lessons in Key Stages 3 and 4 could be observed. Pupils made very good progress in two lessons at Key Stage 3, and good progress in one lesson. Pupils at Key Stage 4, made good progress in the one lesson observed. Religious education makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, particularly through its provision for multi-cultural learning opportunities and community links. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection where there was insufficient evidence to make a secure judgement. Subject co-ordination is now good, the quality of teaching and learning is good with very good features and learning resources and accommodation has been improved.

192. An analysis of pupils' work, teachers' records and pupils' records, as well as photographic evidence show that pupils at Key Stages 1 and 2 make satisfactory progress. Primary pupils study religious education as part of a theme-based approach to the curriculum, such as thanksgiving, celebrations, symbols, beliefs, faiths and practices. This is taught through a range of methods such as story, drama, art dance, videos, visitors and visits. Photographic evidence shows pupils enjoying the full range of activities offered.

193. As pupils move through the school into the secondary department, they continue to learn about different religions and are introduced to the idea of different religions having shared values with their own special people, places, events and celebrations. During Key Stage 3, pupils in Year 7, show a good recall and understanding of Jesus' time in the desert. Using their mathematical skills, they determine that there are 39 (almost 40) days between Shrove Tuesday and Easter Sunday. This is called *Lent*, and is a special time for Christians. Jesus gave up food and water. The pupils decided that, if asked, they would give up something they liked, such as chicken, ice cream, meat or fruit. Older pupils in Year 9 discussed '*death and suffering*'. They studied various stories from newspapers and decided which of the events were caused by humans and could have been avoided, which were natural disasters or which were acts of God. Pupils showed a very mature attitude and gave '*religious or non-religious*' views of the events.

194. By the end of Key Stage 4 (at the age of 16), pupils consider the work of people whose religious beliefs have affected their work and particularly those who have worked for refugees, such as Mother Teresa. They research for information and decide which is important to their studies and which is peripheral. Pupils show a good understanding of how faith or religious beliefs have influenced the lives and work of people and describe the effects of this on other people. Pupils' response, attitude and behaviour in this lesson were exceptionally mature and sensible.

195. The quality of teaching and learning seen in the secondary department was good with very good features. In four lessons seen, two were very good and two good with some very good aspects. Pupils learn well because of the teacher's very good subject knowledge and sincerity in the subject. Lessons are well planned, introduced well with clear objectives to be achieved. Relationships are consistently very good. There is mutual trust and respect between pupils and staff. Skilled questioning brings out the best in the pupils. Their initial answers are extended. Expectations of work and behaviour are very high and pupils respond by being very well behaved and show a mature attitude to

their learning. There is very good differentiation to support pupils learning. This is achieved surreptitiously by degrees of adult support given, or by matching the appropriateness of the topic or reading level of newspaper cutting to the ability of the individual pupil.

196. The subject is well led and managed. There is good co-operation and collaboration between the primary and secondary departments. The curriculum offered is the Bristol Agreed Syllabus, linked to aspects of the National Curriculum, with a revised scheme of work, which works well. Pupils' work is assessed well, recorded and reported to parents. There are good cross-curricular links to other subjects such as English, art, history, geography and school and class assemblies. Pupils' contributions are valued and relationships between staff and pupils are at times excellent. Religious education makes a very positive contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.