

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **ELMWOOD SCHOOL**

Bridgwater

LEA area: Somerset

Unique reference number: 123938

Headteacher: Mrs J Tobin

Reporting inspector: Mrs P Potheary  
21765

Dates of inspection: 20<sup>th</sup> – 23<sup>rd</sup> May 2002

Inspection number: 192155

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

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	4 to16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Hamp Avenue Bridgwater Somerset
Postcode:	TA6 6AP
Telephone number:	01278 422866
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs S Jackson
Date of previous inspection:	March1997

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
21765	Mrs P Potheary	Registered inspector	Equal opportunities Music Religious education	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are the pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
9619	Mr R Miller	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
12112	Ms G Carter	Team inspector	Special educational needs English Modern foreign languages	
3055	Mr C Tombs	Team inspector	Foundation Stage Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology	
22948	Ms M Vallis	Team inspector	Geography History Physical education	
2593	Mr I McAllister	Team inspector	Mathematics Science	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Elmwood is a day community special school for 90 pupils aged four to sixteen. There are 79 pupils on roll full time, 53 boys and 26 girls. All pupils have a statement of special educational need, 40 for moderate learning difficulty, ten for severe learning difficulty, 19 for emotional and behavioural difficulty, six for autism and four for other conditions. All pupils bar one are from a white UK heritage. Attainment on entry is well below national averages and 38 per cent of pupils are eligible for free school meals. The school is part of an education achievement zone and through this has embedded Emotional Literacy<sup>1</sup> into the approach and ethos of the school.

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

Elmwood is an effective and improving school where pupils learn to relate well and become mature. The quality of teaching is good overall leading to good achievement and progress in the majority of lessons. Leadership is very good which, with good overall management, is resulting in rapid recent improvement and good value for money.

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

- Teaching is good overall and pupils usually achieve well and make good progress, especially in their personal and social development.
- Pupils behave well and have good attitudes to school; their attendance and the relationships they make are very good.
- The school cares well for pupils, especially in helping them to behave appropriately, understand their feelings through the Emotional Literacy approach and take responsibility.
- Associate staff including administrative assistants and teaching assistants make a substantial contribution to the work of the school and the progress and wellbeing of the pupils.
- The headteacher provides very clear leadership by monitoring and directing the work of the school. In particular, analysis of the progress made by individuals and groups of pupils in key areas is securing very good recent improvement.

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

- The role of senior management in initiating change and development to better support the work of the headteacher in driving school improvement.
- The role of subject co-ordinators in monitoring the quality of teaching and pupil progress, in sharing best practice and in developing the curriculum and accreditation in their subjects.
- The inconsistent use of the new assessment systems by teachers in all subjects, for planning lessons and developing the curriculum.

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

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

The school was last inspected in March 1997. Since then the school has addressed all the key issues from that inspection and has made good overall improvement. The overall leadership and management have improved very well. The quality of teaching, the pace of change and the curriculum have developed well and the capacity to continue improving is good.

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<sup>1</sup> A system which provides pupils with the language to understand their emotions and those of others, and the strategies to relate well and overcome and resolve conflict.

## STANDARDS

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

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

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

The school has met or exceeded all whole school targets for pupils to achieve GCSEs and has also exceeded targets for overall levels of achievement for the subjects. This represents an improvement on previous years. Pupils achieve well in all key stages and make good progress in most subjects. Good equal opportunities ensure that girls as well as boys, those with severe learning difficulties and pupils with autism or emotional and behavioural difficulties achieve equally well. The school was awarded a School Achievement Award in 2001.

Pupils achieve well and make good progress in English in speaking and listening throughout the school. They progress well in reading and writing and mathematics in Key Stages 1 and 2 and continue with sound progress in Key Stages 3 and 4. In geography and religious education, achievement is also sound and progress is satisfactory. Pupils make good progress and achieve well in science, information and communication technology (ICT), history, music, design and technology and physical education in Key Stages 1, 2 and 4 and art and design in Key Stages 3 and 4. Very good progress is made in art and design in Key Stages 1 and 2. However, in physical education and French in Key Stage 3, progress is unsatisfactory. The progress pupils make in their personal and social development is very good.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have good positive attitudes to learning, activities and staff.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is good; pupils show respect and consideration towards each other and adults and work hard to improve their own behaviour.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils develop their personal and social skills very well. An increasingly mature and confident approach helps them to relate well and take a growing responsibility in the work of the school.
Attendance	Attendance is well above the average for similar schools.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 5-11	aged 11-16
Lessons seen overall	good	good

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

Teaching and the quality of learning are good overall throughout the school. In two-thirds of lessons teaching is good, very good or excellent and it is satisfactory in the rest except for three per cent of lessons which are unsatisfactory. This shows good improvement since the last inspection when an unacceptably high proportion of lessons were inadequate.

The quality of teaching in English in Key Stages 1 and 2, mathematics, information and communication technology, history, art and design, design and technology and personal, social and health education is good. Teaching is satisfactory in English in Key Stages 3 and 4, science, geography, religious education and French and very good in music. The basic skills of communication, literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology are taught well in most subjects, with satisfactory attention paid to teaching reading and writing in Key Stages 3 and 4.

The majority of teaching in the school supports and deals well with all aspects of pupils' special educational needs, the needs of girls and boys and for pupils of differing abilities.

High expectations, clear goals, good subject knowledge, very good relationships and good management of behaviour are the qualities which lead to the good and very good lessons. In these lessons pupils try hard, enjoy their work, have a good sense of purpose and learn well. In the third of lessons where learning is satisfactory or slow, there are strengths, but weaknesses include unclear goals, expectations which are not sufficiently challenging, weak assessment and weak planning which does not help pupils to build on prior learning. There is also too great a reliance on worksheets in some subjects, which do not always extend skills sufficiently. Skilled well-organised teamwork between teachers and teaching assistants leads to good overall organisation in the majority of lessons where pupils clearly make progress. Homework, however, is not consistently given to help pupils who would benefit by building on their learning at home.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum meets statutory requirements and is good overall with a broad range of extra-curricular activities. It is suitable for all pupils and promotes literacy and numeracy well. However, the quality of subject provision is inconsistent ranging from good to unsatisfactory in parts.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' personal development is very good especially their social and behavioural development. Pupils are helped to become mature and take responsibility. Good opportunities are also provided for extending pupils' spiritual, moral and cultural awareness in many subjects.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Pupils are safe and well cared for. Assessment provides sufficient information to plan and guide their work in most, but not yet all, subjects although monitoring in core subjects is good. Good care is taken to keep parents informed and involved, but this is not yet fully effective.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The school is very well led with a very clear sense of direction from the headteacher. Overall management supported by key staff is good in securing school improvement. The role delegated to senior staff and subject co-ordinators is satisfactory but lacks sufficient responsibility for monitoring and taking initiative.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governing body fulfils statutory responsibilities and understands the strengths and weaknesses of the school well. The governors' role in curriculum monitoring and shaping the direction of the school is satisfactory and developing.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school's systems for monitoring and evaluating every aspect of school performance, linked to setting appropriate targets and action for improvement, are very good.
The strategic use of resources	Every aspect of the school's financial control and management is of a high quality. Technology is also used well to secure good, efficient management of systems around the school. Staffing and resources are also good and the school seeks best value in all decisions for spending and deployment of resources.

## 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>• Their children makes good progress and like school</li> <li>• Teaching is good</li> <li>• School is approachable</li> <li>• Information provided is good</li> <li>• The school is well led and managed</li> </ul>	<p>A minority of parents replying to the questionnaire feel that the following could be improved:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homework is insufficient</li> <li>• Closer working with parents</li> <li>• Extra-curricular activities</li> </ul>

The inspection team generally agrees with the views of parents. Teaching is good, and pupils make good progress. There are no clear guidelines for giving homework. The school's strategies for closer ties with parents are not yet successful. However, the provision for extra-curricular activities is good and generally takes place in the lunch hour.



## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Pupils achieve well and make good progress overall. Pupils with significantly different needs such as those with autism, emotional and behavioural difficulties and speech and communication difficulties, make equally good progress. Careful attention paid to equal opportunities ensures that pupils of all abilities, girls and boys also make good overall progress. This represents a good improvement since the last inspection when 20 per cent of progress in all lessons was unsatisfactory. In 3 per cent of lessons however progress remains unsatisfactory, all in Key Stage 3. This therefore remains a weakness, which has not yet been fully addressed. This is balanced by the 19 per cent of lessons where progress is very good, including 19 per cent of the lessons in Key Stage 3 and demonstrates clearly that pupils are gradually being helped to achieve very well in an increasing number of lessons. The school received a School Achievement Award in 2001 and has been put forward for a similar award in 2002.
2. In English and mathematics in Key Stages 3 and 4, geography and religious education achievement is sound and progress is satisfactory. In English and mathematics in Key Stages 1 and 2, science, information and communication technology, history, music, design and technology and physical education in Key Stages 1, 2, and 4 and art and design in Key Stages 3 and 4, progress and pupil achievement are good. It is very good in art and design in Key Stages 1 and 2. In physical education and French in Key Stage 3 progress is unsatisfactory. The progress pupils make in their personal and social development is very good. Pupils' records show that most pupils also make good progress achieving their personal targets, which are reviewed at regular intervals.
3. The school sets measurable whole-school targets last year, which were met and surpassed with an average GCSE points score of 4.1, a marked increase on the previous year. Other targets in mathematics and English for Year 10 pupils were also surpassed. In addition, pupils gained above the national average in statutory tests in mathematics and well above in science compared to similar schools. Performance in English is broadly in line with similar schools and the school is considering ways to further improve performance in English. However the very small number of pupils in each year group (ten in Year 11 in 2001) means that national comparisons with similar schools are unreliable. In addition, the nature of the cohort is complex and becoming increasingly so. This means that year-on-year comparisons are also unreliable. The performance of individual pupils compared to their own previous performance has therefore formed the main basis of the judgements regarding pupils' good achievement and progress in this report.
4. A few pupils who show consistently good progress are supported successfully in a return to mainstream schools. At least 80 per cent of pupils are set to achieve one or more GCSEs and in 2001, seven of nine pupils gained an art and design GCSE and two pupils gained a double science GCSE, one with a grade C. Entry Level examinations in mathematics, English, information and communication technology, and design and technology showed good results, with all pupils gaining some accreditation including several merits and one distinction. Most pupils went on to a college placement. These results represent some good and very good achievements by individual pupils. They do not demonstrate pupils' achievements in a sufficiently wide range of subjects however.

5. In English, pupils make good progress in speaking and listening throughout the school. They gradually develop the skills to answer questions clearly, initially with short or one-word answers and eventually listening carefully to what is said and giving a good account of what they have seen or remembered. By the time they reach Key Stage 4 several pupils discuss subjects at length and speak to adults with confidence. They also make good progress in reading and writing in Key Stages 1 and 2 developing a real enthusiasm for books and an ability to write short stories and accounts usually with support. This reflects the positive impact of the National Literacy Strategy in these key stages. In Key Stages 3 and 4 satisfactory progress in reading means that pupils can choose books confidently and enjoy reading to adults. Several are independent readers and are able to find information and read different types of text with ease. Satisfactory progress in writing in Key Stage 3 and 4 means that most pupils can write legibly and spell simple words accurately by the time they leave school. Several are able to fill out forms, and write lovely poetry and letters to a good standard. By the end of Key Stage 4 most pupils achieve an Entry Level Certificate.
6. The good progress made in mathematics in Key Stages 1 and 2 is evident when pupils solve money problems and count accurately, becoming increasingly confident with adding and subtracting numbers in their heads. This reflects the positive impact of the National Numeracy Strategy in these key stages. Sound progress is evident in Key Stage 3 with an increase in the mathematical vocabulary that pupils understand, some accurate work with measuring and improved multiplication skills. In Key Stage 4, pupils continue to make satisfactory progress and are able to measure and calculate area, the majority achieving an Entry Level Certificate.
7. Good progress in science for all age groups results in equally good achievements; pupils learn well the differences between living and non-living things, learn how their own bodies work and can discuss the planets and magnetism. By Year 11, pupils achieve well in double GCSEs and the Entry Level Certificate.
8. In physical education in Key Stage 3 and French, progress is unsatisfactory because there is a lack of planning to link the lesson sufficiently well with pupil ability and previous achievement. This results in ill thought through activities and insufficient challenge to the majority of pupils and limited continuity from one lesson to the next.

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

9. Pupils' attitudes to learning and to the school continue to be good from the last inspection. Behaviour in class and in and around the school continues to be good also, with a considerable reduction in the number of pupils excluded in this current academic year compared to the last. Opportunities for the pupils to show initiative and take responsibility around the school have improved since the last inspection and now include participation in a school council.
10. Pupils have positive attitudes towards school. The opinions of the parents that their children enjoy coming to school are confirmed by the inspection. Pupils are keen to learn, both in lessons and at extra activities at lunchtime. This eagerness is demonstrated by the way in which most pupils settle quickly to tasks in the classroom. In most lessons pupils have a strong desire to do their best. Their capacity to work hard and to succeed has a positive impact upon the progress they make.
11. Most pupils work with sustained concentration, especially where the teaching is inspiring and expectations are high. Occasionally, pupils become inattentive as a result of a lesson that proceeds at too slow a pace for them or when they do not find the subject matter interesting.

12. The behaviour of pupils in and around the school is mostly good and in some instances excellent. Parents' perceptions that high standards of behaviour exist are accurate. In classrooms, teachers have high expectations of good behaviour and deal with infringements appropriately. Most pupils behave sensibly when moving around the school and in the playground; aggressive behaviour is rare. The general absence of disruptive behaviour enables learning of sound quality to occur. Pupils also respond well to difficult situations by using the language that they have learned in Emotional Literacy lessons. For example, those with emotional and behavioural difficulties sometimes do feel angry and disrupt lessons or are rude to others; however, they have learned how to talk about their feelings and think about the effect of their behaviour on others. This results in some thoughtful discussions and apologies with individual pupils showing increasingly mature behaviour over time. It also means that when one pupil is disturbing the lesson, others often ignore him or her and don't take it personally because they are beginning to understand why someone might feel angry. In addition, the number of exclusions has dropped to nothing from a high level the previous year, which is related to the Emotional Literacy initiative.
13. Since the last inspection, there continues to be very good relationships between pupils and adults and between the pupils themselves. This is a significant strength of the school. Pupils are courteous to visitors and to each other. All pupils have friendly yet respectful relationships with teachers and other members of staff. Adults employed in the school present very positive images to the pupils. For example, when it is necessary, support staff use their initiative to work flexibly to meet the needs of all pupils. When specifically asked to work in groups, pupils co-operate well. There are a number of opportunities for them to demonstrate their ability to work in a truly collaborative way and to take responsibility and display initiative. Examples include Year 11 pupils supervising others at their lunch table and Year 10 pupils mentoring those in Year 5. Pupils' views are now sought on a number of issues, such as playground equipment and other matters, in an effort to continually involve them in improving the school.
14. Attendance at the school is currently around 95 per cent, which is well above the national average and continuous improvement since the last inspection. There are a number of parents who take family holidays during term time, despite advice from the school that this will have an adverse effect on their child's attainment. Punctuality is very good and lessons start and finish on time.

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

15. In all key stages and for pupils of all abilities and special educational need, teaching is good overall. This results in a good quality of learning and progress. The quality of teaching is excellent in one per cent of lessons, very good in 20 per cent, good in 46 per cent, satisfactory in 30 per cent and unsatisfactory in three per cent of lessons. All unsatisfactory teaching is in Key Stage 3, although over half of the teaching in Key Stage 3 remains good or better. This represents a good improvement since the last inspection when one fifth of all lessons were unsatisfactory.
16. The quality of teaching is good overall in English in Key Stages 1 and 2, mathematics, information and communication technology, history, physical education in Key Stages 1 and 2, art and design, design and technology and personal, social and health education. Teaching is very good in art and design in Key Stages 1 and 2 and in music throughout the school. Teaching is satisfactory in English in Key Stages 3 and 4, in

science, geography, religious education and French. It is unsatisfactory in physical education in Key Stage 3.

17. Good attention is paid to teaching basic literacy in most subjects, through a careful introduction of key words and because teachers create good opportunity for pupils to listen carefully and discuss the work. Numerical skills, especially basic number work is also carefully nurtured in the majority of subjects. In science and music, for example, opportunities to measure and count are carefully supported. However a lack of deliberate planning for teaching literacy and numeracy in some subjects means that some opportunities are missed to develop pupils' skills further. The introduction of the National Literacy Strategy for younger pupils has contributed to a well-structured teaching of basic skills for pupils up to the age of 11. Pupils therefore continue to learn these basic skills well in most subjects.
18. Teachers make good use of computer programs in lessons to enable pupils to develop their information and communication technology skills in many subjects. For example in English, highly motivating spelling programs also help pupils to access and change programs and in science, pupils find information about the planets using CDs.
19. The majority of the teaching in the school supports and deals with all aspects of pupils' special educational needs well. Teachers usually make good provision for pupils of differing abilities, for those with significantly different special educational needs such as emotional and behavioural difficulties, autism and speech language and communication difficulties. This is achieved by carefully relating tasks in lessons to the different needs of pupils and through a detailed knowledge of pupils by all teachers. There is a very good use of signing and symbols to aid communication for example. The help given by highly trained and experienced teaching assistants is of great value in lessons in ensuring that pupils with additional needs have full access to the curriculum. There are, however, a few lessons in several subjects where insufficient attention is paid to pupils' need for repetition and consolidation in their learning, and they fail to make progress as a result. In several subjects there is also an over reliance on worksheets which lack variety of task and do not develop the skills of extended writing or independent thinking.
20. In the very good and excellent lessons, teachers have high expectations of what can be achieved and plan to help pupils reach challenging but achievable goals. In English for example a Key Stage 2 teacher assessed pupils constantly to move them ahead when they were successful in learning to spell different words. However, in a few lessons expectations are not sufficiently challenging, this is evident for the highest attaining pupils in mathematics and English, but also in some French, geography and physical education lessons and progress in learning is slower as a result. In the majority of lessons clear goals are planned which are clearly explained to the pupils so that they understand what is expected of them and work hard to achieve it. This is evident in music when the teacher explains that they will be hearing music from Spain and Greece and the pupils gain a sense of excitement in trying out these quite different styles of playing their instruments.
21. A common weakness in both satisfactory and unsatisfactory lessons is a lack of clearly defined goals. Teachers and pupils lack purposeful direction and less learning and particularly progress take place as a result. In a range of subjects this leads to little extension of previous learning and slow progress in some lessons. This weakness is linked to an inconsistent approach towards assessing pupils' progress. In some lessons, progress and achievement is assessed well and the next lesson is planned to build on this understanding. In others a lack of assessment means that teachers are not clear about the progress made by individuals and so cannot plan to build on their

learning accurately enough. This is evident for example in French and Physical Education in Key Stage 3.

22. In all successful lessons teachers and teaching assistants manage behaviour very well. This is partly as a result of very good relationships with pupils but staff also carefully follow the agreed strategies to calm and control pupils who have difficulties. This means that lessons are rarely disturbed and all pupils are able to focus on their work. The Emotional Literacy approach contributes significantly to this good control because pupils, who do become disturbed and leave the room, often return ready to explain their feelings and try to resolve the situation. In the weaker lessons, pupils become restless and disruptive where teachers fail to engage them with sufficiently motivating strategies and a lack of clearly set expectations and directions.
23. In most lessons, teachers show good or very good subject knowledge, which means that they use interesting resources, understand a good range of strategies for teaching the ideas and know how to interest and involve the pupils. Enthusiasm, hard work and a sense of purpose shown by the pupils then usually follows. Skilled, well-organised team work between the teachers and teaching assistants is also a strong feature, giving a seamless quality to most lessons where work, behaviour and organisation of resources are all managed quietly so that learning and pupils' enjoyment takes precedence and is of a generally good quality.
24. There is no clearly defined homework policy and so practice varies and pupils are rarely given work to take home. This means that for some pupils who would benefit from reading at home or practising writing or mathematics, there is no consistent approach from teachers to support and guide them.

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

25. The school provides a curriculum that is at least satisfactory for all pupils and good for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4. In the previous inspection report, curriculum was identified as an area of concern in that the quality and management of the whole curriculum was poor, and the planning was loose and not co-ordinated. In addition, there was a weakness in the matching of work to pupils' individual needs combined with an overall lack of focus on assessment and the monitoring of standards. The school has carried out considerable work and the current inspection team was impressed by the good progress that has been made.
26. Thorough planning has ensured that all elements of the National Curriculum are addressed within each subject area, and Elmwood School now offers a sufficiently broad curriculum that has a good balance between subjects and activities and is relevant to pupils' differing needs. The balance of time appropriately favours literacy and numeracy. All subjects of the National Curriculum are taught, as well as personal, social and health education, which includes sex and drugs education, and religious education which follows the Somerset Agreed Syllabus. The curriculum meets statutory requirements. Subject policies are in place for all subjects, but are at varying stages of development. The subject policies do not have clear statements on homework, which means that parents and pupils are not clear about what is expected. There is no subject policy on the contribution of the subject to planned opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development which results in inconsistent provision particularly for spiritual and cultural elements.

27. The English curriculum is good in Key Stages 1 and 2 and satisfactory in Key Stages 3 and 4. The curriculum for mathematics, science, art and design, music, design and technology and personal and social education is good. Information and communication technology is developing well, and is increasingly included imaginatively within the planning for many subjects. However the curriculum for teaching a modern foreign language remains unsatisfactory and lacks a clear plan to develop and build on pupils' skills. In addition the curriculum for other subjects is sound, but lacks the innovation and direction of the best. In some, there are weaknesses in particular areas, such as physical education in Key Stage 3.
28. The school is successfully increasing available accreditation each year with GCSEs, and/or the Entry Level Certificate in science, art and design, design and technology, English, mathematics and information and communication technology. This is demonstrating increasing success for pupils in these subjects but there is little reason why accreditation is not available for all subjects for those who wish. In addition there is no qualification available to those studying for the college-based, work-related curriculum. The school recognises this and is now ready to increase these opportunities.
29. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies are adapted successfully at Key Stages 1 and 2 to suit the needs and abilities of the individual pupils. Literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology are taught within most subjects, but literacy and numeracy particularly, lack planned opportunities in some subjects to ensure a more systematic building of skills. The promotion of good communication skills is given a high priority throughout the school and is well supported, especially at Key Stage 1, by the use of signing and symbols. Speech therapists make a valuable contribution to this work.
30. The quality and range of opportunities provided to pupils with complex additional needs is in line with curricular provision made for all other pupils in the school. All pupils have equal access to the curriculum, including boys, girls and pupils with additional special educational needs such as autism, and emotional and behavioural difficulties. The school makes appropriate arrangements, including setting, small-group and individual work as well as whole class teaching, to meet the different needs of pupils. Individual education plans contain targets in literacy, numeracy and personal and social development against which pupils generally make good progress. In addition the new assessment system includes separate subject targets, which are changed and developed as pupils learn. However these are not yet set in all subjects.
31. A good range of extra-curricular activities is available to all pupils in the lunch hour, and every pupil has the opportunity to participate in events such as the Key Stage 4 camping trip if they wish. This good wide range of enrichment activities includes the Breakfast Club, which is available to all pupils; a different activity every lunchtime for Key Stage 2 pupils including computers, karaoke and art/craft; and a group for Key Stage 3 and 4 girls for hairdressing. Pupils of all abilities and those with significantly different needs such as autism and speech, language and communication difficulties play a full part in all activities which promote responsibility, such as taking the register to the office, helping at lunchtimes or, for Key Stage 4 pupils, helping younger pupils in ICT.
32. Provision for careers education is satisfactory. The Careers ConneXions' Service delivers the careers education and guidance programme in Years 10 and 11. However pupils are not taught about careers from Year 9 and there is no additional provision by teachers of the school. Provision for work experience is sound with several local companies offering work placements, which are valued by the pupils, their parents and

the school. Pupils in Key Stage 4 follow a valuable work-related curriculum through attendance at college where they experience a range of practical activities such as agricultural tractor driving, catering, animal husbandry, team building and problem-solving games.

33. The involvement of the Community in the life of the school is good. The school welcomes into assemblies a wide range of community groups and representatives including the Holy Trinity Church, the Salvation Army, Save the Children, Mencap and the local Member of Parliament. The school has good links with other schools. Inclusion is arranged for individual pupils, where appropriate in local primary and secondary schools. Currently a few pupils spend time in their local primary school, and this initiative is well supported by strong links with host school staff and the help of a teaching assistant. In addition there are strong links with local colleges of further education where the majority of pupils transfer at sixteen years.
34. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is good overall. Provision is best for social development, where it is very good because of planned opportunities both within lessons and at lunchtimes.
35. Opportunities for spiritual development are good. The aims of the school, drawn up by pupils and staff, reflect the uniqueness of, and respect for, everyone in the school community. Assemblies and teaching in religious education lessons reinforce these aims with a celebratory Friday assembly recognising achievement in many forms. Religious education provides a good focus for reflection and the time to consider the teachings and beliefs of the followers of a range of faiths including Christianity.
36. Provision for moral development is good. Daily interaction between pupils and staff continually reinforces positive behaviour and gives time to reflect on how it might be improved. The school's recently reviewed behavioural policy has led to a positive review of sanctions so that, for example, detention and writing lines have been abolished and replaced by more productive reminders of acceptable conduct including acting out alternatives. Team games provide good opportunities for sticking to the rules and observation showed that pupils play fairly, usually accepting decisions gracefully and supporting their peers to the best of their ability. A good amount of money is raised for a range of charities throughout the year. The Poppy Appeal, Comic Relief and Jeans for Genes have all benefited from the pupils' consideration for those beyond their immediate neighbourhood. The school clearly teaches pupils right from wrong. The application of the behaviour policy and moral teaching in lessons is enhanced very well by the Emotional Literacy programme to help pupils develop a clear set of strategies and values for dealing with their difficulties. Staff provide good role models and encourage pupils to behave well, show respect for others and develop a sense of what is fair.
37. Social development is very good because of the extent and variety of the provision. Pupils of all ages get out and about in the community for a number of reasons, from walks to see the local canal to tractor driving at college and abseiling at Kilve Court. Good opportunities continue within school especially for members of the school council who had the privilege of visiting the Houses of Parliament. This council offers opportunities for pupils to contribute to school development and they debate a range of issues from equipment purchase to supporting others. Year 11 pupils take charge of tables at dinner time and Year 10 pupils act as peer tutors for the younger pupils during some information and communication technology lessons, raising the self-esteem of all involved. Pupils also have opportunities to meet with peers from a variety of schools during sporting and arts activities.

38. The school has recently and successfully introduced a programme to teach Emotional Literacy to all pupils to support improved relationships and behaviour. This is part of the education achievement zone initiative. It is taught discretely to all age groups and is promoted in all lessons. It is too early to judge the overall impact, but several instances of pupils reflecting on their feelings and behaviour demonstrated its increasing effectiveness. This helps their social development and integration as strong emotions are addressed and expressed in acceptable ways.
39. Cultural development is good, including provision for multicultural development. Many subjects including geography, music and religious education where major world religions are studied, contribute to pupils' multicultural understanding. Local culture is celebrated through support for the Bridgwater Fair and carnival and the use of the Blake Museum for history studies. Museums and visits further afield also contribute well to many areas of the curriculum as well as reinforcing cultural development. Traditional and fairy stories and poetry in the well-stocked library reflect British and world culture. Pupils study the work of artists including European, African and Aborigine and listen to and perform music from around the world. This includes a Gamelan morning with outside performers and pupil participation and Spanish, Greek and American music.

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

40. Teachers and support staff quickly get to know the pupils well. A safe and caring environment is created successfully and independence is encouraged. Pupils are supervised effectively and staff know what to do when a pupil has an accident or is unwell. Personal support and guidance for the pupils is very good and continues to be a strength of the school since the last inspection.
41. There are effective procedures in place to ensure the health, safety and protection of the pupils. Nominated members of staff co-ordinate the necessary arrangements and there are good links with outside services, including the fire service. Formal written risk assessments of potential hazards in and around the school are undertaken, as well as those for school trips. Those potential hazards identified in the previous inspection report have been addressed successfully.
42. The school has very effective procedures in place to promote good discipline and behaviour. Rewards for positive attitudes and behaviour are given regularly by staff and Year 11 pupils. At the end of the school day a behaviour review is undertaken of all pupils by each other, with monitoring by their teacher. Any incidents of bullying are dealt with swiftly and effectively.
43. The procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good. Parents generally are very good at reporting absences and unexplained ones are followed up promptly by the school on a daily basis. Each class attendance is monitored closely by the school administrator and action taken as appropriate.
44. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very good. Computer-aided analyses provide a wealth of data on each pupil and individual targets are set with pupils and regularly monitored by staff, all of whom know the pupils very well. Detailed written records of pupils' work, behaviour and any incidents taking place supplement the above procedures.
45. The school has worked well since the last inspection to put in place a consistent system for assessing and recording pupils' progress. In the core subjects, detailed



information is kept on all aspects of work, together with results of National Curriculum tests, 'P' Scales and progress against targets set. Documentation gives a very clear picture of pupils' progress and enables the headteacher and senior management team to chart school improvement as well as outcomes for pupils. Regular and ongoing analysis of data has already highlighted areas for intervention and development of curriculum planning.

46. In most of the foundation subjects, a simpler but uniform system is gradually being put in place, which will eventually provide invaluable information about how individual pupils are doing in every aspect of their academic studies. As yet, there is some inconsistency within and across key stages about whether the system is fully up and running and not all teachers use the new systems. In English, for example, not all teachers have detailed checklists yet, which are to be used to give a complete picture of how a child is learning. This means that currently assessment is not sufficient in many areas to help teachers plan lessons so that pupils' skills and knowledge build systematically. The school target for full implementation of the new system is September 2002. Achievement of this aim could bring about a streamlined and effective system for monitoring and evaluating achievement throughout the school. It will also clarify the starting points for pupils so that all teachers in all subjects can take them into account in their planning and be certain of matching work to pupils' needs more precisely than they currently do.

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

47. Parents view Elmwood School as a very good school. The only significant issues of concern among a few parents were the amount of extra-curricular activity offered by the school and homework. The inspection findings are that the extra-curricular activities provided are good but have not been communicated well enough to parents. The arrangements for homework are inconsistent and there is no clear policy, which means parents do not know what is expected. The school has recognised the need to address these issues.
48. The school has worked hard since the last inspection to achieve satisfactory partnerships with parents. They have carried out their own survey of parents to identify ways in which liaison could be improved and set up a parents' group.
49. The quality of information provided for parents is very good and a significant improvement on the last inspection. There is a notice board in the entrance foyer of the school and a comfortable reception area both of which present up-to-date information. Regular newsletters supplement this information and these are also presented in audiocassette format for those parents who are visually impaired or who have poor literacy skills. The school prospectus and annual report from governors to parents both meet statutory requirements. They are comprehensive and informative and the prospectus gives useful curriculum detail. There are formal opportunities for parents to meet with teachers to discuss end of year reports in addition to the annual review of individual education plans.
50. These links with parents are however insufficient to involve parents fully in the work of the school, particularly in supporting their children's work at home. Only one parent helps in school and there is currently little encouragement for others to do so. The school recognises the need to address this issue.

## HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

51. The headteacher has led the school very well since her appointment in September 2001 providing clear direction in raising standards. This has resulted in good overall improvement since the last inspection when leadership and management were unsatisfactory.
52. The investment in Emotional Literacy is one example of how the aims and values of the school are being actively and well promoted to help pupils in achieving the very good quality of relationships seen. The high standard of equal opportunities and progress for all pupils regardless of their abilities or backgrounds also demonstrates the success of how school aims are reflected in its work.
53. The monitoring and evaluation of the quality of teaching are good overall. The headteacher has begun a very good programme of monitoring the quality of teaching and has identified which elements are strong and which need to be improved. This has resulted in an increase in the number of good and very good lessons with an improvement each year in pupils' performance in national tests and examination results. Members of the senior management team also observe a few lessons, but this practice is not yet sufficient to ensure a strong understanding by all subject leaders or spread knowledge of best practice within the school.
54. The school is well managed. The strongest area of school management is the very careful and consistent monitoring of the progress of each and every pupil as part of performance management, which is very good. This information is then analysed and comparisons made between groups of pupils to see who is doing well and where pupils are not doing as well as can be expected. This in turn is used to upgrade school systems and link the development plan closely to performance. In addition there is very good monitoring and analysis of all aspects of the school's work. This has also enabled the school to set the very good and appropriate targets for development, which are then acted upon very effectively and the improvements reviewed. For example, a uniform subject assessment system has been recently introduced and its implementation and effectiveness are being carefully monitored.
55. Delegation has been widened within the school and is satisfactory overall, but the headteacher is at an early stage of taking control and is still involved in personally driving most of the initiatives. The role of the deputy provides careful attention to support day-to-day management, helping things to run smoothly. However there is no senior role other than the headteacher for creating and driving initiatives, with a view to increasing the pace of implementing improvement and securing the currently good capacity for longer-term success. This is evident in the wide variations in the quality of teaching and curriculum within and between subjects. Nevertheless, senior management and the majority of staff have a good commitment to improvement, and are very supportive of the initiatives already underway. The role of the curriculum co-ordinator in monitoring the curriculum and assessment is beginning to develop through the use of half termly plans. As a result, medium-term planning and individual lesson plans are increasingly linked to the individual needs of pupils and this enables the monitoring of pupils' academic and social improvement. There is also good consultation with staff and a commitment to team work, resulting in a shared school vision for high standards.
56. There has also been improved delegation to subject co-ordinators with a wider sharing of responsibilities within the school. However in several subjects the co-ordinators do not yet monitor the quality of teaching or the quality of pupils' learning, and some do not share best practice or provide accreditation, which has led to variable quality

between subjects. The school recognises this and the subject co-ordinators' role is due to be developed further in the new school year.

57. The governors understand the strengths and weaknesses of the school well and are highly committed to securing high standards of teaching and learning. They have undertaken training and are currently increasing their role in curriculum monitoring, which is satisfactory but underdeveloped. The monitoring and analysis committee ensures that the governors are sufficiently well informed to begin to take a stronger role in shaping the direction of the school. Governors fulfil their role well in ensuring that all statutory requirements are met.
58. The good standards in financial management noted in the previous inspection have been maintained. There are clear links between the school's improvement plan and its financial planning and this ensures that educational priorities are supported through careful financial management. Governors on the finance and premises committee meet regularly and receive good quality information about the budget. This enables them to allocate and monitor resources well, and in a way that fully reflects the school's aims and educational priorities, including those caused by a changing school population. The allocation of funds to curriculum areas is appropriate and is informed by annual subject audits. The substantial carry forward figure in the previous budget is not a deliberate underspend but is a result of funds for the learning resource centre and for the inclusion initiative being paid in late in the financial year.
59. There is efficient financial control. A few minor recommendations of the most recent audit have been fully implemented. The school's finances are in good order. The school's administration procedures are well organised, resulting in efficient organisation and the capacity to respond to unseen events. The high quality of administration allows teachers to focus on their work, and supports their endeavours. The school makes good use of new technologies to improve the quality of teaching and learning and to provide efficient administration and management. Specific grants for building, training and assessment developments are appropriately allocated, relate closely to educational priorities and enhance provision for all pupils. The school is well aware of the principles of best value and applies them appropriately. The school actively seeks, for example, to compare its performance and costs with that of similar schools; it insists on tenders, quotes and estimates for all capital purchases and it challenges itself to do better by setting targets for improvement. The school is aware of the need to consult parents more closely on curriculum matters such as that of homework.
60. The number, qualification and experience of the teachers are well matched to the age, number and learning needs of pupils. Teachers represent a good blend of youth, experience and subject expertise. Many have additional qualifications in special educational needs and are effectively deployed to match the needs of the curriculum. An adequate number of well-qualified and experienced teaching assistants are deployed well to support pupils with most need. Some have developed particular expertise in certain curriculum areas, for example in art and design, design and technology and ICT, and make a notable contribution to the high standards in these subjects.
61. In-service staff development and training, which all staff attend, is very closely linked to educational priorities identified in the school improvement plan, and represents a good improvement since the previous inspection. There is an effective, formal induction programme for all new staff. However in several subjects inconsistent practice is due in part to limited opportunities for co-ordinators to monitor practice and guide colleagues in the best methods and strategies.

62. Overall, learning resources are of good quality and quantity and have improved since the last inspection. Resources are used efficiently to enhance the curriculum and to improve the quality of teaching and learning. Resources are particularly good in English, mathematics, science, art and design, ICT, design and technology, religious education, history and music. They are unsatisfactory in geography and physical education, which is a contributory factor in the more limited progress made in these subjects. Very good use is made of the school minibuses and community resources and facilities to broaden the sporting, vocational and cultural experiences offered to pupils.
63. Accommodation is satisfactory and maintained well to support the learning experiences of pupils. The school improvement plan identifies a continuous cycle of repair and refurbishment of fixtures and fittings. Since the last inspection a designated specialist science area has been added which has led to raised standards in this subject and the playground facility has been improved allowing additional games and pastimes to take place.

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

64. To bring the quality of the curriculum, the quality of teaching and pupils' progress in all subjects in line with the best, the headteacher and governors should:
- (1). Develop the role of senior management in initiating change and development to better support the work of the headteacher in driving school improvement. (Ref: paragraph 55)
  - (2). Improve the role of subject co-ordinators in monitoring the quality of teaching and pupil progress, in sharing best practice and in developing the curriculum and accreditation in their subjects. (Ref: paragraph 56,61)
  - (3). Ensure that the new assessment systems are consistently used by teachers in all subjects, to plan lessons and develop the curriculum. (Ref: paragraph 46)

In addition the headteacher and governors should consider:

- Agreeing a policy with regard to homework, which is clearly communicated to parents. (Ref: paragraphs 26, 47)
- Increasing the involvement of governors in overseeing the curriculum work of the school. (Ref: paragraph 57)
- Developing further ways to involve parents more closely in the work of the school and the education of their children at home. (Ref: paragraphs 48,49,50)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	93
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	34

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	19	42	28	3	0	0
Percentage	1	20	46	30	3	0	0

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

### Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	79
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	30

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

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

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.2

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.6

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	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	79
Any other minority ethnic group	0

**Exclusions in the last school year**

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	26	1
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

**Teachers and classes****Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y11**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	12.75
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6
Average class size	8

**Education support staff: YR – Y11**

Total number of education support staff	16
Total aggregate hours worked per week	468

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

**Financial information**

Financial year	2001
	£
Total income	783,522
Total expenditure	752,966
Expenditure per pupil	8,274
Balance brought forward from previous year	39,369
Balance carried forward to next year	69,925

**Recruitment of teachers**

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	1
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	2
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0
Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	1
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

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

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out	79
Number of questionnaires returned	39

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	72	26	3	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	59	33	5	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	56	28	5	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	13	36	21	13	18
The teaching is good.	69	28	0	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	62	31	5	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	67	31	0	0	3
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	56	38	3	3	0
The school works closely with parents.	56	33	8	3	0
The school is well led and managed.	59	33	3	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	51	38	0	3	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	28	26	15	5	26

### **Summary of parents' and carers' responses**

The majority of parents think very highly of the school, particularly how much their child likes school and the quality of teaching. They feel comfortable approaching the school. A minority feel that there is insufficient homework and would like to see more extra-curricular activity. A few feel that the quality of education is inconsistent or their child is not made to work hard enough, especially with literacy. However most think that they learn a great deal, especially in confidence and social skills. The team agrees with all these views, except those regarding extra curricular activity, which is good and takes place largely in the lunch hour.

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

### **ENGLISH**

65. Pupils achieve well and make good progress in English in Key Stages 1 and 2 and they build on this and make satisfactory progress in Key Stages 3 and 4. Pupils make good progress in speaking and listening throughout the school, there is good provision for helping pupils to communicate and teachers in most subjects take care to help pupils to listen and discuss issues well. Reading develops well in Key Stages 1 and 2. However, although satisfactory, pupils' reading does not develop consistently through Key Stages 3 and 4, where many pupils lack sufficient practice. Pupils' writing develops well by the end of Key Stage 2 and slows to satisfactory in Key Stages 3 and 4, where there are several good features but also weaknesses in teaching and curriculum.
66. Pupils entering the school in Key Stage 1 often have difficulties in listening and concentrating, and usually respond in single words. However, they make good progress in response to carefully structured teaching programmes, and gradually develop the skills to listen and attend for longer and to ask and answer questions at greater length. These skills are developed well in Key Stage 2 and by Year 6, a few pupils enter into detailed conversations, explain clearly how the school routines work and are keen to discuss their likes and dislikes. Pupils with autism work hard to master communication by making eye-contact or choosing between 2 items. The majority of pupils gradually extend their concentration span and discuss increasingly more difficult subjects for longer.
67. In Key Stage 3, many pupils are beginning to develop good speaking and listening skills which they use effectively in discussions and debate or when role-playing during history lessons. Some show good awareness of how to communicate in different situations such as speaking more formally to a group or in a relaxed way with friends. Others at the earlier stages of development need help to sort out differences of opinion or reminding to listen carefully or to take turns and explain clearly. By the end of Key Stage 4, continuing good progress means that many pupils speak clearly and are quite confident in the way they greet and look after visitors.
68. Reading development is good in Key Stages 1 and 2, and satisfactory in Key Stages 3 and 4. By the end of Key Stage 1 most pupils can read their own names and are beginning to recognise single letters. Progress is good throughout Key Stage 2, and the highest attaining pupils can read aloud and follow along a simple story by the age of eleven. They nearly all know their sounds and can use this knowledge to break words down and decode them. Some can describe what is different about certain types of poetry. Progress is steady in Key Stage 3, and continues to be satisfactory in Key Stage 4. Older pupils are able to choose library books from the reference system, know how to use an index and who an author is. Most pupils read a variety of books, which they enjoy and know when to ask for help if they get stuck. Most pupils read simple texts with reasonable accuracy. However some pupils do not know about the sounds in words and have few strategies for working out their meaning when they read aloud. Although a few pupils remain at the early stages of reading development by the time they leave school, most pupils read at a level which will help them to be independent.
69. In Key Stage 1 good development in writing begins when pupils learn how to hold a pencil or crayon and begin by making marks on paper. They gradually develop an ability to copy over letters and can dictate and copy their own words. Towards the end



of Key Stage 2 most pupils are writing more confidently, with some who are successful at using their knowledge of phonics to spell simple words, and high frequency words, with some writing several sentences unaided. Pupils' letters by this stage are mostly even and easy to read. Progress is satisfactory in Key Stage 3; most pupils can write with adult help and a few write independently. Pupils of this age are also beginning to write for different purposes, such as short letters and greetings cards. However some pupils appear to be underachieving in writing in this key stage, showing limited strategies for learning spellings or using simple dictionaries to enable them to be independent. In Key Stage 4 pupils write their ideas speedily, spell common words correctly and use simple punctuation. Several pupils show good creativity and originality in their ideas, others need more support to plan and express themselves logically. They achieve success in the Entry Level Certificate, with three pupils achieving a merit and four a pass. This represents satisfactory achievement overall.

70. The most consistently good teaching is achieved in Key Stages 1 and 2 where teachers, particularly of the older pupils, have high expectations of what can be achieved, use good quality materials and texts and give pupils examples of how to present their work and strategies for learning new words. Pupils enjoy their work, try hard and make good progress as a result. Teachers help pupils to care for the resources, which helps them to be responsible and support the school's work in pupils' social development.
71. The quality of teaching is satisfactory in Key Stages 3 and 4. The good beginning to lessons helps pupils to remember the work they have learned before. Lively delivery also makes sure that pupils try hard. However in one lesson some of the ideas were too complicated for pupils and so they lost concentration towards the end. The main weakness in these key stages is insufficient challenge for the highest attaining pupils. In one lesson, for example, pupils were expected to predict the end of a poem, but this was too easy for them and they became disruptive. In some of these lessons learning objectives are not shared or reviewed with pupils and even where groups are set by ability, teachers do not plan well for the range of learning needs within classes. However, relationships in all lessons are always good, the difficult behaviour of some pupils is well managed and teaching assistants play a valuable part in helping pupils focus on their tasks. The good teaching in Key Stage 4 is characterised by a calm manner, which encourages pupils to be confident so that they are keen to get on with their writing and contribute suggestions. There is however a reliance on using worksheets, which provide insufficient opportunity for pupils to write freely or at length. In all lessons there is good individual teaching and support from teaching assistants.
72. The subject has an enthusiastic co-ordinator who has done a great deal to implement the National Literacy Strategy and brings in an attractive range of high quality resources. She has introduced a detailed system of assessment, which enables precise target setting, lesson planning, and evaluation of pupil progress. She has begun monitoring and evaluating teaching, but this is not sufficiently developed yet to ensure consistency in teaching. The lack of a homework policy means that practice is inconsistent and parents and pupils are unclear as to what is expected.

## **MATHEMATICS**

73. Overall, the achievement in mathematical skills, knowledge and understanding and progress demonstrated by the pupils is satisfactory. In Key stages 1 and 2 pupils achieve well and make good progress. During Key Stages 3 and 4 progress and pupil's achievements are satisfactory. This is similar to findings from the last inspection.

74. In Reception pupils are given appropriate support to sort a selection of toys that are big or small with some success. The highest attaining Key Stage 1 pupils can identify matching shapes and what each shape is. They can colour in shapes accurately without assistance. The lowest attaining pupils concentrate well and can, with help, make the shapes of numbers with a stencil. They can recognise the numbers they have drawn. They are learning to use language such as 'long' and 'round'. By the end of Key Stage 1 the highest attaining pupils have made good gains in learning. They are beginning to use mathematical language and can identify and name a range of shapes. They can sort and match, are beginning to sequence, and can estimate heavy and light, and taller and shorter. Some pupils can recognise numbers up to ten and can count in ones. At Key Stage 2, pupils show basic skills in measuring, recognition of numbers and simple computation. They are beginning to use prepositions and understand them, such as 'more' and 'less'. By the end of Key Stage 2, gains in learning are good. Pupils demonstrate and consolidate previous knowledge and skills in the areas observed.
75. At Key Stage 3, pupils demonstrate an ability to add numbers in a practical situation, tell the time and complete simple computations including the use of place value to multiply and divide whole numbers by one hundred. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils make satisfactory gains in learning. Pupils demonstrate thinking skills to solve problems, have an increasing knowledge of mathematical vocabulary, are able to use number in more complex ways and are increasingly able to tell the time well. At Key Stage 4, pupils carry out investigations and represent their findings graphically. They calculate using vulgar fractions and decimals. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils have made satisfactory gains in learning. There is evidence of consolidation of skills and increased understanding of three-dimensional shapes and the properties of a circle.
76. The quality of teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 is mostly good and sometimes very good. Relationships are good, resources are well used, learning support assistants are well deployed and planning for their use is good. This leads to good and very good attitudes from pupils who enjoy their mathematics lessons and work hard, in some lessons in Key Stage 1 pupils show an excellent approach to learning by their enthusiasm and effort.
77. In Key Stage 3 the quality of teaching is never less than satisfactory and sometimes good. Most teaching is motivating, visual aids and resources are well prepared, tasks are matched according to pupil need, support is well deployed and lesson planning and continuity are good. This leads to most pupils being involved in their work, keen on the task in hand and friendly and relaxed in their relationships. A few pupils in Key Stage 3 demonstrate poor attitudes to learning and their behaviour was unsatisfactory, mainly because the lesson pace was not well matched to the needs of the group and teaching assistants were not deployed to help them effectively. In these lessons the gain in learning of the pupils was less good.
78. In Key Stage 4 the quality of teaching is satisfactory overall. In the good well-planned lessons, expectations of the pupils are high. This results in very good attitudes to learning where pupils take a pride in doing well and are curious to develop their understanding. Pupils' work indicates that the highest attaining pupils are not always sufficiently challenged however. The pupils are helped to achieve well in the Entry Level Certificate with seven of nine pupils gaining a merit in last year's examinations.
79. Curriculum planning for mathematics is good, and the school's monitoring and evaluation procedures are beginning to have a positive impact on learning. The co-ordinator has only recently been appointed and leadership in this subject is satisfactory. The co-ordinator is working hard to ensure continuity between key stages

and the assessment system is being used to support this. There is a policy in place for mathematics and a whole school approach to mathematics is developing, although not for work which may be undertaken at home. Continuing professional development of staff is beginning to show results in improved teaching. The co-ordinator has attended training on numeracy and has delivered whole school training to staff in Elmwood. Resources are good and are well organised. Plans are in place to improve further the resourcing of numeracy.

## SCIENCE

80. Achievement in science is good across the school, and when compared with similar schools elsewhere. Standards as shown by performance in national tests, and by the school's internal assessment and recording system, have risen over the last three years, and continue to rise. In lessons seen during the inspection much of the work was pitched at a sufficiently demanding level. Purposeful teaching with frequent opportunities for consolidation, ensure that most pupils acquire good levels of knowledge and understanding. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is driven by the Entry Level Certificate syllabus, which provides accreditation at bronze, silver and gold levels. Where the teaching is based on good subject knowledge, the teachers extend the challenges, providing work at higher levels. All pupils, from reception to Year 11, undertake experimental work and high expectations of their independence and competence raises achievement in this aspect of science. The highest attaining pupils are helped to take GCSE double science and one pupil gained a DD and the other CC in 2001, a very good achievement.
81. By the end of Key Stage 1, pupils know the names of materials such as wood, metal and plastic. They can sort various items into sets according to material. They are also beginning to learn about electricity. Through experimenting with circuits, they know which things need electricity to work, and that switches are used to turn electricity on and off.
82. Pupils at the beginning of Key Stage 2 can recognise silhouettes and know basic facts about light, such as that it travels in a straight line. By the end of the key stage they can sort and classify materials into groups according to properties such as shiny, hard or smooth. They can recognise and name various sources of light, and use simple texts to gather information for themselves.
83. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils have a good grasp of a range of appropriate topics. For instance they can recognise the effect of acid rain on seed growth, they know some of the effects of alcohol consumption on humans. They can give examples of bones such as skull, rib and jawbone, and use language about body control systems such as sweat, kidneys and urea. They know that an element contains only one sort of atom, and higher attaining pupils use their knowledge successfully in writing word equations such as copper + oxygen = copper oxide.
84. During Key Stage 4 they continue to develop their knowledge and understanding on forces and robotics well. They carry out experiments and investigations in electricity and magnetism. Some pupils are able to speak at length about the planets.
85. At the last inspection it was reported that progress in science was satisfactory overall but less than satisfactory at Key Stage 3, and satisfactory at Key Stages 1, 2 and 4. Progress in science is now good overall, and very good at Key Stages 3 and 4. This represents very good improvement.

86. The teaching of science in all key stages is satisfactory overall but good in at least a third of lessons. In the best lessons, subject knowledge is very good. Excitement communicates itself to the pupils and they are motivated which helps them to make good progress. During a lesson on robotics the older pupils were fully involved and could talk about the results of their project. Good subject knowledge allows the teachers to rephrase explanations and provide support to enable the pupils to succeed. Sensitive use of knowledgeable Learning Support Assistants enables the needs of individual pupils to be met effectively, and raises the achievement of the whole class.
87. The teaching of literacy and numeracy is well embedded in the teaching of science. There are opportunities for learning definitions, spellings and to take measurements and record results. Pupils are generally well managed and teachers achieve good behaviour with difficult groups by the enthusiastic presentation of interesting learning activities.
88. The range of learning opportunities is significantly enhanced by the effective use of information and communication technology in some but not all lessons. For instance, in one lesson the use of high quality images of the solar system from a CD raised the level of pupil interest, and motivated them to go and look in an extensive range of reference books for further information.
89. At the time of the inspection the science co-ordinator was absent. However, leadership in the subject has been good, and the curriculum has been recently developed to ensure all pupils have access to good quality provision. It is this good quality of curriculum which is supporting the good overall progress made by pupils. However the lack of a homework policy leads to limited use of work at home to support learning. The new science laboratory is well resourced and a learning support assistant provides some technical support, which enhances the teaching and learning in science.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

90. Pupils achieve high standards in art and design and make increasingly good progress as they move through the school. This is as a result of teaching that is consistently good and often very good and because teachers have good subject expertise and high expectations that promote effective learning. This good and very good progress applies equally to boys and girls and to all groups of pupils with different special educational needs. It maintains the high standards noted in the previous inspection.
91. No teaching was observed for pupils up to the age of seven. However, a scrutiny of their work shows that pupils are making good progress in acquiring basic knowledge, skills and understanding in art and design. They use different materials for drawing and painting, for example pencils, crayons, felt tips, pastels and 'readimix' paint. They explore different ways of applying and spreading paint, using brushes and fingers and hand dripping techniques. They create collages from a variety of paper products and natural material such as leaves and shells. Design work focuses on them choosing the colour and material to make attractive mobiles and animals. Pupils' work is carefully stored, dated and annotated and confirms their good progress overtime.
92. Pupils aged seven to eleven build on this firm basis and continue to make good progress in developing discreet art skills. For example, in a lesson inspired by the work of surreal illustrators, pupils use images to make block prints. The teacher focuses pupils' attention with a good recall of previous work and a group discussion on good and bad dreams. She values all pupils' contributions to the discussion and as a

result pupils express their opinions with confidence. The teacher's very good subject knowledge is in evidence in unambiguous explanations and a clear demonstration on how to use press-print material, so pupils know what to do. They observe closely and work with sustained concentration because they find the activity challenging and interesting. Good use is made of information and communication technology through video and photography and this enhances learning. Pupils of all abilities are included through good planning. For example, pupils with more complex special needs mix paint in large trays and are encouraged to feel the paint with their hands. They are well supported and stay on task because of the timely interventions of support assistants. Higher attaining pupils are able to discuss their work, experiment with material and suggest improvements such as using a different coloured paper as a background or putting more paint on the block. Good use of time and the pace of the lesson are maintained. Excellent relationships contribute to a satisfying learning experience in which pupils achieve well.

93. Pupils aged eleven to fourteen continue to make good progress in improving hand-eye co-ordination and manual dexterity as they manipulate a variety of media. They learn and experience work in different styles, times and cultures. Pupils in Year 8, for example, identify features of Pop Art, influenced by the work of Roy Lichtenstein, and produce images of a similar style. Pupils in Year 9 weave and stitch patterns with a variety of materials, such as cane and wool to produce on their own 3D project, with visual elements inspired by the cubism and surrealism schools of art and by work of Aboriginal design. Lessons are well planned, prepared and organised so that learning is continuous. Good strategies are planned to cater for pupils of all abilities, so that they too experience success. Good ICT resources such as a smart board, which generates images, and good resources generally, provide a stimulus for pupils. The teacher's good use of praise, such as, "I like the way you've coloured the face" encourages pupils to try harder. A calm purposeful, ethos characterises lessons, with pupils confident, busy and productive. As a result they achieve well and their work displays appropriate colour, mood and feelings. Very good reviews at the end of lessons, gives pupils the opportunity to explain and show their work to the class and to tell their peers what inspired their ideas. In this way, pupils learn from each other and communicate and explore their ideas in visual form.
94. Pupils aged fourteen to sixteen, make very good progress in refining detailed observation and in understanding concepts and techniques such as proportion and composition. They do so because the teacher has a good command of the subject, its examination syllabus and programme of study, and the most effective methods that help them achieve. Last year pupils in Year 11 were accredited through the GCSE and obtained grades D-G. In one lesson pupils are required to look critically at how well-known artists such as Picasso, Van Gogh, Rousseau and Gauguin have drawn or painted faces and then copy one of their own choice. In doing so they learn about the importance of proportion, shape and tone. Their work improves because the teacher gives regular and positive feedback, stopping the lesson from time to time to demonstrate a pupil's work and reinforce a teaching point, and because pupils persevere in refining their portraits. Pupils too are well used to evaluating their own and others' work with comments, for example, like "I think you are pressing too heavily with your pencil" or "I like the detail around the nose". Pupils are mature, sensible and respond to the teacher's high expectations.
95. The subject enjoys high status within the school and the community. It is well led by a new co-coordinator. Opportunities to enter art and design competitions and festivals outside of the school are taken up and pupils are justifiably proud of their achievements. There is a good scheme of work in place that ensures that pupils steadily acquire knowledge, skills and understanding as they move through the school

supported by new assessment procedures. Assessment is in the early stages of development and is set to secure and improve the good progress being made. Both of these are improvements since the previous inspection. Resources for the subject are good and used well to provide exciting activities. Accommodation is also good. The art room has adequate working surfaces, lighting and display area. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' literacy, numeracy and ICT skills and to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Displays of pupils' work, in a variety of media and techniques, are well organised and make a vibrant contribution to the ethos of the school.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

96. Pupils achieve well and make good progress in developing their design and technology capability as they move through the school. This is because teaching is always satisfactory and often good and very good, and because teachers challenge pupils with practical activities that are relevant and exciting. This good progress applies equally to boys and girls and to all groups of pupils with different special educational needs. It represents good improvement on the findings of the previous inspection. Pupils in Year 11 are accredited through the OCR Entry Level Certificate and last year eight pupils obtained a distinction grade.
97. Pupils up to the age of seven are introduced to the early skills of handling materials and tools safely. They have good opportunities to work with and recognise the properties of card, cotton reels, pipe cleaners and coloured laces as they design and make toy caterpillars. They improve their fine motor skills of threading, cutting and gluing because the teacher and support assistants encourage them to do the tasks for themselves. The lesson is clearly introduced with reference to a caterpillar 'made earlier' so pupils know how the finished article is meant to look. A wonderful 'resource box' contains a collection of a range of construction material and this excites the pupils. Excellent organisation and teamwork between teachers and support assistants ensure that all pupils take a full and active part. A very good plenary in which pupils share and show their caterpillars brings the lesson to a successful conclusion and gives the teacher the opportunity to reinforce literacy and numeracy skills by getting pupils to observe closely and compare size, length and colour.
98. Pupils up to the age of 11, build on this firm basis. They make good progress in acquiring skills and techniques in both making and designing and in carrying out tests to improve the moving parts of their monster creations. Thorough preparation beforehand ensures that the lesson proceeds at pace. Appropriate resources, such as plastic bottles, tubing, boxes and balloons, challenge pupils to be creative. Good questioning by the teacher, for example, "Why can't we blow the balloon up completely?" helps some pupils understand the limits of their design. Timely interventions by support assistants maintain pupils on task, and help manage some idiosyncratic behaviour with minimum fuss. A good review at the end gives pupils the opportunity to show and explain their models to their peers and raises their self-esteem.
99. For pupils eleven to sixteen, the subject is taught in two broad areas – resistant materials and food technology with textiles. Pupils make good progress in both areas because teachers have high expectation of behaviour and working practices. Pupils are encouraged to give greater attention to detail, use correct technical language, to show an awareness of health and safety issues and to constantly evaluate their products. Support assistants have developed particular expertise and familiarity with resources in this subject and make a consistent contribution to the quality of teaching and learning. Resources and facilities are good and motivate pupils to work carefully.

In a Year 8 food technology lesson, pupils are able to follow a recipe to design and mix cakes. They compare and evaluate the texture, taste and colour following cooking in a microwave and conventional gas oven because of good questioning by the teacher. Her subject expertise in organising, demonstrating and instructing inspires confidence.

100. In a Year 10 resistant material lesson, pupils make very good progress in looking closely at different types of bridge construction around the world – beam, arch, suspension and cantilever – and then constructing and testing to destruction ‘trial’ cardboard designs of their own. Every pupil’s model is valued as the strengths and weaknesses of designs are evaluated. In this way they are not discouraged and persevere with refinements. Pupils display safe working practices in using a ‘Stanley’ knife to cut balsa wood, cutting away from their bodies, and work accurately with set squares and metal rulers. The teacher allows them sufficient time to consider design problems and how these can be overcome. He challenges them to reconsider their designs with ‘how’ and ‘why’ questions. Pupils are well motivated by the task and are busy and productive. Their finished work is of a good standard.
101. Design and technology is well led, although at the time of the inspection the co-ordinator was away on maternity leave. A good scheme of work guides teachers’ planning. The assessment procedures are new and do not yet ensure that all pupils build skills systematically, although they are beginning to track individual pupils’ progress through the school. Resources are good and have been improved with the acquisition of a forge for metalwork. Resources are well stored and easily accessible. Accommodation is also good with a reasonable match of group sizes and workroom space. Good use is made of community resources to enhance pupils’ vocational knowledge, for example, trips to see industrial practices at MacDonald’s and factories making doors and windows fittings and stained glass windows. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils’ literacy and numeracy skills and makes appropriate use of ICT to research projects, for example bridge designs. Displays of pupils’ work, in a variety of materials and components, enhance the school building, celebrate achievement and standards and stimulate interest. The subject is well placed to challenge higher attaining pupils with GCSE coursework and accreditation.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

102. Geography is judged to be satisfactory overall. However, there are few areas of real strength in the subject and some areas that have significant weaknesses. This means that progress since the last inspection is unsatisfactory. Areas identified for development at that time, such as monitoring, assessment, establishing schemes of work and increasing the progress pupils in Key Stage 3 make, have not yet been implemented. Well advanced planning shows that all of these issues are intended to be addressed over the next year.
103. Achievement for pupils by the end of Years 2 and 6 is satisfactory. Pupils in Year 2 identify features in the neighbourhood on walks that make use of the pleasant school grounds and the nearby canal. The younger pupils name or point to boats, ducks or the bridge and match the words with the symbols back in the classroom. By the end of Year 6 pupils identify local buildings and recognise their purpose. Highest attaining pupils are building up a geographical vocabulary and identifying similarities and differences, for example by comparing homes in different areas. They understand that towns and countries can be located from maps and globes and information can be recorded in a range of ways. Numeracy skills are reinforced as tally charts and bar graphs are completed, for instance when they record what they have bought in different shops.

104. Achievement is barely satisfactory by the end of Year 9. This is because of the constraints of a narrow curriculum, insufficient assessment of how each pupil is progressing, the unsatisfactory use of information and communication technology and a lack of challenge leading to some disruptive behaviour. The majority of pupils understand that maps are of differing scales. They recognise and understand the use of symbols and transfer information from one map to another. They retain information relating to the work on Australia and name mining and sheep rearing as major industries. Pupils with additional special educational needs achieve in line with other pupils because of the well-directed teacher assistants who interpret work and help with recording. Pupils understand that water comes in a number of forms through more practical work related to weather. They name types of precipitation such as rain, hail and snow and transfer learning in science to help identify solid, liquid and gas states in clouds, lakes and glaciers.
105. By the end of Year 11, achievement is satisfactory because pupils work hard and benefit from some good practical opportunities to practise skills. Map skills continue to develop. They identify high and low areas of population from maps and give sensible reasons for the growth of towns. They select information from a range of sources including videos and books. They read aloud willingly from worksheets but have too little opportunity to research using the Internet. Outdoor activities on Dartmoor, testing map reading and compass bearing skills, encourage personal development as well as reinforcing geographical skills.
106. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. No clear judgement can be made for Years 1 to 6 because geography is not taught this term. Studying planning documents, discussion with staff and looking at work leads to the conclusion that it is likely to be satisfactory, however. Teaching for pupils in Years 7 to 11 is satisfactory overall although there is considerable room for improvement. One lesson seen was very good. The teacher has good subject knowledge and relationships between pupils and all staff are good. However, too few opportunities for practical activities contribute to the unsatisfactory behaviour of some pupils. In a Year 7 lesson, which was repeated in Years 8 and 9 because of the present scheme of work, the introduction to the lesson was overlong. This resulted in some loss of interest and restlessness that was only partially overcome when pupils transferred information about mining to a map of Australia. Good questioning throughout the lesson and constant repetition of the major facts by all adults enabled pupils to recall information at the end of the lesson. In a Year 11 lesson teaching was very good because the teacher caught the imagination of the pupils in a number of ways. Pupils remembered previous learning about volcanoes well, were interested in hearing of the teacher's travel experiences as he showed them a map of Italy and were captivated by a practical demonstration of volcanic force and lava flow.
107. Co-ordination of the subject is satisfactory. The co-ordinator is in the unusual position of managing a subject that she is not trained for and which she is not teaching until next term. She is enthusiastic however and has designed a scheme of work to develop pupils' geographical skills, knowledge and understanding that should prove more relevant to the pupils' needs. However, there is limited opportunity to develop and share best practice within the school. Assessment is currently inadequate which means that pupils' skills are not developed systematically. The subject is due to begin using the new school system, which is good but, until then, the progress and achievements pupils make in lessons is not recorded for teachers to build upon. Resources are also inadequate to support pupils understanding well. There is insufficient use of information and communication technology, for example in establishing Internet links with other areas and using CD Roms, to provide information.



There is currently no opportunity for pupils to gain certificates of accreditation at the end of Key Stage 4 and this is a weakness.

## **HISTORY**

108. History is a good subject overall. There has been good improvement since the last inspection especially in teaching and in the progress pupils make. Pupils of all ages enjoy this subject and work hard.
109. Achievement is good across Key Stages 1 to 3. History is not taught in Key Stage 4. By the end of Year 2 and Year 6 pupils of all abilities, including those with additional special needs, are achieving well. This is because of some very good opportunities for historical enquiry, which capture their imagination and engage their interest. Attitudes to the subject are therefore very good and behaviour is excellent so no time is wasted. Having visited the local museum where they dressed up, the youngest pupils are happy to re-create the experience in the classroom as they learn about Admiral Blake. They recognise differences in clothing 'then' and 'now,' studying themselves in the mirror and looking carefully at their photographs taken on the digital camera. They show good concentration and manual skills as they help staff make pomanders. A visit to the Fleet Air Arm Museum and visits by local residents help bring alive World War Two experiences for pupils in Key Stage 2. By the end of Year 6 they are beginning to understand what conditions were like at that time and how it felt for those involved. They develop very good questioning skills as well as acquiring a wider vocabulary. Pupils are starting to compare evidence from the past from a range of sources including books, artefacts, eyewitness accounts and film.
110. By the end of Year 9 pupils of all abilities are still achieving well. Attitudes and behaviour continue to be strengths and contribute positively to success. With help, pupils select information from reference books and transfer brief key points about the Great Fire of London to simple individual computers. They consider cause and effect, understanding the devastation following the fire. Again, the historical richness of the local area stimulates pupils to good achievement as they prepare to visit the Sedgemoor battleground. Pupils' literacy skills are low so the amount of work recorded in writing is slight but good support from all adults and worksheets prepared for pupils of differing abilities minimise this problem.
111. Teaching and learning in history are very good. Teachers convey their obvious enthusiasm for the subject to the pupils even though they are not subject specialists. Planning to meet the needs of all pupils is very good so that all pupils make very good progress. However, the use of the new assessment system is not yet sufficiently developed to ensure that this very good progress develops systematically for each individual pupil. The subject is made relevant for the pupils by the number of visits out, the practical activities within lessons and the good use of resources from the local museum service. In a Year 6 lesson, pupils had been prepared very well to question a local resident about her wartime memories and they listened courteously to answers so that the learning experience was very good for all present. A Year 8 class could not fail to make very good progress because relationships were so positive and short tasks were so well selected that all in this difficult group grew in self-esteem at their success.
112. The management of history is currently satisfactory overall. The co-ordinator is newly appointed and is well aware that the subject policy and the monitoring and assessment of individual pupils' achievements are in need of improvement to secure the good progress being made. The new scheme of work is well planned to address some of the present limitations of the curriculum, especially in Key Stage 3. It is unfortunate that

the strengths within the subject in Key Stages 1 to 3 are not further developed by the inclusion of history in some form in Key Stage 4, with possible accreditation.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

113. Provision for information and communication technology is good. Pupils achieve well and make good progress in acquiring knowledge, skills and understanding in ICT. This is because teachers throughout the school have a good command of the subject and promote effective learning. Resources are also good and pupils are keen and interested. This good progress applies to all pupils and represents good development since the last inspection.
114. ICT is taught in support of the curriculum for pupils up to the age of seven, and is taught as a discreet subject for older pupils. Younger pupils with more complex needs show good progress by making intentional movements to locate an image on the screen, and selecting, for example between two pictures, which requires concentration and timing. They show developing confidence in the use of the computer. In addition, they experience the wider use of ICT in the form of radio, video, digital camera and control devices.
115. Pupils aged seven to eleven build on these basic skills and confidence well. They become competent in the functional operation of the computer, such as logging on, opening and closing files, manipulating text and clipart. They make good progress in Year 5 for example, in programming the 'Roamer' for simple three-stage operations – forward, turn, forward – because of the effective peer mentoring they receive from Year 10 pupils. This is a really good example of co-operative learning. For example, one senior girl was particularly supportive to a pupil with autism by communicating with a symbol board. In a Year 6 lesson, interrupted when the system broke down, pupils shared and exchanged information by viewing the websites of local schools. The teacher was particularly skilled at providing an interesting and relevant alternative activity so that pupils' disappointment at the breakdown was soon forgotten. Pupils in this age group use a basic skills program independently to improve their literacy and numeracy skills. They thoroughly enjoy the challenge of checking and noting their own progress.
116. Pupils, aged eleven to fourteen, improve their keyboard skills using 'Dazzle/Textease' and portable wordprocessing computers. Some of them produced a badge or poster for a voluntary group while others wrote up rules recently agreed in a citizenship lesson. Planning caters for pupils with a range of abilities, with tasks of different levels of difficulty and by the very knowledgeable help of support assistants. The teacher circulated the group giving clear instructions, for example, "If you right click on star sign" so that pupils' learning was continuous. The management of some difficult behaviour is well managed and does not disturb a calm and purposeful atmosphere. Older pupils from this group recorded data from an instruction sheet using 'Counter Plus'. They chose the representation of the data by resizing windows, changing the colour to suit, gave the graph a title and saved in a data-handling folder. Good one-to-one support was given to one lower attaining pupil so that she too was able to complete the task. The very good resources in the ICT suite give pupils full access and enable them to work at their own pace.
117. Pupils aged fourteen to sixteen follow an Entry Level course that leads to accreditation. Last year, five pupils gained merits and three gained passes, which is an improvement on previous years. They make good progress in understanding the properties of triangles and how to measure angles with an on-screen protractor. In another lesson, Year 10 pupils set up folders and gather information about their last

years at school for their record of achievement statement. They are now confident users of ICT and many are able to work independently.

118. The subject makes a good contribution to other areas of the curriculum. In history for example, the digital camera is used well to show clothes from the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. A video called 'Eat Well' supports learning in personal and health education. In mathematics one pupil used a graphics program to record groups of 'Smarties' by colour and number as a 3D bar chart, and in religious education the Jewish festival of Hanukkah is researched using the Internet. Pupils improve their ICT skills and confidence through attendance at four lunchtime clubs where, among other things, pupils compose their own music, play Solitaire, or use the Internet to find out more about 'Eastenders'.
119. The subject is well led by two co-ordinators, who take separate responsibility for the ICT suite and ICT across the curriculum. There have been a number of significant improvements since the last inspection. These include a new ICT suite, with improved security which allows for the discreet teaching of ICT, training for all teaching staff who have requested it and an updated learning and teaching policy in the light of curriculum 2000 and a changing pupil population. Other resources have also improved with the purchase of a digital camera, with 'save to disk' facility, a number of portable wordprocessing machines and more relevant software to enhance subjects across the school, such as the basic skills program Success Maker. There is a good scheme of work in place, supported by the new assessment procedures and new target setting. However the new assessment system is not yet sufficiently well established to monitor and secure improving individual progress. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It has the resources, teachers' expertise and pupils' interest to challenge higher attainers with GCSE coursework and accreditation in the future.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

120. French is currently taught in Key Stage 3 only. Although there has been some improvement since the last inspection, in that a scheme of work has been introduced, pupils' achievements and the progress made over time remains unsatisfactory. They are very uncertain about listening or responding in the target language and vocabulary which has appeared on the half-termly planning sheets, such as family names or even basic greetings, is not secure. Although some pupils can count to 10, they cannot identify numbers unless they start at one, and they are unable to name classroom objects. When given the opportunity to repeat a French word or expression several times, they can produce reasonably accurate pronunciation, but words they have learned are generally mispronounced. One or two can work out the meaning of French words because they are like English words, as in 'vacances', 'vacation'. Their familiarity with French culture is limited and they are unable to say very much about how life in France might differ from life in England.
121. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall although it varies from good to unsatisfactory which is insufficient to lead to sound or steady progress for the majority of pupils. In one good lesson, pupils responded very well to being given plenty of opportunities to repeat and consolidate new learning. In the majority of lessons however, the target language is insufficiently used and there are very few opportunities for repetition. Vocabulary is taught from small pictures or symbols rather than real objects or large photographs. The methods for bringing the subject to life, lack variety and are not well planned. The co-ordinator is a subject specialist with a good command of the language, but does not use it enough when he is teaching. Expectations of what pupils might achieve are often low. Pupils easily become demoralised and as a result they become restless and lack concentration.

122. There is now an outline scheme of work, but there is no assessment, monitoring or evaluation of standards or progress in the subject. The school plans to change its approach to the way the subject is taught from September 2002, and recognises that the issues need to be addressed as a matter of priority.

## **MUSIC**

123. Music is taught very well throughout the school and pupils make very good progress in lessons. The subject is currently being taught by a temporary teacher who is able to inspire and challenge the majority of pupils of all ages. Previous high quality teaching has led to the subject being enjoyed and valued by most pupils.
124. Pupils' achievements are usually very good throughout the school covering all the elements of listening, composing, appraising and performing. The youngest pupils show a very good knowledge of simple songs, which they sing to a high standard while playing different percussion instruments. By the age of seven they show a very good appreciation of loud and soft and make very good progress in clapping to a set rhythm. During Key Stage 2 the very good progress and achievement continues. Pupils are able to respond to a large variety of musical forms, including Gamelan from Indonesia and water sounds made by different instruments. In Key Stage 3, pupils begin to learn the names of instruments from different countries such as a Mandolin, a bouzouki and a guitar. They also respond with great enjoyment to performing percussion to the sounds of an African band, the Ladysmith Black Mambazo, demonstrating excellent ability to play complex rhythms as a group. All pupils show good familiarity with different percussion instruments and are able to play different rhythms and often a sequence of sounds.
125. The quality of teaching remains very good for pupils of all ages. Lessons are lively and very interesting with a very good variety of activities and resources. With the youngest pupils music is very successfully used to evoke atmosphere and tell stories. Pupils in one lesson were skilfully transported with sound to the sea and were enraptured. When they were then 'taken to a stream', they were so engrossed that they were reluctant to leave this imaginary place! Very good planning means that as pupils become older, they build on their skills, for example being able to interpret symbols for and follow a score responding to, stop and start, loud and soft instructions as well as reading the beat. In one lesson in Key Stage 3, pupils were introduced to Spanish and Greek music. The teacher had taken the trouble to find an instrument as close to bouzouki as possible and re-created the exciting and joyful atmosphere of a Greek dance, the pupils faces were wreathed in smiles with all pupils joining in, even those who had entered the room in a bad mood. Pupils each chose an instrument and were very proud of the group performance. The standard of achievement is very high with all pupils showing some degree of ability and involvement regardless of barriers to learning such as autism or emotional and behavioural difficulty.
126. The subject contributes significantly to pupils' spiritual and cultural development and also supports numeracy through counting and literacy through good quality discussion. There is some good quality music therapy to help pupils with communication and self-esteem, and a guitar club, which is very popular. The use of information and communication technology is growing, but is not yet fully developed. The pupils have made their own CD of favourite music and have worked on computer-generated music, but there is little evidence of keyboard work, which is a limitation of the otherwise good provision, especially for older pupils.

127. Subject management is satisfactory. The new co-ordinator does not take full responsibility until September 2002. This means that there is currently no monitoring or overview of standards in the subject, but the high quality of teaching by the temporary teacher and the previous good work in the subject is ensuring that high standards remain for the time being. Despite the very good achievement no accreditation is offered. Subject planning is good, but assessment is in the very early stages of development and there is as yet no clear record of individual pupils achievements. The scheme is in place, but is not yet used effectively to build on skills from year to year. Good knowledge of the pupils currently ensures that lessons help pupils to build skills systematically, which is satisfactory. With the exception of the limited keyboards, resources are good with a good use of the local environment such as group work with a local school and a trip to the 'Wizard of Oz'.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

128. The quality of teaching of physical education, pupils' achievement and the progress they make are good overall in Years 1 to 6. They are unsatisfactory in Years 7 to 9 because of some unsatisfactory teaching due to lack of subject expertise. The quality of teaching and the progress pupils make are satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. This represents a deterioration since the last inspection when physical education was identified as a strong subject. The school has been unable to access other local sporting facilities to enrich the curriculum on a regular basis for older pupils, which means that opportunities are more limited for pupils in Years 7 to 11.
129. Achievement for pupils by the end of Year 2 is good. They respond to gentle encouragement well and are prepared to explore the resources, which they collect themselves. They kick, bounce and roll balls and show good hand-eye co-ordination as they knock down skittles with beanbags or balls. Good behaviour management encourages all pupils to take part in the lessons and listen to instructions. Physiotherapy sessions provide additional opportunities for meeting the personal targets of pupils with specific physical needs. By the end of Year 6 achievement continues to be good because the curriculum is wide and relevant, teaching is good and pupils are enthusiastic. Good routines mean that they change quickly for swimming and enter the water readily. They use a range of strokes to propel themselves through the water with highest attaining pupils swimming 25 metres. Dancing provides very good opportunities for co-operation and self-evaluation. 'Let's stand back to back when we are waiting' was one pupil's hint for improvement as he danced in a group of eight attentive boys with no direct adult support.
130. Achievement by the end of Year 9 is unsatisfactory and they make slow progress. This is because girls and boys from Year 7 to 9 are taught together with insufficient planning for their differing needs and stages of physical development. Pupils co-operate well however, working as part of a team, accepting the rules of the game and showing enthusiasm. Insufficient time for the regular practice and refining of small skills means that these are underdeveloped. Because of the large group size there is a lack of balance in the curriculum, meaning for example, that gymnastic skills are overshadowed by team games.
131. Achievement is satisfactory by the end of Year 11. Pupils are more evenly matched in age and size and enjoy the physical challenge of team games such as uni-hoc. However, they have few opportunities to try out a wider range of activities because they do not use local facilities during the whole afternoon allocated for physical education. The Life Skills programme does provide personal challenges of a high degree however. During activities such as abseiling, pupils overcome their fear, build their self-esteem and show a high degree of self-control.

132. Teaching and learning are good in Key Stages 1 and 2, unsatisfactory in Key Stage 3 and just satisfactory in Key Stage 4. In the good lessons, teachers plan in conjunction with effective support staff for the physical and emotional needs of all pupils. They are used to dealing with the unexpected, such as the illness of instructors at the local pool, and react positively so that good learning still takes place. Relationships are very good between staff and pupils of all ages so that most pupils are prepared to work hard and listen to instructions. Where teaching is unsatisfactory support staff are not well deployed to help pupils of all ages and abilities to take part equally. Health and safety are also compromised as girls and boys of unequal age and size play team games together and learning is unsatisfactory. These lessons do not build upon pupils' skills which are not well recorded or assessed in any area of the physical education curriculum. This is an area for urgent development.
133. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory although there are areas for development. Subject knowledge is weak for teaching older pupils, which leads to a lack of balance in curriculum provision. There is limited opportunity to develop teacher skills further and share good practice. There is too much emphasis on team games where some pupils find difficulty progressing in such a mixed group. Resources are limited for gymnastics but are otherwise satisfactory. Outdoor accommodation is satisfactory but the hall is too small for large groups of pupils who are therefore unable to progress well. Showering and changing accommodation have improved considerably and include facilities for disabled pupils. Links with other special schools are positive, providing opportunities for competition and contributing well to social development. A small number of pupils benefit from regular attendance at Riding for the Disabled.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

134. The quality of teaching and the achievement and progress pupils make are satisfactory overall. This is similar to the findings of the last inspection.
135. In Key Stage 1, pupils show sound knowledge of stories and bring in their favourite books. In one lesson pupils understood the story of Noah showing that they can repeat the words 'Noah' and 'ark' very well. In Key Stage 2, pupils make steady progress. They showed a good understanding of the Hindu religious story of Rama and the Demon King in one lesson, remembering facts from earlier lessons and anticipating what will happen next and showing an understanding of the qualities of the characters. Pupils in year six are able to discuss what made Samson strong and what kind of a person Delilah was.
136. In Key Stage 3, pupils show a sound knowledge of why they should keep to the rules, and how this is related to their own lives and the lives of others and where beliefs are shared. This is demonstrated through the story of the Good Samaritan, which the pupils role-played and drew. In Key Stage 4 pupils show a steady growth in understanding when they found out about the qualities of Amnesty International, Ghandi and Martin Luther King. They show some very good development in producing a class prayer following September 11<sup>th</sup> 2001 and demonstrate an understanding of the differences between being lonely and being alone.
137. Teaching is satisfactory overall, but good in about a third of lessons. In the good lessons teachers bring the subject alive with relevant pictures, big books and real objects. There is very good use of signs and symbols to support learning. Storytelling is usually skilled and engages the pupils well. However there is a limited use of real objects in most lessons to bring the ideas and events really close to the pupils, for strengthening their understanding further. Worksheets were commonly used to end

lessons which, although appropriate to some, lacked variety and impact when used too frequently. The work of teaching assistants is generally strong; they contribute significantly to supporting pupils understanding and helping them to concentrate and managing difficult behaviour. In one very good lesson there was very good use of artefacts with a real Torah, and 'Jad' for pointing, which captured the pupils' imaginations. Pupils made their own scrolls and were then asked to find out more using the Internet. The teacher had beautifully prepared sheets with each of the pupils' names written in Hebrew, which made them very keen to decorate their own sheets well.

138. There are good links to literacy with plenty of opportunity for pupils to discuss issues. There is less opportunity provided for older pupils to write about their work in their own words. Some sound use is made of information and communication technology, for example one pupil typed out the class Christmas poem on the computer. However there are no CD-Roms to support investigation although some do use the Internet. The subject contributes well to pupils' cultural, moral, social and especially spiritual understanding. In one Key Stage 1 lesson as the teacher explained how God made all the birds, trees, flowers and animals there was silence and a child's voice said "Wow!"
139. Management of the subject is satisfactory, the Somerset Agreed Syllabus is followed and teachers have a sound subject knowledge. However there is a lack of monitoring and analysis of the quality of teaching and pupils' work by the co-ordinator. This means that there is little information currently to guide subject development. Teachers lack the training and assessment necessary to help them provide consistently engaging lessons, which build systematically on pupils' previous learning. A good assessment system is now in place ready to be used in the autumn term. No accreditation is offered in this subject. The school does not make sufficient use of local religious leaders or places of worship to extend pupils experiences but the subject has some good basic resources, with video and audio-cassettes, boxes of artefacts and a sound range of books for pupils to research for five different religions. These can be supplemented with high quality materials from the learning resource centre. A Buddhist monk has also visited to provide colourful subject understanding.