

## **INSPECTION REPORT**

**FAIRMEAD COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

Yeovil

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123940

Headteacher: Mr. R. Hatt

Reporting inspector: Dr. Eric Peagam  
14943

Dates of inspection: 14<sup>th</sup> – 18<sup>th</sup> February 2000

Inspection number: 191839

Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Type of school: Special: moderate learning difficulties

School category: Community

Age range of pupils: 4-16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Mudford Road  
Yeovil  
Somerset

Postcode: BA21 4NZ

Telephone number: 01935 421295

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Appropriate authority: Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mr. A. Chiffers

Date of previous inspection: 13/01/97

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Eric Peagam	Registered inspector	Design and technology	The school's results and achievements
		Music	How well are pupils or students taught?
		English as an additional language	What should the school do to improve further?
Daphne Johnston	Lay inspector	Equal opportunities	How well does the school care for its pupils?
			How well does the school work in partnership with parents
Keith Tottman	Team inspector	French Geography History	How well is the school led and managed?
Jennifer Hall	Team inspector	Science Physical education	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
Alison Hopwood	Team inspector	Mathematics Religious education Art	Staffing, accommodation and resources
Margaret Hart	Team inspector	English Information technology	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Fairmead school provides education for up to 110 boys and girls aged from 7 to 16 from Yeovil and its surroundings who have special educational needs (SEN) arising from a range of disabilities, which give rise to moderate and, at times, severe learning difficulties. Increasingly these include emotional and behavioural difficulties and those related to varying degrees of autism. Although it is increasingly the policy of the local education authority (LEA) to educate as many pupils as possible in mainstream schools, particularly younger pupils, a small number of pupils in Key Stage 1, and, occasionally, Under-Fives are placed at the school. There are currently 103 pupils on roll, all of whom have statements of SEN. There are nearly twice as many boys as girls. Very few pupils have a minority ethnic background and none where English is not the language of home. Nearly a third of the pupils are entitled to free school meals. The school has faced a period of considerable uncertainty, during which there has been a change of headteacher, and, at the time of the inspection, the future role of the school within the LEA's planning was not clear.

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

Fairmead is an effective and improving school, particularly in guiding pupils towards the next stage of their lives, which it achieves through a well planned vocationally oriented Key Stage 4 curriculum. The strong emphasis on pupils' personal as well as academic development is underpinned by the extent to which staff value the pupils and enhance their self-esteem, through promoting enjoyment in learning. Staff provide very good role models and the school is very effectively guided by the vision and energy of the headteacher and governing body. The school gives satisfactory value for money

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

- Pupils achieve well in English as a result of high expectations, matched by good levels of support.
- The school has developed good strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy skills.
- Generally high quality teaching promotes mostly good progress, especially for older Key Stage 2 pupils.
- Pupils respond well to the school, they attend regularly and develop good relationships and independence.
- Provision for social and cultural development is very good and pupils flourish in social settings.
- Vocational education, including careers, is good for all secondary aged pupils.
- The school makes good use of the wide-ranging links with the local community to enrich the curriculum.
- Very good links with other partner institutions are well used to extend pupils' experience.
- The leadership and management of the headteacher are very good supported well by the governing body.
- The management of money, and particularly the use made of various grants, is very good.

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

- Provision for the youngest pupils, including those under five is inadequately planned.
- There is insufficient planning to ensure that pupils build systematically and securely on previous learning.
- Curriculum time is below that recommended for Key Stages 2-4.
- Arrangements to assess pupils' academic progress are still unsatisfactory.
- Unsatisfactory accommodation impedes progress in science and physical education.
- Individual Education Plans are insufficiently used and do not focus sufficiently on the needs of pupils with additional or complex special needs.
- The school does not carry out required risk assessments on the building or the curriculum.
- The roles of departmental heads are undeveloped and subject co-ordination is weak in many subjects.

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

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

Following the inspection, exactly three years ago, the school was declared to have serious weaknesses, and was put into the Ofsted school improvement programme. Since then, there has been good improvement, which has been particularly marked in the last year, since the arrival of the new headteacher. Most of the Key Issues from last time have been resolved, and progress made in those that remain. Literacy and numeracy strategies have been successfully introduced and the range of accreditation at Key Stage 4 has been significantly increased. Some issues, however remain as weaknesses, particularly in curriculum planning and assessment, and some leadership roles remain to be clarified and become effective. Accommodation issues previously raised have not been fully resolved. There is now a good climate, commitment and capacity for further improvement.

## STANDARDS

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

<b>Progress in:</b>	<b>by age 11</b>	<b>by age 16</b>	<b>Key</b>	
speaking and listening	B	B	very good	A
reading	B	B	good	B
writing	B	B	satisfactory	C
mathematics	B	C	unsatisfactory	D
personal, social and health education	B	B	poor	E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	C	C		

Achievement is at least satisfactory and generally good overall. Achievement is particularly marked in English where it is good across all aspects of the subject, including the development of literacy skills. It is also good in art, French, design and technology, music and in PSHE, where progress is reflected in the good personal and social development displayed by pupils. In mathematics it is good in Key Stage 2 and satisfactory for other pupils. Numeracy is well promoted and progress is good. The school does not set targets for whole-school achievement and individual targets, contained within pupils IEPs, are often too vague or generalised to enable the extent of progress towards them to be clearly established. Where they reflect curriculum aims in core subjects or behavioural aspirations, progress is generally satisfactory.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Pupils enjoy coming to school and participate in lessons and planned activities with enthusiasm and enjoyment, especially in the primary and younger secondary classes.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' behaviour is good in lessons and around the school; nearly all lessons proceed without interruption. There is no oppressive behaviour and pupils play and work well together, are courteous and respect the building and equipment; there is no litter or damage. Exclusion is rarely used.
Personal development and relationships	Personal development is good, pupils develop independent working skills, cooperate well in teams and groups. They form good relationships with staff and each other.
Attendance	Attendance is above average for similar schools. Punctuality is good.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 5-11	aged 11-16
Lessons seen overall	Good, very good at times	Good

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

Teaching is good overall, making a very significant contribution to the good learning that goes on in most lessons. It is at least good in over three-fifths of lessons, including nearly one lesson in five where it is very good. On occasion it is excellent and is rarely unsatisfactory. It is particularly good in Key Stage 2. Teaching is strong in English, where literacy skills are effectively promoted. In mathematics, teaching is always satisfactory and often better, being excellent at times. It is particularly good when teachers impart numeracy skills. In science, all teaching is at least satisfactory with some good and very good features in Key Stages 2 and 3. Teaching in PSHE is mostly good and never unsatisfactory. In other subjects it is generally good and rarely unsatisfactory. There are a number of common strengths including good pace well-established routines, clear and high expectations in terms of behaviour and work, good oral assessment and feedback and dialogue based on good relationships. There is a high level of subject expertise, and good understanding of teaching method, which is used to vary lessons well, including the effective use of whole-class and small group organisation. Classroom assistants make a good contribution to the overall quality of teaching. Taken together, these strengths encourage pupils to show a high level of interest in their work, taking pleasure in showing it, describing what they have done and what they intend to do. Teaching is occasionally weak where tasks are not well supported or where lessons lack pace and pupils become unsettled. There is insufficient distinctive planning for the youngest pupils, including under-fives. Overall, teachers provide well for pupils' special educational needs, although insufficient use is made of IEPs.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Generally satisfactory with significant strengths in provision for literacy, numeracy, work-related curriculum and increasing emphasis on accreditation at Key Stage 4. The wide range of extra-curricular activities enriches the curriculum for all pupils. However, there are weaknesses in curriculum planning in general and for some pupils with additional or more complex difficulties.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	There has been considerable improvement since the last inspection. The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development well overall. Arrangements for social and cultural development are very good. Extra-curricular and offsite activities make a significant contribution. The work-related curriculum successfully extends pupils' personal skills for independence
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a supportive environment, which successfully raises pupils' self esteem and confidence. There is effective monitoring of personal development, but procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' academic performance are still unsatisfactory. The school cares well for pupils in general, but there are health and safety issues that require to be addressed.

The school works effectively to establish a partnership with parents. Parents feel the school works closely with them and are pleased with the quality and effectiveness of what the school provides.

Curriculum strengths include the good emphasis on English and mathematics, particularly on literacy and numeracy, good provision for French, a good quality work-related curriculum and the effective use of the local community. There is a good range of accreditation at the end of Key Stage 4.

Weaknesses relate to the absence of co-ordinated planning across the school, provision for very young pupils, and pupils with additional and complex needs. Targets in pupils' IEPs are inadequate and insufficiently used to



assure progress. Curriculum time is below national guidelines in Key Stages 2, 3 and 4. Provision for homework in Key Stages 3 and 4 is poor. There are shortcomings in information technology.

Good use is made of external services and agencies to promote pupils' welfare. Teachers monitor behaviour, attendance and personal development well. Staff prepare pupils well for return to mainstream and continue to support them after they have transferred.

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

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management from the headteacher are very good and the school has been improving steadily under his stewardship over the past year. The roles of departmental heads are unclear; subject co-ordination and the management of the curriculum across key stages is weak in many subjects.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Governors are effective in supporting and guiding the school; their contribution has improved significantly over the last two years. Committees of governors link well to the main group and are increasingly well informed. The governors fulfil the great majority of their statutory responsibilities.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Monitoring of pupils' progress and personal development is satisfactory overall and good with regard to attendance and behaviour. The monitoring of teachers' performance in classrooms by direct observation has begun but is insufficiently developed.
The strategic use of resources	There is good management of money; planning for the next two years is thorough; very good use is made of various other funds at the school's disposal. The school considers well the merits of different spending decisions in order to achieve best value for money spent.

Overall staffing, accommodation and resources for learning are satisfactory. Resources and accommodation for science are unsatisfactory, and the physical education curriculum is restricted by lack of facilities.

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

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The happy atmosphere</li> <li>• The high level of support and care</li> <li>• The extent of communication</li> <li>• The improved curriculum</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More consistent approaches to homework.</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> <li>•</li> </ul>

The inspection supported the parents' views. Homework is inconsistently used. It is at its best in Key Stage 2, but is unsatisfactory overall. The recent policy is designed to address this issue.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The characteristics of pupils at this school make it inappropriate to report pupils' attainment in comparison with national norms. This report focuses on pupils' achievements in relation to their prior attainment and the progress they make, as well as giving examples of what they know, understand and can do. No separate judgement is made on the achievement of the single pupils in each of Nursery, Reception, Year 1 and Year 2, as no distinctive provision is made for them and they are taught in a class with children up to the age of 9. This situation is unsatisfactory, but plans to address it depend on the outcome of the still-developing LEA strategies for very young pupils with special educational needs.
2. Achievement is at least satisfactory and generally good overall, for pupils across all classes and in all age groups. In many subjects this is a significant improvement on the position at the last inspection, where secondary aged pupils made unsatisfactory progress in over a third of lessons. Much current achievement stems from the progress promoted by good and often very good teaching allied to an effective and appropriate curriculum. Achievement is particularly marked in English where it is good across all aspects of the subject. Pupils with communication difficulties learn to listen carefully, take turns and speak with confidence. Their critical listening skills are well supported by their experiences in French and drama lessons. Where communication is supported by gesture and signing, pupils with more complex communication needs respond well, however these are insufficiently used to ensure that this small group of pupils makes as good progress as their peers do. By the time they leave, most pupils successfully discuss a range of topics.
3. Pupils make good progress in reading. Primary aged pupils, who are very well supported by the school's literacy strategy, enjoy stories, read simple familiar texts independently and acquire strategies for building words. They understand what they read and discuss characters and plot. As pupils move through the school, their skills improve, so that the highest attainers read fluently at a near-adult level and enjoy a wide range of material, although there remain some pupils who require support with even the simplest texts. Similar good progress is achieved in writing, with primary aged pupils learning to write words and phrases legibly, using joined script, with recognisable spelling and, with help, producing short passages and stories at a higher level. By the time they leave, most pupils have the skills to write in work-related formats, filling forms and composing letters. Throughout the school, they make good and increasing use of information technology to support the development of their English skills.
4. Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory for all pupils over time; it is good for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 and satisfactory for those in Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils make good progress in 'mental maths' and begin to handle calculations with confidence. Younger pupils demonstrate counting skills, sequencing, multiplication tables and of methods for working out simple calculations. Older pupils recognise a range of 3D shapes and identify spheres, cylinders, cubes and cuboids. In Key Stage 4, pupils use their number skills in order to carry out realistic budgeting exercises.
5. Achievements in science are generally satisfactory; Year 11 pupils attain pass and merit grades of the Certificate of Educational Achievement. Pupils acquire knowledge and understanding across all areas of the subject, albeit unevenly. Progress is restricted, however, by the continuing unsatisfactory facilities for the subject, which were recorded at the previous inspection, together with the unsatisfactory curriculum planning. This particularly restricts the extent to which pupils can successfully develop investigational skills.
6. In other subjects, achievement is at least satisfactory and often good, as it is in art, French, design and technology, music and in PSHE, where progress is reflected in the good personal; and social development displayed by pupils. Satisfactory and, at times, good achievement is seen in history and religious education. It is satisfactory overall in physical education, where some aspects are restricted by inadequate facilities, and in geography, where inadequate curriculum planning and co-ordination does not support continuity of learning. In information technology, achievement is just satisfactory, limited by the range of resources available, which, in turn, are insufficiently used to promote learning in other subjects.
7. The school does not set whole-school targets for achievement. Individual targets within pupils' IEPs are often too vague or generalised to enable progress towards them to be monitored. Where they reflect curriculum aims in core subjects and include behavioural aspirations, progress is generally satisfactory. However, targets do not provide for secure planning, often having little meaning. This is particularly true when, for example, in mathematics, they consist of single skill or knowledge 'targets' selected from further

along the scheme in use.

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

8. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good. They are happy to come to school, and their parents confirm this. Attitudes both to lessons and to other planned activities are generally good throughout the school although a few of the older pupils are sometimes less well motivated. Pupils usually settle down quickly to their work, show interest and learn to work independently from the youngest classes. In some lessons there is a high level of enthusiasm, as in a poetry session in which pupils announce 'Brilliant, will you read it again Sir?' or at the end of a lesson, when pupils cluster around the teacher to continue discussion even though it is break time. This is a direct result of good teaching and positive relationships.
9. Pupils are courteous to adults and to each other, offering assistance, apologising and thanking each other without prompting. They handle equipment, such as design and technology tools, art and craft materials and computers, sensibly and there is very little damage or litter around the school. Pupils feel able to ask for and accept help with confidence. Many have particularly good relationships with classroom assistants. In most lessons and at break and dinner times there is a good atmosphere and pupils take advantage of activities offered, such as in-line skating or recorder club. The school appears free from bullying, sexist, and racist behaviour; occasionally some teasing is seen. Pupils respect each other's feelings and opinions, as illustrated in drama lessons where they observe each other's performance and give sensible and balanced criticism. They are helped to reflect on what they do and its impact on others by teaching through assemblies and by sharing each other's achievements through the awarding of merits and badges. They take responsibility in school; older pupils sweep up the hall after lunch; in primary classes older pupils help younger ones on the computer.
10. In Years 10 and 11, pupils participate in work experience and help in retirement homes and children's nurseries. Attendance is good; there is little unauthorised absence, and much of what there is, is due to a small number of pupils being frequently absent. Exclusion is rarely used.

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

11. The overall quality of teaching is good; it is a strength of the school and makes a very significant contribution to the good learning that goes on in most lessons. It is at least good in over three-fifths of lessons, including nearly one lesson in five where it is very good. On occasion it is excellent and is rarely unsatisfactory. While well over half the teaching is good in each key stage, it is at its best in Key Stage 2, where over two-thirds is good or better and over a quarter is very good or excellent.
12. Throughout the school, good teaching has a number of common strengths. In many lessons, a good pace is set from the beginning, with well-established routines pupils are familiar with, including a review of previous learning, which ensure that the lesson starts by gaining pupils' interest well. Pupils respond by being well motivated, listening well and showing good levels of concentration. Teachers set clear and high expectations in terms of behaviour and work; this establishes a climate within which pupils work hard and sensibly. They show a high level of productivity and progress well with tasks especially in practical sessions. During the lessons, a constant dialogue is maintained in which good oral assessment and feedback from the teacher or classroom assistant offers guidance to pupils, keeps them on task and avoids the frustration which pupils experience when they make an error, especially in practical subjects. Against this background of support, pupils are given good opportunities to make choices; again, this is particularly noticeable in practical subjects. As a result, older pupils especially, are encouraged to show increasing maturity. They show a high level of interest in their work, taking pleasure in showing it and describing what they have done and what they intend to do. Good relationships contribute well to learning through keeping pupils engaged, in a relaxed, friendly environment.
13. There is a high proportion of subject specialists on the staff and, in other cases, teachers have acquired very good subject knowledge outside their original specialisms, which they use very effectively and confidently to transmit knowledge and skills, so that there are no subjects where expertise is insufficient. Teachers show a good understanding of teaching method and use a variety of approaches to good effect. Well-managed whole-class teaching, appropriately matched to pupils' attainments and learning styles, together with timely changes of activity, sustains learning through long lessons.
14. On other occasions, the organisation into small, well-supported groups enables pupils to learn well at their own level. This is particularly effective in the promotion of literacy and numeracy, where teachers demonstrate good levels of skill and knowledge. In literacy sessions, particularly, pupils show good

achievement in increasing their ability to listen carefully and develop more accurate use of language. Good methods and strategies are used in English lessons, especially shared and scribed writing and group and class reading, which allow pupils to read and write worthwhile texts rather than be limited by what they can achieve, unsupported. Teachers' awareness of the importance of these basic skills is demonstrated in lessons where good support for pupils with reading difficulties ensures access to the curriculum materials in other subjects, particularly through the teaching of subject-specific vocabulary and the promotion of oral skills. Good use of open and closed questions ensures that all pupils are enabled to contribute to oral lessons. The contribution from classroom assistants is very important in supporting pupils, addressing their emotional needs and keeping them on task. On occasion it enables teaching to be satisfactory which would otherwise not be.

15. Occasional weaknesses in teaching are seen where pupils are set a task but not given the support necessary to enable them to achieve it, or where lessons lack pace, so that learning opportunities are lost, time is not well used and pupils become bored or fractious. This is particularly noticeable in lessons where long gaps between activity leads to unsettled behaviour as pupils become restless. At the same time, the lack of distinctive planning for very young pupils, including those under five, means that teaching is unsatisfactory for them at times, as their needs are not addressed.
16. In general, teachers are aware of the special educational needs of pupils, and plan effectively for them. However, for the growing number of pupils with complex or additional needs, planning is, at times, unsatisfactory. Lesson plans indicate how staff will be deployed to help these pupils, and the support is good. No references are made, however, in lesson plans to IEPs; nor are any assessment procedures in place to monitor that these pupils are making the best possible progress given their additional special needs. This can mean that behavioural difficulties are not consistently dealt with or communication needs not fully met. In particular, not all teachers and classroom assistants are sufficiently competent and confident in using sign to meet the needs of individual pupils. This limits individual pupils' access to the curriculum.
17. The generally high quality of teaching is maintained across the curriculum. English is generally well taught throughout the school and there is no unsatisfactory teaching. In mathematics, teaching is particularly strong in Key Stage 2, but is always at least satisfactory across the school, and good at times, especially where numeracy skills are being taught. In science, all teaching is at least satisfactory with some good and very good features in Key Stages 2 and 3. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and secure good standards of discipline in lessons, enabling pupils to access suitably challenging tasks without distraction. However, there are serious shortcomings in marking and assessment.
18. Teaching in design and technology, previously unsatisfactory at times, is now usually at least good, frequently very good and never unsatisfactory. A similar pattern of teaching is seen in art. In geography, there is mostly satisfactory teaching, and it is good in Year 5. History teaching is mostly good and is sometimes very good in Key Stage 2. Teaching in information technology was satisfactory in the two lessons seen, but there is limited use of computers in other subjects. In French, teaching is particularly strong, with effective use of a good balance of French and English in the lesson. In music, there is some unsatisfactory learning for the youngest pupils as a result of insecure teacher skills and unsatisfactory presentation, but, in the main, teaching is good and, at times, it is very good. Although there is no specialist physical education teaching in the school, teachers have sufficient skill to meet the demands of the planned curriculum, so that teaching is good overall and never unsatisfactory. In religious education, teaching is good and, at times, very good.
19. Teaching has improved significantly since the last inspection where there was a significant amount of unsatisfactory and even poor teaching. This was particularly marked in Key Stages 3 and 4, where teaching is now good overall, with very little that is unsatisfactory. While there are still some weaknesses in planning, especially in terms of IEPs, the school has made satisfactory progress in this crucial aspect of its work.

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

20. The curriculum has improved since the last inspection and is now generally satisfactory. Good strengths in the curricular opportunities provided make an effective contribution to pupils' learning. The school has, for example, established a good emphasis on English and mathematics; and particularly effective are the new strategies that the school has developed for the teaching of literacy and numeracy. Provision for French is also good. A good quality work-related curriculum starts with careers education in Year 9 leading to a well established programme of work experience and community placements in Key Stage 4. This well planned and accredited programme prepares pupils well for the next stage in their lives. The school makes good use

of the local community to enrich pupils' experiences with a wide range of visits and extra-curricular activities for all pupils, especially in Key Stage 2. Highly effective organisation and management of swimming, using a local swimming pool, enable pupils to make very good progress from developing water confidence to distance swimming and life-saving awards. Very constructive relationships with other schools and a local college provide pupils with valuable experience of mainstream schooling. A programme of inter-school sporting fixtures not only promotes pupils' physical development but also makes a good contribution to their personal and social development through competitions and friendly matches.

21. There is now a good range of accreditation at the end of Key Stage 4, with GCSE opportunities developing in English, mathematics, art and drama. The Certificate of Educational Achievement is available in English, mathematics, science and French. The Youth Award Scheme is well established with certification in a wide range of subjects including food technology, information and communications technology, religious education and motor vehicle maintenance. The curriculum is generally socially inclusive and no pupils are denied access to the curricular opportunities on the grounds of their gender or ethnicity.
22. There are weaknesses in the curriculum, which hold back the progress which pupils can make. Curricular planning in general, across and within key stages, and planning to meet the needs of pupils with additional and complex special needs in particular, are weak. Not enough attention is given to the separate planning of the curriculum for any under-fives, who are taught in a class with pupils up to Year 4. The opportunities provided for their creative, social, and physical development through play are too narrow. There is inadequate use of the nursery facility and only very limited appropriate equipment in the playground for the youngest pupils. The weaknesses reported at the last inspection about curricular planning to assure continuity and progression across the whole school remain. There has not been enough progress in responding to this key issue. Schemes of work are in place for each subject, but there are very few cross-references to the National Curriculum programmes of study, and generally the schemes take insufficient account of the ranges of ages and attainment in each class. Insufficient guidance is in place to meet the needs of pupils remaining in the same class for more than one year, who need progressively more challenging work as they enter the second cycle of a scheme; which has also to serve as the first cycle for the new and younger pupils joining the class. The school has a policy for special educational needs and meets the requirement to conduct an Annual Review of each pupil's Statement of Special Educational Need. The targets in pupils' Individual Education Plans are, however, inadequate and, as also reported at the last inspection, are insufficiently used to assure progress generally. There is too much inconsistency in the quality of these targets across the school and the wording of them is often far too general to ensure that needs can be met. Individual Education Plans do not focus sufficiently on the needs of those pupils who have additional and complex needs; and lesson plans rarely cross-refer to Individual Education Plans or to specific learning objectives for these pupils. In general there has been insufficient progress since the last inspection in using Individual Education Plans as a means of influencing pupils' learning and achievements. The work of the Governing Body is improving at a fast pace, but up-to-date policies for the curriculum as a whole and for individual subjects and aspects have yet to be agreed as the basis for informing the schemes of work. The amount of taught curriculum time falls below national guidelines in Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 particularly because tutorial time across the school is not well planned and co-ordinated. The inspection findings support parents' concerns about homework in Key Stages 3 and 4 where provision is unsatisfactory.
23. The scheme of work for religious education meets the requirements of the locally Agreed Syllabus. However, arrangements in Year 11, where it is not taught weekly, do not meet the statutory requirements. The provision for information and communications technology through other subjects is not well established and does not assure the implementation of the planned curriculum for this subject in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. Provision of information and communications technology is best in Key Stage 4 where pupils benefit from an accredited course at the local college. Implementation of the full range of National Curriculum science in Key Stages 3 and 4 is significantly limited by the absence of any specialist science accommodation, a weakness also reported at the last inspection and one which the Governing Body has sought to resolve, as yet unsuccessfully. Provision for indoor physical education is hampered by the small size of the school gymnasium, which is a multi-purpose hall. This results in some loss of physical education time at transition points in the day. The hall, located where it is, is unavoidably a very busy thoroughfare resulting in many interruptions during physical education lessons. The schemes of work for history and geography cover the National Curriculum but implementation in practice is uneven, particularly in Key Stage 2.
24. There have been significant improvements since the last inspection in the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; and provision overall is now good. Planning for spiritual development, poor at the last inspection, is now satisfactory. Assemblies, the quality of displays around the

school and opportunities for pupils to express their feelings in the classroom all contribute well to spiritual growth. Parents feel strongly that good values and attitudes are consistently promoted by a united staff that shares the same vision. The spiritual element of the curriculum, however, is not sufficiently considered, and pupils do not experience a regular daily act of worship. The school continues to provide good opportunities for pupils to learn and understand right from wrong. Opportunities are taken to explore moral aspects of the curriculum, for example in history. Arrangements for social development, judged satisfactory at the last inspection, are now very good and include residential experiences in this country and abroad. The promotion of pupils' awareness of their own and other cultures has improved very significantly since last time, supported by an extensive programme of visits and visitors to school. The wide range of educational trips, including residential activities, and visits from theatre and dance groups, make a significant contribution to pupils' social development and cultural awareness. For older pupils, the work-related curriculum and opportunities to take responsibility successfully extend pupils' personal skills.

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

25. The school provides a supportive and caring environment, which successfully raises pupils' self-esteem and confidence. Class teachers know the pupils in their class well and communicate effectively with other staff about any problems that arise from day to day. Pupils are supervised well during break times and before and after school. Working practices in general are safe, but formal risk assessment is not carried out on the building or on the curriculum. This is particularly important with regard to the practical areas of the curriculum and the specific medical needs of some pupils.
26. Pupils learn how to relate to each other with confidence and develop increasing self-awareness in personal, social and health education. The school makes good use of external services, such as the police and the school nurse, to promote healthy and safe living. There are effective links with Social Services and good liaison with the speech therapist to support pupils' welfare and development. Music therapy extends this range of provision well for a number of pupils. The work-related curriculum and careers education and guidance prepare secondary aged pupils well for the next stage in their lives. Vocational courses and work experience provide valuable opportunities for pupils to broaden their understanding of the world of work, and to develop skills for independence.
27. There are effective measures for promoting good attendance and behaviour. Pupils are rewarded for 100 per cent attendance each term and the overall rate has been consistently good since the previous inspection. Strategies for encouraging good behaviour are employed consistently by staff and expectations are prominently displayed in primary classrooms. Fair and firm use of discipline successfully minimises disruption and helps pupils to improve their behaviour. Pupils know teachers' expectations and set much store by the rewards, which are celebrated in assembly every Friday. These procedures make a significant impact on the quality of pupils' learning and conduct around the school. Staff foster positive relationships that encourage mutual respect and tolerance towards others.
28. Some good systems are in place in Key Stage 2 for assessing and recording achievements in literacy. The assessment information is used very effectively to monitor progress and analyse pupils' strengths and weaknesses. These assessments enable teachers in Key Stage 2 to plan literacy programmes that are very well matched to pupils' learning needs. The arrangements for assessing and recording achievements in swimming are well established and serve to motivate pupils to improve their skills further. Assessment procedures are developing in aspects of English, mathematics, French, art, and Key Stage 3 history but remain, as reported at the last inspection, unsatisfactory overall. Progress since the last inspection has been slow. The tracking of academic progress and the diagnosis of factors that may be impeding learning are inadequate. Assessment is not sufficiently developed, except in literacy and Key Stage 2 mathematics, to properly influence curriculum planning. There is still no designated school assessment co-ordinator nor has the governing body yet agreed an up-to-date policy for assessment.
29. Statutory requirements are met in respect of statements of special needs, annual reviews and transitional plans. Parents and professionals are appropriately involved, including the Careers Service. However, the quality of IEPs and the targets in them vary from satisfactory to poor. Many targets are too vague, making it impossible to measure progress against them. (e.g. "improve literacy skills"). Others focus on a small and isolated aspect of attainment for a whole term. (e.g. (clock) – "be secure on ¼ past"). There is no evidence that these targets are used as working documents and updated more frequently than once a term, and in some cases new targets are written without the old ones having been commented on. Although most pupils are making good progress generally, it is difficult to demonstrate good progress towards their IEP targets, which do not play the part they should in moving on pupils' learning. In general, IEPs are not an integral

part of pupils' educational provision and do not guide planning. Annual reviews and reports to parents tend to concentrate on pupils' attitudes to the subject and their enjoyment, rather than giving a clear assessment of strengths and weaknesses in academic performance.

30. Teachers monitor pupils' behaviour, attendance and personal development well. Absence is checked daily and any unexplained or worrying absence is investigated that day. Sustained unauthorised absence is referred to the education welfare officer. In the primary department, teachers and support assistants monitor pupils' behaviour and personal development effectively through the use of individual targets, wall charts that record achievements and through close observation. Home-school books are very well used to record pupils' achievements, attitudes to learning and behaviour, and enable staff to see how pupils' progress and personal development have changed over time. In the secondary department, pupils' conduct is assessed and recorded at the end of every lesson. Class tutors monitor these records and difficult behaviour is discussed at staff meetings. If a pupil's behaviour is causing concern, appropriate, agreed targets are set and subsequently evaluated at the end of each lesson, in discussion with the pupil. Appropriately detailed notes are kept of serious incidents and the use of the 'time-out' room. Support assistants focus their attention skilfully on pupils according to individual performance and development. Staff readily praise pupils and recognise their good work and effort, which effectively encourages them to achieve more.
31. The school works closely with mainstream school staff in planning and supporting programmes designed to help those pupils who wish to be included in mainstream schools. Staff support pupils very well and continue to do so after they have transferred, taking a great interest in their development.

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

32. Parents feel the school works closely with them and are pleased with the quality and effectiveness of what the school provides. They say the curriculum has improved and appreciate the trend towards accreditation, enabling their children to relate to pupils in mainstream schools on a more equal basis. Parents are very happy with the standards attained, both in academic work and behaviour. They are particularly pleased with the high level of caring and support for their children, the happy environment and the consequent improvement in their children's self-esteem and social development. A few parents express concerns about transport arrangements. Parents feel very well informed about progress and say that teachers respond to requests for meetings. Communications are good, the headteacher is readily available and home-school books provide a very good daily link for parents of younger pupils. Homework, however, is an issue. Parents are aware of the school's policy, but say that it is not implemented consistently, nor is it enough to support pupils working for accreditation at Key Stage 4. Inspectors' evidence supports the overall views of parents and finds that, while the school is offering a good education for their children, arrangements for homework are unsatisfactory.
33. The quality of information that parents receive about school organisation, policies and events is good. The 'Fairmead Flyer', issued every half term, contains interesting contributions by pupils and staff. The prospectus and governors' annual report to parents, although generally informative and welcoming, do not fulfil statutory requirements. For example, the Prospectus omits absence rates, the Governors' Annual Report has no information about provision for disabled pupils, and neither contains the school's policy for special educational needs. In general, parents receive little information about the curriculum. Pupils' annual academic reports do not adequately inform parents about what their children know, understand and can do. However, together with reports for the annual reviews, they do give a clear indication of their progress in attitudes and personal development. Home-school books keep parents of primary aged pupils in close touch with their child's development.
34. The Friends of Fairmead association holds successful fund-raising events, making a significant contribution to the resources in the school. Parents are keen to attend the presentation evening held in the summer term when pupils' work is displayed, the Christmas production, summer concert, leavers' service and special occasions such as the visit by an African dance group. Consultation evenings, offered three times a year, and annual review meetings however, are not supported well. The school stresses the importance of parents' involvement in decisions about their children's learning, and is offering a choice of times during a whole week this term to encourage parents to attend. Staff strive to work in partnership with parents and this has a positive impact on pupils' learning and personal development. On balance, the school's links with parents are effective and have been extended since the previous inspection.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

35. Leadership and management from the headteacher are very good and the school has improved steadily under his positive leadership; this confirms the view of parents who attended the pre-inspection meeting. The roles of department heads are unclear and still developing, and subject co-ordination and the management of the curriculum is weak across key stages in some subjects; in the humanities, design and technology, science and physical education, for example. This is most often related to subjects taught by different teachers at different key stages and is not commonly found where there is a sole teacher/co-ordinator, as in French, for example.
36. The governors' contribution is good; they are effective in supporting and guiding the school and this has improved significantly over the last two years. Four well-attended and increasingly well informed committees deal with various activities and link closely to the main body. The school meets well its major aims related to providing a purposeful learning environment and extending its links into the community. The governors meet the great majority of their statutory responsibilities, which is an improvement since the previous inspection, although there are shortcomings in their Annual Report and the Prospectus, there is not always a daily act of worship and religious education is not taught weekly to Year 11. Governors and headteacher have worked closely and effectively together to overcome the uncertainties about the school's future whilst maintaining internal development.
37. The governors have an increasing understanding of what is happening in the school, particularly with regard to premises and expenditure, although less so with regard to the curriculum. Nonetheless, they have access to a widening range of reports, on literacy and numeracy for example, and some have a good, informal knowledge of the school over time. The school's monitoring of pupils' progress and personal development is satisfactory overall, and good with regard to attendance and behaviour. Teachers' performance in classrooms has begun to be monitored through direct observation and this aspect is still improving, and will eventually involve heads of departments. However, there is no effective monitoring of the quality of IEPs and IEP targets. The school has made a good response through its action plan to the weaknesses identified in its previous inspection; it has a useful improvement policy and is meeting the great majority of its development plan targets on time. Governors are increasingly involved in target setting and the formulation and monitoring of the school's development plan.
38. The staffing levels overall are satisfactory but there are too few staff who have undertaken any specific additional qualifications in the area of special educational needs. There are, in addition, no suitably trained specialist teachers for science or for Early Years. This concern was identified in the previous inspection report and has not yet been addressed by the school. This has an adverse effect on pupil's progress, particularly in these two identified areas. Teaching and support staff work well together in classrooms; some support staff are directly involved in the curriculum planning process, and they all know the pupils well and give valuable support to them. The efficiency of their deployment is now satisfactory. Subject leaders within the curriculum have not received any specific training for this management role and as a result the monitoring of both continuity and progression across all key stages is not carried out effectively. The work of the Inclusion facilitator and inclusion support staff is effective in ensuring two-way transmission of ideas between the school and mainstream partners, while the valuable outreach service, managed by the Nurture Group co-ordinator, and assisted by support staff is highly regarded by the local primary schools it supports.
39. The level of accommodation is satisfactory in the main but there are inadequate facilities for the delivery of the science curriculum and insufficient play areas and equipment for the youngest pupils. The teaching of art is also inhibited due to lack of an appropriate fully designated area and facilities for physical education are limited with lessons being frequently interrupted as people pass through the main hall area. The quality of the display of pupil's work around the school is very good. Great care has been taken to show their work to best effect reflecting to pupils that their efforts are valued.
40. The level of learning resources is good overall particularly in English and mathematics, history and modern foreign language. In most other subject areas resources are satisfactory but the range is unsatisfactory in science where pupils do not have any access to gas, water or electrical services. The library resources are satisfactory and books available from the Learning Resources Centre greatly enhance the range of books available to pupils. The location of this LEA facility within the school, managed by a teacher from the school and administered effectively by a member of the support staff, is of considerable benefit to the school as well as providing a resource for other schools in the area.
41. The school's use of its delegated budget and other funds is good. Necessary budget reductions over the past two years have been achieved sensitively. Financial planning for the next two years in support of



identified priorities is good. In addition to the leadership and management of the school, the headteacher has some responsibilities for aspects of staffing and finance related to the LEA provision of a Learning Support Centre on site. The management and administration of money across these various headings is very good and significant sums have been wisely spent on good learning resources in recent times. Financial controls and office administrative procedures are meticulous and these support governors in their planning decisions; a very recent audit report found that the school had exceptionally good systems of control in place. The school makes satisfactory and improving use of new technologies administratively but insufficient use across the curriculum. Its accommodation and plentiful resources are used well. In its practices, management is evaluative and self-critical, and seeks best value in all its activities.

42. Overall improvement since the last inspection has been good, most particularly in the extent to which management, governors and parents are committed to a shared vision for the future; longer term financial planning, the evaluation of performance and the use of resources are all better. Previously the school was not providing satisfactory value for money. In light of the progress made, the quality of teaching and the experiences available to pupils, the school now gives satisfactory and still improving value for money.

### **WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?**

43. In order to improve the school further, governors, headteacher and senior management should:
- establish, in consultation with the LEA, a viable admissions policy for very young pupils, including children under-five to ensure that, where such pupils are taken on roll, there is adequate provision and planning to meet their academic and developmental needs in an appropriate setting, (see para. 1, 15, 22 )
  - increase the amount of taught time in line with that recommended, (see para. 22 )
  - improve arrangements to assess pupils' academic progress and ensure that the information obtained is effectively used in curriculum and individual planning to enable pupils to build securely and systematically on previous learning, (see para. 28 )
  - improve the accommodation for science and physical education to provide pupils with the standard of provision that enables the delivery of a fully enriched secondary curriculum, (see para. 39 )
  - improve the quality and use of individual education plans so that they are better used in planning and, in particular, ensure that they focus sufficiently on the needs of pupils with additional or complex special needs, (see para.7, 22, 29, 37 )
  - clarify the roles of departmental heads so that they are enabled to play an effective part in the management of the school, and improve the arrangements for subject co-ordination particularly between the primary and secondary phases. (see para. 35 )
44. In addition, the governors should consider addressing the following minor issues in their action plan
- Arrangements for religious education and collective worship do not fully comply with requirements. (see para.24, 36 )
  - Aspects of the school's Prospectus and Governors' annual report are lacking (see para.33, 36).
  - Reports to parents do not focus sufficiently on progress and targets (see para. 29).
  - Teaching in information technology is not securely established across the curriculum (see para. 6, 92).
  - Risk assessments on the building and the curriculum are not carried out as required (see para. 25).

• **PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS**

*Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection*

Number of lessons observed	79
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	42

*Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	17	43	36	3	0	0

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

*Information about the school's pupils*

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	103
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	29

<b>English as an additional language</b>	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	10

*Attendance*

**Authorised absence**

	%
School data	5.7

**Unauthorised absence**

	%
School data	2.0

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

***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	103
Any other minority ethnic group	

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

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	5	2
Other minority ethnic groups		

*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 – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	12.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	8.5
Average class size	11.5

**Education support staff: YR – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	386

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

***Financial information***

Financial year	1998/99
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	£
Total income	717,191
Total expenditure	712,580
Expenditure per pupil	6,420
Balance brought forward from previous year	92,315
Balance carried forward to next year	96,926

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

**Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	103
Number of questionnaires returned	31

**Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	71	23	0	3	3
My child is making good progress in school.	74	16	3	6	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	61	32	0	3	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	39	39	16	3	3
The teaching is good.	77	16	3	3	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	58	39	0	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	71	23	3	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	81	13	0	3	3
The school works closely with parents.	74	23	0	3	00
The school is well led and managed.	77	19	0	3	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	81	6	3	3	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	48	32	6	3	10

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

**ENGLISH**

45. Achievement and progress in speaking and listening throughout the school are good. Although many pupils have communication difficulties, they learn to listen carefully to staff and to each other, to take turns and to speak with confidence. Some pupils respond particularly well to gesture and signing, as used by the speech and language therapist to support spoken language. A few pupils with more complex communication needs make less progress than they might because teachers and classroom assistants do not offer sign and gesture support. As pupils progress through the school their spoken language becomes more complex and accurate and by age 16 most pupils are able to discuss sensibly and clearly a range of topics arising out of lessons and their everyday life. They are beginning to know what kind of language is appropriate for the world of work and how it differs from that used with their friends. The experience of pupils from 11 to 16 in learning French has a positive impact on their English as they develop really good listening skills and extend their memory; while the recently started drama course for older pupils is helping them to develop critical listening skills and to discuss how to improve their work.
46. Achievement in reading is good throughout the school and pupils make good progress. By age 11, pupils handle books well and enjoy reading stories with the support of staff. Most read simple familiar texts independently and use knowledge of letter sounds and blends to help build up words. They know about capital letters and full stops; they talk about stories and begin to have ideas about what characters are like. They predict what might happen next. Pupils use 'talking' computer programmes to support their reading. By age 14, most pupils read simple texts and many read junior fiction books with some fluency, often with expression. All pupils, even those with the greatest difficulties, have a sight vocabulary and some strategies for decoding words. Almost all pupils enjoy reading and participate in the short silent reading session that begins many lessons. By age 16, there is still a wide variation in reading ability, with a few of the most able pupils reading in line with age expectations, but with a small number of pupils needing a lot of support even with simple texts. Class and group reading and good reading by teachers of interesting and amusing stories and poems ensure that pupils are not limited to reading material at their actual reading age and are motivated to read regularly, enjoy literature and improve their skills. They are able to comment on effective phrases in poems and appreciate the sound of the language.
47. In the primary classes, where the National Literacy Strategy is in place, pupils' progress is particularly good. Work in small groups of pupils with similar identified needs appears to be further accelerating progress. A strength of the upper school is the wide variety of reading material enjoyed by pupils.
48. Achievement in writing is good throughout the school and progress is good. The youngest pupils learn to form letters correctly and many go on to develop a joined and legible script, although there is variation between classes. By age 11, most pupils write words and phrases with recognisable spelling. They compose short passages and stories at a higher level than their spelling allows and the help given by staff, for example by acting as scribes for individual and group work, promotes original and imaginative use of language. By age 14, all pupils draft short compositions and use word books and dictionaries to help them towards independent writing. Their writing is varied in format and style and includes poems. The higher attaining pupils produce extended passages of writing, which they redraft to a high standard, sometimes word-processing the final draft. Pupils use information technology to illustrate and embellish their work. By the age of 16, pupils write in formats appropriate to their work-related studies, composing letters, writing job applications, filling in forms, recording experience and achievement. They use reference books and the Internet as sources of information.
49. Since the last inspection there are clear improvements in achievement in speaking and listening, reading and writing; work is, on the whole, better matched to pupils' abilities. Records of reading have improved. The school has adopted the National Literacy Strategy and this is having a positive effect in the primary classes. In addition the school has initiated small group work based on pupils' individual needs as identified through detailed diagnostic assessment. This is already proving extremely effective as a means of raising literacy standards. The quality and range of English resources have also improved since the last inspection.
50. English is generally well taught throughout the school. There is no unsatisfactory teaching although planning for the youngest children including those under five is unsatisfactory. In the majority of lessons throughout the school, teaching is good; in a sixth of all lessons it is very good. There are high expectations of work and behaviour and pupils respond to this by trying hard and working well. All staff respect pupils' efforts and build on them, so that pupils gain confidence in themselves as learners. Good methods and strategies are used, especially shared and scribed writing and group and class reading, which allow pupils to

read and write worthwhile texts rather than be limited by what they can achieve unsupported. This maintains pupils' motivation. Teachers are very good at communicating enthusiasm for stories and poems and regular sessions of silent reading set good habits. Reading for meaning is encouraged by good questioning techniques.

51. In less successful, (although overall satisfactory) lessons, work is not always sufficiently challenging for the more able pupils. The needs of younger pupils or those with complex difficulties are not planned for sufficiently; and the pace of the lesson is sometimes not sustained in lessons that are too long, and pupils become unsettled.
52. Assessment is often detailed and accurate but also fragmented, so that it is difficult to gain a clear idea of pupils' overall progress and achievement. IEPs include a literacy target but these are not always well chosen. There is little evidence of targets being part of a day to day strategy to promote learning, and in some classes they are not adequately reviewed even on a termly basis. However, an example of very good practice is the use of diagnostic assessment to group pupils for work on sounds in the sessions known as "Primary Focus". Homework is appropriately used in some classes but not consistently across the school.
53. While co-ordination of English is not continuous across the whole school, work done in preparation for the initiation of the National Literacy Strategy has gone some way towards building consistency of approach. There is scope for more sharing of good practice through classroom observation and whole school discussions. The school does not have an adequate communications policy to take account of the changing needs of its pupils. Increasing numbers of pupils admitted have complex learning difficulties including communication problems that require a variety of ways of supporting language, including sign and symbols. Further training is indicated for teachers and classroom assistants so that approaches used by the speech and language therapist can be offered consistently throughout the school day.

## **MATHEMATICS**

54. Achievement in mathematics is satisfactory for all pupils over time. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection when it was often unsatisfactory and often poor for older pupils. It is good for pupils in Key Stage 2 and satisfactory for those in Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils make good progress in 'mental maths' where they begin to handle calculations with confidence. In Key Stage 2, pupils show knowledge of counting skills, sequencing, multiplication tables and methods for working out simple calculations. This is significantly assisted by the recently established approaches to numeracy adopted by the school, particularly with younger pupils, which is in line with the National Numeracy Strategy.
55. Key Stage 3 pupils recognise a range of 3D shapes and identify spheres, cylinders, cubes and cuboids. Key Stage 4, pupils use their number skills in order to carry out budgeting exercises, which are closely related and relevant to social situations.
56. Teaching in Key Stage 2 is always at least satisfactory and is very good and excellent on occasions. Lessons are planned well and follow the framework of the Numeracy Strategy. Good routines have been established and, as a result of this, time is used effectively and lessons have a brisk pace. Where the best teaching is taking place, pupils are excited by the range of activities presented to them and are keen to contribute and be involved. They are challenged well and this results in high levels of concentration. Great enthusiasm from the staff, who have very positive relationships with their pupils, encourages the pupils and fosters the development of self-confidence.
57. Teaching in Key Stages 3 and 4 is always at least satisfactory and on occasions good. Lessons have clearly identified learning objectives, which provide good levels of challenge for the pupils. This results in sustained concentration and effort from the pupils. Pupils are grouped appropriately and this ensures that the tasks they are given are suitable for their ability levels. Where whole class warm-up sessions are used, they are lively and interesting and establish good levels of concentration and effort from the pupils. In Key Stage 4, tasks are set within relevant social situations for pupils of this age and opportunities are made available for pupils to work with a degree of independence.
58. Pupils' response in lessons is at least satisfactory and usually good or very good. Pupils settle quickly and quietly, responding well to the established routines. They willingly contribute in whole class sessions, answering questions confidently. They concentrate well and are highly involved, particularly during numeracy lessons where there is a good range of activities. They listen carefully to their teachers and to one another. Behaviour in lessons is good, and any incidents of misbehaviour are dealt with quickly and efficiently.
59. The co-ordinators have designed a full and comprehensive scheme of work, which ensures appropriate

coverage of National Curriculum, and there is an associated assessment scheme, which is now being regularly used. This in turn informs planning of individual and group programmes. As a result of this planning, work prepared for pupils is well matched to their ability levels and supports satisfactory or good progress.

60. Both co-ordinators have attended training sessions for the Numeracy Strategy and are now implementing this successfully. Practice is particularly secure in Key Stage 2. Other staff have received training and are using sections of the strategy appropriately. The co-ordinators do not monitor teaching in mathematics, although the progress of individual pupils is more closely monitored through the assessment system. Resources available for the teaching of mathematics are good with several published schemes being used as and when they are appropriate.

## SCIENCE

61. Achievements in science are generally satisfactory and pupils make sufficient progress to reach the pass and merit grades of the Certificate of Educational Achievement by the end of Key Stage 4. The absence of a science laboratory, however, and the restrictions this imposes on the range of science resources and investigative work, especially in Key Stage 3 and 4, limit pupils' achievements and prevent study of a sufficient range and depth of science to give pupils' access to higher level accreditation. The lack of appropriate accommodation was reported at the last inspection. In spite of the efforts by the school to obtain the necessary funds for a laboratory there has been no improvement in the science accommodation since the last inspection. Pupils are developing some knowledge and understanding in each of the broad areas of biology, chemistry and physics but the gains made each year are very uneven within and between the four science National Curriculum attainment targets. This is attributable both to the poor accommodation and to the unsatisfactory quality of curriculum planning. The great majority of pupils want to learn, behave well, and have a positive attitude towards science. Only in Year 11 is there any evidence of lack of effort and commitment to science. Pupils are learning some of the range of investigative skills, such as preliminary predicting, observing and recording results but in very limited contexts. They really enjoy experimental and investigative work and it is a pity that no arrangements are in place to use science facilities in partner institutions. Pupils with additional and more complex special educational needs are subject to the same restrictions in science as other pupils but do have full access to the opportunities provided, they display the same positive attitudes as their peers and make satisfactory progress. Lesson plans indicate how staff will be deployed to help these pupils, and the support is good. No references are made, however, in lesson plans to IEPs; nor are any assessment procedures in place to monitor that these pupils are making the best possible progress given their additional special needs.
62. All teaching and learning observed across the key stages is at least satisfactory and this is an improvement since the last inspection when some of the teaching was reported as poor. Overall the quality of teaching is satisfactory, with some good and very good features in Key Stages 2 and 3. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and secure good standards of discipline in lessons, enabling pupils to access suitably challenging tasks without distraction. There are no science specialists, but teachers have sufficient knowledge to meet the demands of those aspects of National Curriculum science that can currently be taught without a laboratory. The best learning is exemplified in a Key Stage 2 lesson on sources of light, where pupils displayed very high standards of behaviour, high levels of interest and concentration, wasted no time and by the end of the lesson had constructed a circuit. Some pupils extend their learning when they match the three-dimensional equipment to two-dimensional diagrams of the same, and make a record their results. The highest attainers showed well-developed independent learning skills and applied the necessary intellectual effort needed to complete the task. The teacher and support staff were on hand to give them support, and importantly gave these pupils the space to make mistakes and learn from them until the task was complete.
63. In a Key Stage 3 lesson, successful learning about the volume of air in different materials is the result of the judicious grouping of pupils according to their prior levels of attainment, deploying staff effectively to each group and pitching questions within these groups which are well matched to learning needs. In some lessons the pace of learning is slow when tasks are not sufficiently varied during the very long science lessons; and when too few demands are made on pupils resulting in some unnecessary chatting. A significant minority of the oldest pupils is not prepared to make the effort to think about their work, when studying the Solar System, for example. Their completion of tasks is perfunctory and their understanding is, as a consequence, superficial.
64. The quality of marking and assessment in science across the school is poor. No progress has been made in

developing effective assessment procedures since the last inspection. Informal assessments, only, inform the end of key stage judgements about pupils' standards in science. There are no formal records of assessments for monitoring progress and diagnosing learning difficulties. No assessments are in place to guide lesson planning or to inform any necessary adjustments to the schemes of work. The use of homework continues to be inadequate, as reported last time.

65. The science scheme of work for each key stage is not cross-referenced to the National Curriculum programmes of study and provides no guidance on meeting the requirements for experimental and investigative science. There is insufficient help in the scheme for teachers who have a wide range of attainment and ages in their classes, and where pupils stay in a class for more than one year. There is no guidance on how to pitch appropriately the same topic from the two year cycle of the scheme of work both for younger pupils in their first year in the class and for older pupils in their second year. There is a degree of unnecessary repetition between Key Stages 2 and 3, for example in learning about the properties of materials and in constructing electrical circuits in series. There are no risk assessments in the science scheme of work and insufficient provision for information and communications technology.
66. Teachers have access to a good range of published resources but the range of science equipment and three-dimensional resources is unsatisfactory. Co-ordination, monitoring and evaluation of the curriculum, and co-ordination of the development of effective assessment procedures in science, are weak. Overall there has not been sufficient progress in responding to the weaknesses in science reported at the last inspection.

## **ART**

67. Achievement in art has improved greatly since the last inspection, when it was unsatisfactory for older pupils. It is now good for all pupils, due to the good progress they make as they begin developing skills and experiencing work in a range of different media. Key Stage 2 pupils work with colours and paint and complete collage work with growing accuracy. They know how to make shades lighter or darker and their compositions are becoming more interesting. They are given a good degree of independence and listen carefully to the help and advice given. They comment on the work of famous artists showing developing observational skills. In Year 6 pupils very confidently mix paint and produce a full range of shades.
68. In Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils are taught by the art co-ordinator who ensures that they develop a broad range of skills and have the opportunity to work in a good range of media. They use their sketchpads to record their ideas and plan their work. They create shades of colour in paints, chalks and pastels. They use clay confidently and their observational drawing is good. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 are preparing a portfolio of work for GCSE and each contains a good range of pieces of different styles. Much of the work undertaken is on an individual basis and most work with a good deal of independence.
69. The quality of teaching is always at least satisfactory and is good or very good on occasions. Lessons are well managed with a good supply of resources being made available to pupils. Key Stage 2 pupils watch demonstrations carefully and approach their work with confidence as a result. Teachers and classroom assistants give good support at an individual level and pupils are constantly encouraged to think about their work and to make decisions about techniques that they could use. Where any behavioural difficulties occur they are well dealt with by staff and in most lessons pupils work with concentration and focus throughout. Pupils' work is well displayed around the school and they realise that their efforts are valued.
70. Older pupils are clearly very familiar with routines of working in the art room; they manage their materials well and with a good degree of independence. The scheme of work guides teachers in the covering of a good range of basic skills in Key Stage 2. These are further developed in Key Stage 3 in preparation for course work, which will be undertaken in Key Stage 4. The work of famous artists is looked at throughout the key stages.
71. The co-ordinator who teaches art in Key Stages 3 and 4 monitors pupils' work and provides continuous feedback to them on how they might improve. She also guides the contents of portfolios with the pupils, ensuring an appropriate variety of work. Although the co-ordinator is not an art specialist, she has attended relevant in-service training and has great enthusiasm for the subject, which the pupils respond to positively. She sets high levels of challenge and expectation, assuring them that they can do good work, and as a result standards are high. Monitoring of art across the school is not fully established, however.
72. There is a good range of resources to support work in art and pupils treat these with care and respect. There are some difficulties in accommodation however, in that the art room is a teaching base for other subjects and constant tidying and preparing for activities is required as lessons change.



## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

73. Pupils achieve well overall in design and technology, as a result of good progress sustained over time. This is well supported by consistently high quality teaching and good facilities. Teaching, which was previously found to be unsatisfactory at times, is now usually at least good, frequently very good and never unsatisfactory. In lessons, pupils make good learning gains, and in some lessons these are very good. Secure subject knowledge from specialist teachers ensures that lessons are well planned to achieve their objectives and enables pupils to make confident progress. The exposition and recall of previous learning with which lessons begin, set the tone and the final review reinforces what has been learned and prepares well for the next lesson by indicating how the project will progress. Oral assessment and feedback are consistently used to guide pupils, reducing the risk of mistakes and consequent frustration, particularly with younger pupils, with positive reinforcement and praise well used to sustain motivation and confidence. For older pupils, teaching increasingly encourages independent working so that learning takes place in an increasingly adult environment.
74. Year 11 pupils undertake a range of food technology projects to achieve accreditation via the St. Ivel award scheme. All pupils attain the bronze award and some work towards silver. They research into school dinner provision choosing, making and evaluating a range of foods. They demonstrate culinary skills when they trial a selection of variations on common foods, such as a sausage plait. The youngest pupils design and make a sandwich, improving their use of tools, selecting the materials and combining them, ending up by testing and evaluating the finished product.
75. Pupils also make good, or very good, progress in lessons involving textiles. Older primary pupils make good quality felt slippers to a pattern evolved through research and develop their design skills as they explore and implement ways of finish them off to improve presentation. Key Stage 3 pupils work in groups, each making a part of a textile collage of seaside scenes using a range of techniques, including ordinary, French and finger knitting, appliqué and drawing with fabric paints. They design jointly and plan ahead, choosing the materials and deciding how they are to be used. Other pupils design and make cushion covers, plaiting materials for decoration. By Year 10, pupils demonstrate increasing confidence in using electric sewing machines as they design and make summer shorts.
76. In other aspects of the subject, pupils design and make a range of structures and mechanisms, as Key Stage 3 pupils are making a cam-driven toy. At other times they make useful household artefacts or attractive wooden toys. Designs are currently being developed for a model fairground, in which the whole group contributes to the planning.
77. Achievement is also well supported by the good overall response that pupils make. Year 11 pupils find it hard to engage at first, but good behaviour management ensures they quickly settle to the task of preparing their variation on the sausage plait. They are effectively motivated by the St Ivel awards scheme they are following, and take their work seriously. Younger pupils work with enthusiasm throughout, are pleased with what they are achieving and demonstrate it to visitors with obvious pride. Behaviour is good; pupils have a good awareness of safety and hygiene issues and follow the well-established, agreed routines without the need for reminders. They work well together, making joint choices and working out designs and strategies together, co-operating well when it comes to making. They share resources well, taking turns to use restricted equipment and showing good awareness of each other's needs. They are friendly and cheerful in lessons, reflecting the teachers' attitudes, and showing increasing maturity in their ability to work for extended periods without requiring help.
78. The curriculum is wide-ranging and varied, being planned to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. All strands are covered, but there are insufficient resources to provide adequately for plastics technology, and this, in turn, has a limiting effect on other aspects. Arrangements for co-ordinating the subject, both across the school and across the various strands, are insecure. Assessment, reported to be a weakness in the last report, has only recently been introduced in Key Stage 3, and remains unsatisfactory elsewhere and overall. Good use is made of the specialist facilities for resistant materials and food technology, and the school is well equipped for textiles.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

79. In geography, achievement is satisfactory overall as a result of mostly satisfactory progress, although in one lesson in Year 8 progress was unsatisfactory because of shortcomings in the teaching. Teaching is otherwise satisfactory throughout and good in Year 5.
80. The youngest pupils achieve satisfactory levels of understanding in early map work becoming familiar with

the local environment and a nearby park; this supports work tracing Little Red Riding Hood's journey from the shops to her Grandma's cottage. Pupils are slowly acquiring relevant, key words (over, through, cottage, wood and field, for example) and progress is satisfactory. Progress is no better than satisfactory because there is too little differentiation in the planning, and at times too few staff in the room, to cater for the wide range of age and learning difficulty here. Pupils in Year 5 have a good developing understanding of the line of longitude running south from London through France and on into Mali in Africa as part of their project 'On the Line'. They have good insights into life in a Mali village, and their cultural and multi-cultural awareness is developing well as a result of this topic. The teaching of this project is good because it is encouraging strong links with other subjects, it is capturing pupils' enthusiasm for looking at life in other countries and is encouraging good listening and analytical skills.

81. In one lesson in Year 7, limited, but just satisfactory, progress was made in naming capital cities in the United Kingdom because of barely satisfactory teaching overall. While a clear lesson plan addressed some appropriate learning objectives, the delivery lacked enough challenge to maintain the interest of all pupils throughout the lesson and pupil management was made secure only by the presence of a classroom assistant. Achievement in these circumstances is limited.
82. In Year 8, standards are mostly unsatisfactory; for example, although pupils know that northern regions are often colder and that they live in the south-west of England, they do not all have a secure grasp of north, south, east and west, and they have poor recall of what they have been taught recently. Teaching in one lesson seen here was unsatisfactory in that the material did not challenge the most able and unsettled behaviour was not adequately dealt with. Otherwise, behaviour is very good in lessons and pupils bring positive attitudes to classes. They are inquisitive, offer their ideas and suggestions willingly and, noticeably in Year 5, handle artefacts and equipment with great care.
83. On paper, geography is co-ordinated by a non-specialist who teaches it to older pupils; in effect, co-ordination in terms of a whole-school policy and scheme of work, a subject development plan or the monitoring of colleagues' teaching is almost non-existent. The curriculum taught shows reasonable regard for the National Curriculum but assessment is undeveloped and very little used to guide what is next taught and how. Resources for geography are adequate and some use is made of visits to local sites of geographic interest. Geography has improved from a low base at the last inspection when both teaching and pupils' progress were mostly unsatisfactory; further improvements in these areas await better co-ordination.

## **HISTORY**

84. History is taught up to the end of Key Stage 3 and achievement is at least satisfactory as a result of generally good progress. Teaching is mostly good and is sometimes very good in Key Stage 2.
85. In Year 5, achievement is satisfactory in understanding the development and use of vacuum cleaners over time, largely as a result of the teacher's effective use of an excellent range of original artefacts. In Year 6, pupils have a satisfactory and growing understanding of life in Victorian times and some of the differences between then and now. In their detailed study of clothes worn in those days some very good teaching is promoting very good progress. Lessons are planned to engage pupils' enthusiasm through the use of excellent resources, in one case adults in full Victorian dress. New relevant words, like 'invention', 'corset' and 'bodice' are skilfully introduced; pupils learn and remember the details because of the visual impact provided by the artefacts.
86. In Year 8, in their study of the Black Death, pupils have made satisfactory progress in learning about the detail of the plague; they understand the importance of rats carrying fleas in spreading the disease through the unclean streets of London. Despite having significant learning difficulties in some cases in this class, pupils try hard, offer lengthy explanations and read confidently.
87. In Year 9, good progress is being made in learning about the background to, and some of the causes of, the Second World War. Achievement is good in understanding the use made by both sides of propaganda in the run-up to war; many pupils have an accurate grasp of what is an historical artefact and they have gained a fairly clear understanding of the order of main events between the two wars and what were Hitler's ambitions. These achievements are a consequence of well-planned teaching with work pitched at varying levels to match pupils' different needs. In one lesson the use of an original document, signed by Winston Churchill, was effective in promoting interest and understanding. The good teaching here is characterised by clear explanations, sufficient recapitulation of what was covered in the previous lesson and useful contributions from the support assistant to the needs of those who have greatest difficulty.
88. Pupils' attitudes to history are mostly good and never unsatisfactory. A general air of enthusiasm is found

in lessons, pupils ask pertinent questions, want to know more and, even when excited, behave sensibly.

89. The subject is co-ordinated by a specialist who teaches it at Key Stage 3 but who has limited influence over what is happening at Key Stage 2 and insufficient time to monitor and develop the subject overall. The schemes of work show reasonable regard for the National Curriculum but there is limited planning for continuity of study overall, assessment does not guide next steps in learning and there is no subject development plan or overall policy available. The quality of teaching and levels of pupils' progress are little changed since the previous inspection when they were mostly at least satisfactory; no use of information technology was seen during the inspection, which was criticised previously. A significant strength of the teaching of history is the availability and use of some excellent resource materials and artefacts throughout, but particularly at Key Stage 2.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

90. Only two information technology lessons were observed during the inspection. Judgements are based on these, on scrutiny of work, display, observation of pupils in other lessons and analysis of planning and assessment documents. Achievement in information technology appears just satisfactory overall throughout the school although with areas of weakness, particularly in the primary classes where it is not taught as a separate subject. The youngest pupils use number and letter games and drawing programmes. They are familiar with the keyboard and the mouse and can highlight and select objects, type in words and letters and draw pictures. They are confident in handling equipment and older pupils help younger ones to use programmes. By age 11, pupils use the computer to word process drafts of their writing and can select, load and use talking versions of their English reading books. By age 14, pupils are using word processing confidently, are able to choose appropriate fonts and layouts to present their work, and can find information on CD-ROM. They gain experience of modelling through computer games. By the age of 16, pupils have had experience of writing a programme to control lights on a clown or Christmas tree. They understand terms such as "folder", "procedure" and "scrolling"; they can use programmes to design different rooms and they understand the purpose of a database and can enter data. They access the Internet and use both addresses and search engines to find information. Many pupils achieve certificates under the OCR National Skills Proficiency award scheme.
91. Since the last inspection there has been some progress in information technology, for example, the writing of a scheme of work, training opportunities taken by the co-ordinator and an improvement in the opportunities offered to pupils in Key Stages 2 and 3. The progress of these pupils is now judged to be just satisfactory. There are still no timetabled lessons for information technology and resources that were judged good are now outdated and do not meet current needs. A major upgrade of hardware including connection to the Internet and the National Grid for Learning is awaited. Overall there has been insufficient progress made by the school in the teaching of information technology since the last inspection although some sound foundations have been laid. The school plans to deliver a course of basic level information technology skills in the near future.
92. Teaching in information technology is satisfactory judged by the two lessons seen. The control technology aspects of the subject are taught as part of design and technology. For older pupils there is satisfactory provision in all strands of the information technology curriculum, in Years 10 and 11, at Yeovil College. While it is clear that all teachers encourage and support pupils in Key Stages 2 and 3 in the use of computers for drawing, writing and information retrieval, the pupils' experience is limited by their teachers' skill and experience. Teachers' knowledge of the subject and how to present it is varied and sometimes barely satisfactory. The lack of staff expertise and confidence lead to progress which is just satisfactory but not good. Teachers sometimes rely too heavily on the intrinsic attraction of the technology, and the co-operative and patient behaviour of pupils. Teachers include the use of ICT in their lesson planning but too often plans are limited to a mention of a commercial programme; in science and music the planning for use of ICT is itself unsatisfactory. There is insufficient attention to data handling in Key Stages 2 and 3. Assessment is not fully in place. There is a useful log in which pupils' skills and knowledge should be recorded, but these logs are not used consistently, and in some classes not used at all. The teaching of skills is not sufficiently systematic.
93. There has been recent progress in the co-ordination of the subject. The scheme of work meets the requirements of the National Curriculum. However, the co-ordinator's role in monitoring teaching, pupils' work and planning is undeveloped.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

### French

94. French is taught at Key Stages 3 and 4 and pupils' achievement is mostly good and they make mostly good and sometimes very good progress.
95. Achievement in Year 9 at the end of Key Stage 3 is good in the understanding of vocabulary relating, for example, to places in towns and their position (beside the swimming pool; in front of the station). Good progress in this regard is the result of well-managed, whole-class exercises pitched at pupils' levels of understanding and interest; this is helped further by timely changes of activity to maintain a lively interest from pupils throughout lengthy teaching sessions.
96. Good progress is maintained through Year 10 in careful listening and in the greater care taken over correct pronunciation; pupils here have more confidence to tackle longer phrases and short sentences in their responses. Written work is more limited but satisfactory, except that presentation is sometimes careless and untidy. Good progress is made, firstly, in writing and, subsequently, in talking through short question and answer 'conversations' in pairs. This constitutes good achievement for pupils with these levels of learning difficulty. Progress is slower, and achievement is noticeably less, in Year 11 where about half the class has opted for French. This is because the class has a significant number of pupils with attention and marginal behavioural difficulties that have slowed the rate of progress over time. Relationships are good, but attitudes toward the subject are not equally positive throughout this class; some are only superficially interested.
97. For much the greater part, pupils like French and try hard throughout lessons. A relaxed working atmosphere prevails, there is a maintained emphasis on work and relationships are affable and respectful. Teaching, which is a strength of the school, and which is never unsatisfactory and very good in a half of lessons, maintains an appropriate mix of spoken French and English in both questioning to check understanding and in giving instructions. The quiet management of behaviour, the astute changes in activity within the planning and the deployment of assistant staff to pupils with the greatest difficulties are particular strengths of teaching in French.
98. French is co-ordinated, and taught to all classes in Key Stages 3 and 4, by a non-specialist but very experienced teacher. The scheme of work has good regard for the National Curriculum with a slight emphasis in favour of speaking and listening to the language, although reading and writing in French is not ignored, with good attention to giving pupils insights into the culture of France. In support of this, a group of senior pupils will visit Paris later this year. There is good use of commercial schemes, one of which provides the basis for satisfactory assessment of progress in the subject. Resources for learning are plentiful, although information technology is too little used. The progress being made by pupils, and the quality of the teaching throughout, is much better than at the time of the last inspection, when some aspects were found to be unsatisfactory. In addition, external accreditation through the Certificate of Achievement was introduced last year and nearly all those entered gained certificates.

### MUSIC

99. Achievement in music is usually good and is improving, as pupils acquire greater skill and confidence. This represents a significant improvement since the last inspection, where overall achievement was not secure. There is some unsatisfactory learning for the youngest pupils as a result of insecure teacher skills and unsatisfactory presentation, but, in the main, good teaching ensures that learning in lessons is good and, at times, it is very good. Overall, teaching has improved since the previous inspection, especially in Key Stages 3 and 4. This is because confident specialist skills are communicated well to pupils and encourage them to believe in their own ability. Well-planned lessons provide a good balance between composing, listening and performing. Smooth transition between activities and clear explanations enable pupils to focus effectively on the task they are given. High expectations sometimes lead a teacher to ask pupils to attempt tasks that are too difficult for them, but a determined approach largely overcomes these difficulties, and pupils achieve unexpectedly well. From the earliest years, pupils develop some listening skills, and become aware of rhythm, performing some actions in time to a tape of a radio programme. Some join in songs, which they hear on the tape. Older Key Stage 2 pupils compose a musical sequence using claps, taps and clicks, listen to each other and copy each other's sequences. They use untuned percussion to perform and copy rhythms and learn a sequence to accompany the song 'Here comes the Circus'. They sing familiar songs in assembly with enthusiasm and satisfactory regard for pitch pulse and rhythm. Key Stage 3 pupils learn well from the commercial scheme used, they understand the nature of a fanfare and recognise that there are different

patterns of calls and response. They echo and invent variations on musical phrases using a triad. They acquire a satisfactory musical vocabulary, which is reinforced through questioning. They learn to compose simple melodies to fit selected words and make judgements about preferences when they listen to tunes written by others. Higher-attaining pupils combine phrases to create musical stanzas, using the same range of notes in different combinations. They sing a range of songs from traditional airs like the 'Gypsy Rover' and songs from other cultures as 'Mango Walk', to unfamiliar melodies found within the published scheme.

100. Younger pupils usually respond well in music lessons, although their enthusiasm leads them to be noisy at times. They try hard to achieve what is asked of them even when it is actually beyond their capabilities, and, as a result, unexpectedly good learning takes place. They listen carefully to the teacher and each other, take turns well and, in general, are supportive towards pupils who find the tasks difficult. They handle instruments with pleasure and care, exploring the sounds each makes, and talk about what they are doing. When 'marching' with the circus band, they make considerable efforts to keep in step. When given the opportunity to sing 'My God is a good, good, good, God' in assembly they join in with great enthusiasm, performing actions in time to the music. However, at times, an individual pupil displays behaviour that disrupts their own and others' learning as a result of a lack of clear planning to address their individual special needs. Older pupils behave well, handle instruments carefully and show considerable self-discipline and restraint in leaving them alone between performances. They sing 'I wish I'd looked after me teeth' with gusto, and set about composing musical sequences with great seriousness of purpose.
101. The curriculum provided is generally satisfactory, and good in Key Stage 3, where it follows a published scheme covering the programmes of study for Key Stage 2. This scheme provides an effective structure to assess pupils' progress, but there is unsatisfactory assessment in Key Stage 2. Arrangements for co-ordinating the subject across the school are satisfactory and there is some monitoring of teaching by the co-ordinator.
102. There is a limited range of extra-curricular activities; there is a recorder group, but no choir, and pupils rarely perform in assemblies. However, there are two concerts annually in which pupils demonstrate the work undertaken in class. The resources are, in many respects, good, with a range of tuned and untuned percussion and a growing collection of keyboards. There are some instruments reflecting other cultural traditions, but these are limited, and the absence of a quality sound reproduction system limits the use of music across the school so that it does not play as great a part in the life of the school as it could, particularly contribution to spiritual and cultural development. The accommodation for music is very good; the multi-purpose studio adjoining the co-ordinator's room offers high quality facilities for a range of musical activities.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

103. Achievements in physical education are satisfactory overall but there are restrictions on the standards pupils can reach caused by inadequacies in the provision of indoor facilities, especially for the more physically mature pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4. Wet weather compounds the accommodation deficiencies and there is insufficient alternative curricular planning of the National Curriculum physical education programmes of study for adverse weather conditions. Achievements by the older pupils during indoor games are satisfactory but there is insufficient individual diagnostic feedback during lessons for these pupils to know how to improve their skills further; their progress is also hampered by the provision of only a narrow range of activities in these lessons. There are currently no arrangements, other than for swimming, to use on a regular basis other indoor sports facilities for pupils in Key Stage 3 and especially Key Stage 4. Pupils cope very well with the many interruptions to indoor physical education lessons that result because the small multi-purpose hall is a main thoroughfare for the school. Younger pupils, especially, concentrate so well on developing their gymnastic and dance skills that they usually make good progress in spite of these interruptions.
104. The inadequacies of indoor accommodation were reported at the last inspection. Progress in acquiring skills during outdoor lessons is good, for example, in football and outdoor and adventurous activities; and progress in swimming at the local pool is very good. A significant minority of boys and girls in Key Stage 3 and 4 achieves a wide range of football skills in line with national standards. Boys and girls compete in a range of inter-school sporting fixtures that contribute well not only to the continuing development of their physical skills but also to personal and social development.
105. The great majority of pupils have a positive attitude towards physical education and behaviour is mostly good. Sometimes it is very good, on the football field for example, where pupils accept the rules of the game and the referee's decisions. Behaviour of the large number of Key Stage 2 and 3 pupils at the local

swimming pool is excellent, enabling them to maximise their time in the water, to work safely and to follow instructions carefully as they consolidate and develop new skills, such as floating on their backs and collecting objects from the bottom of the pool. Pupils are very caring and protective of pupils with physical disabilities. Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties generally work hard to overcome their difficulties and teachers and support staff successfully manage the sometimes very challenging behaviours of these pupils.

106. Teaching is good overall, often very good and never unsatisfactory. Swimming and Key Stage 4 football lessons provide very good examples of those aspects of teaching which are particularly successful in securing good quality learning. These lessons are characterised by highly efficient organisation and management of the activities and the pupils to maximise learning time. High standards of discipline are in place, there is very effective deployment of learning support staff, and methods and groupings of pupils provide a close match between tasks and pupils' learning needs. Particularly effective in these lessons is the good balance between individual work and integration for group and team activities for pupils with physical disabilities and complex learning needs. Although there is no specialist physical education teaching in the school, teachers have sufficient skill to meet the demands of the planned curriculum. Teachers and support staff are enthusiastic and mainly successful in motivating pupils.
107. The schemes of work cover the National Curriculum requirements; but they do not specifically refer to the programmes of study, and there are no risk assessments in these plans. The quality of teaching and learning has improved since the last inspection. The school is successful in promoting a socially inclusive physical education programme where girls, boys and pupils with additional and complex learning needs all have good access to the range of opportunities provided. There has not yet been enough improvement since the last inspection in developing, recording and using assessments to diagnose strengths and weaknesses, to plan individual programmes and to monitor progress. Assessment is best in swimming where assessments are made and recorded each lesson and where the information is used effectively to inform the next stage of swimming instruction. Pupils are highly motivated by the swimming certificates they receive and the staff respond very well by accrediting even the very small achievement made by pupils with additional and complex special needs. Some useful informal assessment is developing in football and in Key Stage 2 dance where pupils are being encouraged to evaluate their own performances.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

108. Pupils are achieving soundly in religious education as a result of making satisfactory progress in their knowledge and understanding. Key Stage 2 pupils are aware of celebrations both in their own lives and those of other faiths. Their study of Divali is related to their work on light and their learning is well supported by a useful range of resources. Older pupils in Key Stage 2 are able to join in a good purposeful discussion on feelings and relationships, giving thoughtful responses and expressing themselves well. In Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils show that they know the important facts about the life of Jesus, that they know several well known parables and that they are aware of some Old Testament stories. Their discussion on jealousy, following work on Cain and Abel shows that they have understood what they have been working on. Where they are looking at forgiveness, most can contribute to the discussion but have difficulty recording their work. Work in pupils' books and folders shows their knowledge of other faiths.
109. The quality of teaching and learning is good or very good in the lessons observed in Key Stages 1 and 2. The sensitive leading of a discussion on feelings in Year 6 and the use of role-play challenges pupils well into making thoughtful observations and responses. Support staff play a key role in this lesson. The youngest pupils are also well supported in expressing their opinions and thoughts as they plan their birthday celebrations. In Key Stage 3, teaching is satisfactory and discussions are encouraged but pupils are not given sufficient input or structure to express them fully. No teaching was seen in Key Stage 4.
110. The scheme of work is in line with the Agreed Syllabus and the co-ordinator monitors work across the school. Pupils' work reflects coverage of the scheme. The teaching of religious education as a block in Year 11 does not meet statutory requirements and the school has not as yet developed any system of assessment to monitor pupils' progress. Resources to support work in religious education are satisfactory.