

INSPECTION REPORT

HIGHDOWN SCHOOL

Worthing, West Sussex

LEA area: West Sussex

Unique reference number: 114697

Headteacher: Mr G Elliker

Reporting inspector: Mrs J Cook
2351

Dates of inspection: 26 February – 1 March 2001

Inspection number: 193818

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community Special
Age range of pupils:	2 - 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Durrington Lane Worthing West Sussex
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Appropriate authority:	Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs P James MBE
Date of previous inspection:	28 April 1997

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Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
2351	Jacque Cook	Registered inspector	Information and communication technology	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? a) The school's results and achievements How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
9957	Shirley Watts	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
20397	Rosa Blunt	Team inspector	Modern foreign languages Music	How well is the school led and managed?
10198	Kate Burton	Team inspector	English Vocational education	
31862	Julia Coop	Team inspector	History Religious education	How high are standards? b) Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
2512	Brian Emery	Team inspector	Art Design and technology Personal and social education	
18457	David Haigh	Team inspector	Science Special educational needs English as an additional language	
22948	Mary Vallis	Team inspector	Geography Physical education	
10668	David Walker	Team inspector	Mathematics Equal opportunities	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

Highdown is a mixed, day, special school for 114 pupils aged two to 19 with severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties. Currently, there are 107 pupils on roll, which is shortly due to rise when the new building is complete. No pupils are aged under five. One pupil is part-time. There are 13 students older than 16. Throughout the report, the term 'pupil' will be used unless specifically referring to students. There are considerably more pupils at Key Stage 2 (aged 7 to 11) and Key Stage 3 (aged 11-14) than at other key stages. All pupils have statements of special educational need, but only 20 for profound and multiple learning difficulties, which is low in comparison with similar schools. Eighteen pupils have additional autistic spectrum disorder. There are three Bangladeshi, one part Black African, one Arabian and one part Thai pupil of whom four are learning English as an additional language; they are in the early stages of language acquisition. The number of pupils eligible for free school meals is low at 22 (21 per cent). Pupils travel to school from the coastal area from Portslade and Shoreham in the east to Littlehampton in the west and as far inland as Steyning and Pulborough. Attainment on entry is low and often very low.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Highdown is an effective school where pupils make good progress, have very good attitudes to their work and behave very well. This is largely because the quality of the teaching is high, the school is well led and managed and provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- All pupils make good progress most of the time and many make very good progress. This is mainly because the quality of teaching is high and support staff are very effective.
- Pupils have very positive attitudes and their behaviour and relationships are very good.
- Staff are very good at helping pupils with difficult behaviour to improve.
- The provision for those at Key Stage 4 and Post-16 is very good, they are taught very well and make very good progress.
- Pupils' moral, social and cultural education is promoted very well by the school.

What could be improved

- There is a lack of consistency in the assessment and recording of pupils' progress.
- What is taught for personal, social and health education needs to be better planned and sex education is currently not taught.
- There are insufficient resources for information and communication technology, geography and modern foreign language.
- Not all pupils who should be studying a modern foreign language.
- Toilet facilities require attention to comply with health and safety requirements.

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 April 1997 when six key issues were identified. Since then there have been very good improvements in pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development and in their teaching and learning. The teaching of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties, the first key issue, has improved very well. Standards in English have improved significantly and there has been good improvement in pupils' progress as a whole, notably in science, art and geography. Good standards have been maintained in most other subjects. The planning assessment and recording policies have been implemented effectively, key issue 2, and are working well apart from in Key Stages 2 and 3, where there is some inconsistency. This remains an issue for this inspection and is partly explained because the school is awaiting national guidance on the curriculum before it makes any more changes. However, this represents insufficient improvement although the reporting of progress has improved. The majority of individual education plans are of a good standard and are used well but a few lack specific targets. Whilst the time for each subject referred to in key issue 3 has been established and checking at key stages has been introduced, overall monitoring is not as effective as it should be. There has been very good progress on some elements of key issue 4: alterations to Highdown House

have made it accessible to all pupils and a new library has been created, but the technology room remains unsuitable and lack of an art area precludes pupils working on larger pieces of work. Work has been undertaken to refurbish some toilet areas, key issue 5, but others remain unsatisfactory. Arrangements for separate changing for physical education are in place but they offer insufficient privacy for older pupils. Resources have been improved for all the subjects listed in the final key issue but more are needed for modern foreign language and in other areas. The areas where the school have made very good improvement, far outweigh in importance those elements of the key issues still being addressed. In consequence improvement overall since the last inspection is good. The commitment of the staff and improvements planned indicate a good capacity to improve further.

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	by age 19	Key	
Speaking and listening	B	B	B	very good	A
Reading	B	B	B	good	B
Writing	B	B	B	satisfactory	C
Mathematics	B	B	A	unsatisfactory	D
Personal, social and health education	C	C	C	poor	E
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	A	A		

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

Pupils do well throughout the school and particularly well at Key Stage 4 and Post-16 in vocational courses. Pupils make very good progress in history because the teaching is very good. Through using mathematics in everyday situations, students at Post-16 learn very well. Pupils make good progress in all other subjects with the exception of information and communication technology and personal and social education where progress is satisfactory and modern foreign language where progress is unsatisfactory.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils are interested, keen to learn and want to come to school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Most pupils are well mannered and polite and try hard to behave well. Those with difficult behaviour are helped to improve through good quality behaviour plans.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils are encouraged to make choices and to take responsibility. They have very good relationships with staff.
Attendance	Good.

Pupils' positive attitudes are a major factor in their successful learning. They behave well in class, around the school and when on visits.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

In 6 per cent of the lessons teaching was excellent, in 28 per cent very good, in 53 per cent good, in 11 per cent satisfactory and in 2 per cent unsatisfactory.

The quality of teaching and learning are good overall, and very good at Key Stage 4 and Post-16. The quality of teaching and learning are good in English, mathematics and science. It is very good in history and vocational education and good in most other subjects. Teaching and learning are satisfactory in information and communication technology and personal, social and health education. The strengths of teaching are in the quality of planning, the effectiveness of the support staff, the consistent use of effective methods and high expectations of what pupils will achieve. In consequence, pupils learn well. They try hard because they want to please the staff they work with and have the confidence to work independently. On the rare occasions when teaching is unsatisfactory too many resources and weak team work are major factors. Literacy and numeracy are taught well and communication very well, through effective use of signs and symbols. The needs of all pupils are met well.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is satisfactory overall. It is particularly good for older pupils and students.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Provision for pupils with English as an additional language is appropriate. Arrangements are made to translate documents or for a translator to attend medicals if necessary. Staff take care to ensure the needs of these pupils are met.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision for pupils' moral, social and cultural development is very good, and spiritual development is good. This is despite the satisfactory progress made in personal, social and health education sessions because these elements permeate all areas of the school's work
How well the school cares for its pupils	Support and guidance is good. There are very good systems to improve behaviour and attendance is monitored well. There are very good systems for assessing and monitoring progress which are inconsistently applied by some staff which reduces their effectiveness.

Links with parents are good, maintaining the high standards set at the last inspection. The curriculum is enriched through use of the local community and visits further afield. The quality of vocational education including college attendance and work experience is very good. Careers education and guidance are very good. The school does not meet statutory requirements for the teaching of a modern foreign language, as all secondary aged pupils do not have the opportunity to study the subject. The school is a safe environment and the welfare of pupils is taken seriously. Work with external agencies is effective. However, there is a lack of speech and language therapy in breach of provision written on some statements of special educational need.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management of the headteacher are good and he is ably supported by the deputy headteacher and key stage co-ordinators. They provide good direction for the school's work towards improvement. Subject co-ordinators are effective in raising pupils' standards of achievement.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governing body fulfils its statutory duties satisfactorily. However they do not ensure that the requirements to study a modern foreign language are met or that the special educational needs policy is reported on annually. Governors do play a very strong role in shaping the direction of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Teaching is monitored well and has led to a considerable improvement. The progress towards meeting the priorities set out in the development plan is rigorously checked and subject co-ordinators review their subject areas well each year.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are used well and value for money is good.

Staffing levels are good, both in terms of teachers and support assistants. Although at the time of the inspection there were two temporary teachers, new staff are recruited. Although the level of resources has improved considerably since the last inspection, it is now satisfactory, but there are not enough for information and communication technology, modern foreign language and geography. The accommodation is satisfactory overall. Some toilets remain unsatisfactory, there are no changing rooms and the design and technology room is unsatisfactory. The headteacher delegates responsibility effectively and has successfully built a team of staff with a shared commitment to improve. They are aware some policies need reviewing and updating. Principles of best value are applied satisfactorily.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils like school. • Teaching is good. • The staff are easy to talk with. • Pupils make good progress. • Any problems with behaviour are sorted out. • Information provided is good. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insufficient speech therapy. • There are insufficient opportunities for older pupils in the school to feel they are 'seniors'. • Insufficient extra-curricular activities. • There is not enough homework. • Some classes have too many pupils.

The inspection team agrees with the positive views expressed by the parents. They also agree that there is insufficient speech and language therapy to meet the demands of statements of special educational need. They disagreed with the other areas of desired improvement. Older pupils have good opportunities to feel part of the senior school. They are treated in a more adult way by staff, are expected to have opinions, take more responsibility, behave sensibly and have age appropriate work to do. This includes vocational education, work experience and opportunities to use Highdown House, for example to visit the café. The team found the extra-curricular activities at lunchtime to be good. Transport difficulties preclude many organised activities after school. Homework was found to be satisfactory, on the whole. Reading homework is sent home regularly for many pupils in book bags. Additionally, parents are able to ask for homework if they wish their children to have it. Opportunities are missed to give practice in numeracy activities at home to support learning in school. The number of staff in the school, teachers and support staff, is good. Whilst some classes may seem large, pupils are often taught in groups of much smaller numbers and at times they work on a one-to-one basis with staff.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. *It is inappropriate to judge the standards of the pupils for whom this school caters in relation to the National Curriculum or any other national benchmarks. The report does, however, comment on the achievement of the pupils and on what they know, understand and can do. Judgements about achievement take account of information in their statements, annual reviews and individual education plans.*
2. Overall, pupils do well and make good progress. They make very good progress during Key Stage 4 and at Post-16, this is partly because they are taught very well and learning is very relevant to pupils' needs. This represents a significant improvement at Key Stage 2, an improvement at Key Stages 1 and 3 and a maintenance of high standards at Key Stage 4 and Post-16. Pupils with additional special educational needs also make good progress. Those with autistic spectrum disorder learn to tolerate the presence of others and to join in with group activities. Through the use of signs and symbols, where appropriate, communication is increased. Mathematical understanding is improved by systematically practising skills. Because lessons are planned to meet the needs of all the pupils in the class effectively, there is no measurable difference between the progress of boys and girls. Similarly, pupils whose home language is not English also do well.
3. Standards achieved in all aspects of English are consistently good in all parts of the school. Pupils make good progress in speaking and listening, reading and writing. Speaking and listening skills improve as pupils learn to communicate more effectively, some using signs or communication aids to help them. During lessons pupils are attentive, follow instructions and answer questions. Pupils do well in reading and enjoy lessons particularly when sensory experiences and activities enable them to take part and understand what is happening. They develop a real interest in rhymes, stories and books. There are a good number of older pupils and students who read for pleasure and for information. Writing skills are developed effectively throughout the school. Early writing experiences include making shapes in shaving foam and sand. More able pupils use their own personal dictionaries to write simple sentences. Handwriting improves as letters are shaped more accurately and evenly. Many pupils also use computers to write sentences alongside symbols. There is a significant improvement in standards of achievement in English since the last inspection. The good standards and progress in the subject can be attributed to factors such as good quality teaching, detailed planning, clear learning targets on individual education plans and the introduction of elements of the National Literacy Strategy. The school also makes good use of structured teaching methods that focus on the development of language skills.
4. In mathematics pupils' achievement and progress are good. During Key Stages 1 and 2 they are satisfactory and they are good at Key Stage 3. At Key Stages 4 and at Post-16 achievement and progress in mathematics are very good, reflecting the enthusiastic, imaginative and very good teaching these pupils receive. Improved progress in numeracy is linked to the introduction of a modified numeracy framework across the school. This works particularly well at Key Stage 2 when pupils are grouped by ability for numeracy sessions. Since the last inspection satisfactory improvement has been made. By the age of 11, many pupils are able to match and sort by colour and shape and understand what numbers represent. More able pupils count accurately and are adding on and taking away numbers. By the age of 16, pupils are developing their knowledge of money. They recognise coins and more able pupils add pence together accurately. Counting improves, some count in tens and are able to tell the time in whole hours. By the time they leave school, most students use money confidently, some giving change accurately for several pounds. Throughout the school, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties improve their understanding of cause and effect, learn to match pictures and shapes and develop an understanding of colour and space.

5. In science pupils' achievements and progress are good overall. By the time they are seven, pupils show an awareness of the world around them and how to use their senses to interpret it. Less able pupils are more able to communicate and to respond to light and sound. More able pupils play pushing and pulling games to develop understanding of forces, balance, space and weight. When they are eleven, most pupils understand that animals can be grouped into domestic, farm and exotic sets. They understand that materials can take on several different forms such as white, brown and granary bread. During Key Stage 3, pupils continue to develop their understanding of materials and how they can take on many forms. They know that water can be solid, a vapour or a liquid. Their ability to use the school's system of signing to record their work develops. This enables pupils to record practical work and exercise greater independence. Science is not taught as a separate subject after Year 9 but the topic work in Key Stage 4 and at Post-16 shows that the work completed earlier in the school is built upon very effectively. Pupils understand how to take plant cuttings, about different types of seeds and bulbs and the differences between cool, warm and hot climate plants.
6. During Key Stage 4 and Post-16, pupils and students achieve very well and make very good progress in vocational education. They work towards the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) Youth Award Scheme Bronze Awards and the Towards Independence qualifications. The number gaining awards is increasing. Students successfully take part in courses at local colleges and learn about running businesses through Team Enterprise, where they make and sell items to the public, and the in-school café they run.
7. Pupils achieve very well and make very good progress in history. This is due to the high quality of the teaching and the imaginative use of resources to give pupils, as far as possible, a feeling of what it was like in the past. In almost all other subjects, pupils achieve well and make good progress. There are three exceptions. Pupils make satisfactory progress in information and communication technology, despite the improved expertise of staff. This is because what is to be taught is yet to be established throughout the school and there are too few computers, software and other equipment. In personal, social and health education, pupils make satisfactory progress. Currently the plan for what they should be taught is under review and there is insufficient guidance for staff to make best use of the time available. Pupils do not do as well as they should in modern foreign language. Their progress is slowed through a lack of continuity in staffing. Although some pupils have French lessons each week and German teaching is offered as part of the lunchtime choices, a significant number of pupils who should, do not study the subject.
8. The school has piloted working towards targets established using the performance 'P' scales. These were found to be too broad to measure the progress some pupils make.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

9. Pupils' attitudes to school are very good and have improved since the last inspection. Parents comment that their children are eager to come to school and it is evident that on arrival in the mornings they greet staff happily. They also greet visitors warmly and most are very courteous. They are keen to learn and want to do their best for their teachers, co-operating with what they are asked to do. They persevere with tasks and try hard, even though concentration spans are often short. Pupils of all ages enjoy the range of activities that are available. For example, younger pupils show their delight in early morning exercise routines. In all classes morning circle times and registration activities, are used well to give details of the coming days activities. Pupils anticipate lessons with enthusiasm, which really helps them learn. Pupils in Key Stage 2 eagerly await a visit to an old manor house as part of their history project and more able pupils spontaneously begin to consider questions they might ask of the owner. At lunchtimes, pupils make full use of the stimulating and varied choice of lunchtime activities. They become fully engrossed in activities. The very good relationships they have with all members of staff, is a major factor in developing positive attitudes, and building self-esteem. Older students, who attend local colleges, some twice a week, are relaxed and confident in this different environment and relate well to the college staff. They express consideration for the work of another group.
10. The behaviour of pupils is very good in school and when they go on visits. At times it is excellent, for example when they are totally engrossed in stimulating multi-sensory activities and lessons,

such as tasting different herb drinks. It is also excellent when resources such as slides and music are sensitively used to create atmosphere within the lessons. On the rare occasions when behaviour is not as good, it is usually because pupils are distracted by resources rather than listening to the teacher. Sometimes pupils are distracted through activities being introduced too quickly. Due to their complex learning difficulties, the behaviour of some pupils can sometimes be difficult. These pupils learn to improve their behaviour with the help of specific, well thought out plans. It is evident that many of these pupils are making tremendous progress in learning what is acceptable. There has been a good improvement in the behaviour of pupils since the last inspection. The number of exclusions is low at one and has not risen since the last inspection.

11. The personal development of pupils is very good because the school expects them to take responsibility and to show initiative. The very good relationships pupils develop with teachers and support staff are a key element in helping them to learn. This leads to expressions of joy, humour and co-operation. For example, in one class, pupils are sufficiently confident that they deliberately make mistakes in maths to 'tease' their teachers. On a daily level, pupils take registers to the office help with classroom jobs while older pupils help the caretaker at lunchtime. Pupils take a pride in these activities, with one pupil so keen to do his job that he could hardly wait for registration to end so that he could get on with marking the weatherboard. Many pupils learn quickly to share toys and to work alongside their peers sharing their equipment although some still find this difficult. As they mature, pupils have the opportunity to make simple choices at lunchtime, becoming increasingly independent. The very good provision of 'options' for older students and college and work experience placements help them to mature and take decisions. As a result they grow in confidence. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are helped and encouraged to make choices, for example at lunchtimes one younger pupil indicated the ball pool, and then lay in rapt attention, listening to quiet music, crackling shiny paper. Overall there has been a very good improvement in pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development since the last inspection and this is now strength of the school.
12. Pupils' attendance is good at 93.57 per cent, with almost all absences being the result of pupils' individual medical condition. Punctuality is good. The majority of pupils travel by taxis or minibus and only occasionally does dense traffic cause some delay. The pupils are engaged in activities as soon as they arrive at school and lessons start on time. Pupils generally waste little or no time. Since the last inspection attendance has remained good.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

13. The quality of teaching and learning is good, overall. It is very good and at times, excellent, in 34 per cent of lessons and unsatisfactory in two per cent of lessons. This is a considerable improvement on the last inspection when teaching was at least good in only 50 per cent of lessons and in 19 per cent of lessons it was unsatisfactory or poor. Additionally, the teaching and learning of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties has improved significantly, from unsatisfactory to good. These improvements are partly due to the very good programme of observing lessons and monitoring of teachers' planning but also to the commitment of the staff to raising pupils' achievements. The quality of teaching and learning is maintained at a good standard at Key Stage 1, has improved to good at Key Stages 2 and 3 and to very good at Key Stage 4 and Post-16. The very high quality of teaching at Key Stage 4 and Post-16, notably in vocational education, is largely because staff choose age appropriate materials and methods. These gain and maintain students' interest giving them maximum opportunities to exercise their independence. For example, driving an electric wheelchair around the school or selecting programs on the computer.
14. In most subjects, the quality of teaching and learning is good overall. History is particularly well taught using everyday experiences to establish the passing of time. Pupils' learning is reinforced effectively through other subjects, for example, in drama and art. In information and communication technology, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Staff have become skilled in using their expertise to improve their teaching. However, pupils' learning in this subject is limited because there is currently insufficient direction for staff in the form of a long-term scheme of work. There are also too few computers.

15. A major factor in the high quality of teaching throughout the school is the very good preparation staff make for lessons through detailed lesson plans. This ensures the learning of all pupils is catered for at an appropriately difficult level. For example, the planning of a science lesson on pushing and pulling had clear targets for the pupils and carefully chosen resources to ensure pupils would succeed. Included in the planning is the very effective use made of other adults to support and guide pupils. The quality of the work of support assistants is high and they make a real difference to the progress pupils make. These staff are very well briefed by teachers and are knowledgeable about individual needs. They know what works best to make pupils want to learn. Together with the teachers they make a powerful team in each classroom because they use the same procedures, apply rules fairly and constantly praise and encourage the pupils. This means, for example, behaviour plans are consistently followed and pupils' behaviour improves because they know what is expected of them and what will happen if they misbehave.
16. In most lessons, pupils work hard because they are interested in the good range of activities. This also helps them sustain their concentration for relatively long periods. Through changing activities and moving from class to group or individual work the pace of lessons is successfully maintained and pupils do not have time to become bored. For example, in one lesson with older pupils and students with profound and multiple learning difficulties, pupils explored bubbles, improved their toleration of texture, moved cogs to make them go round, operated a touch screen on a computer, and used Big Macks to associate cause and effect. Additionally, by the end of the session one had driven his motorised chair around the school, another had made music using a keyboard and a computer and two students had stood in their standing frames. Staff have high expectations of pupils' work and behaviour and pupils respond well, confident that they will not be asked to do anything beyond their capability. They are justifiably proud of their achievements.
17. Teaching methods used are varied and effective. A modified Teaching of Autistic and Communication Handicapped Children (TEACCH) approach works well with young pupils with autistic spectrum disorder and Higashi movement is used well to encourage physical mobility. Pupils are spellbound when listening to staff read to them and they enjoy opportunities to use a computer. Staff encourage pupils to become independent, to make choices and decisions. More able pupils are expected to work out how to assemble a tongue and grooved box from a selection of pieces. Some are keen to use a hammer without help, others manage with just the right amount of support and rapid pulling away of fingers when the box is missed. A significant number of pupils throughout the school turn the computer on and select what they want to do themselves. All staff use signs, symbols and the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) well to help pupils to improve their communication skills and as far as possible encourage pupils to use as many senses as possible to help them learn. In this respect drama is effective, particularly as it is used in history, for example, to give pupils the feeling of what it was like to live in the past.
18. Teachers use a good range of strategies to assess how well pupils are doing. They question skilfully to discover if knowledge is gained and understood. Sometimes recording sheets are used to note significant improvements or to pinpoint difficulties to be addressed in subsequent lessons. Very good attention is paid to fulfilling the assessment criteria for pupils and students working on accredited courses at Key Stage 4 and Post-16.
19. Occasionally, elements of teaching do not help pupils learn as well as they should. For example, in a Year 7 English lesson, because it was too ambitious, not all pupils completed what was planned for them. In one instant teaching was aimed at an appropriately hard standard for the more able group of pupils but was too hard and did not give sufficient time for the less able group. In the very few lessons where teaching and learning were unsatisfactory there were too many pieces of equipment in close vicinity to the pupils and in consequence they became distracted and lost their concentration. Unusually, roles of staff were not clear in one instance. This was because two teachers were taking small group of pupils for communication lessons. Their different contributions to the lesson were confusing for the pupils and progress was slowed.
20. A few parents were concerned about the lack of homework. It is set on an informal basis if parents request it. Many pupils take home book bags to enable them to share books with their parents on a regular basis. However, opportunities are missed to give parents small tasks to carry out at home to reinforce what pupils have learnt in school.

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

21. The quality and range of what pupils are taught overall are satisfactory. Since the last inspection, the school has made satisfactory progress in developing the curriculum under the leadership of the four key stage managers. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been introduced and modified effectively to meet the diverse needs of the pupils. There is, however, more work to be done on the Literacy Strategy. Some ability groupings for literacy and numeracy are also proving successful. These approaches are contributory factors leading to pupils making the progress they do in English and mathematics. Within key stages, there has been a change from a topic-based curriculum to one of discrete subjects. The planned improvement is not yet complete to incorporate a suitable published scheme with the revised National Curriculum. This is because staff are currently awaiting further guidance on lower ability pupils. Teaching time for National Curriculum subjects has been reviewed, but the time allotted to personal, social and health education and daily living skills is high and this time is not linked sufficiently to a planned programme of personal and social education. The current provision, although satisfactory, lacks the necessary coherence. Religious education is appropriately based on the Locally Agreed Syllabus and meets statutory requirements. However, there is a lack of clarity in the timetabling arrangements for this subject. Not all pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4, have equal opportunities to study a modern foreign language. This does not comply with statutory requirements, is unsatisfactory and a significant omission. Sex education and drug misuse education for secondary age pupils are not currently being taught, although, there is provision to answer pupils' questions as they arise on a one-to-one basis. A number of pupils are withdrawn from lessons for therapy and it is not always clear how they will learn what they have missed in class. These weaknesses indicate a lack of overall monitoring of the curriculum to draw together work at key stages particularly.
22. Pupils aged five are taught the same, appropriate curriculum as other pupils in their classes. Work is organised using the areas of learning at the foundation stage of the National Curriculum and suitably adapted to meet their needs. The curriculum for pupils and students aged 14 to 19 is very good. It is well designed, focusing on vocational education and the requirements of accredited courses. This is most appropriate and highly relevant to the needs of the students. It prepares them very well for making choices about future education or training. There are many exciting opportunities for students. For example, good links with colleges of further education and training centres give students the chance to sample courses they might take after leaving school. Team Enterprise sessions involve students in running businesses that actually make profits from selling goods to the public. Work experience placements within school and in real working environments provide students with opportunities to try out a variety of jobs, helping them to discover their interests and talents. All the work the students do is accredited through the ASDAN scheme and there is a real sense of achievement when students gain Bronze Awards or Towards Independence Certificates. The provision for careers education and guidance is very good.
23. Provision for pupils with additional special educational needs is satisfactory overall. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorder are helped by the use of an appropriately modified TEACCH type approach linked with intensive work on signing and symbols. The use of learning bays for each pupil aids concentration and allows the good ratio of staff to pupils to be effective. Those pupils that are taught in groups not exclusively for autistic pupils are, with support in some instances, able to undertake the full range of activities. They are helped with appropriate behaviour management plans and the use of symbols boards to give structure to the day. All pupils are helped by the good attention given to developing communication skills. The school has adopted the Picture Exchange Communication System (PECS) and this is working well. Pupils with difficult behaviour have well structured behaviour management plans that are taken into consideration when lessons are planned. Advice from specialist visiting staff is taken into account when planning what is to be taught and the best methods to use for pupils with visual and hearing impairment. The lack of regular support from speech and language therapy provision is compensated for partly by the emphasis on teaching language throughout the school. The emphasis on language teaching supports pupils with English as an additional language effectively. Individual education plans are used well to highlight specific areas of improvement for all pupils

- taken from statements of special educational need and annual review reports. Whilst some targets are not sufficiently specific they provide a good basis for staff planning.
24. Opportunities for pupils to join local schools are developing well. Seven pupils now attend local first schools for part of the week, usually a morning or afternoon. They enjoy the experience and make real gains from working and playing with mainstream pupils. Plans are well advanced for this to extend to a middle school after Easter. Other links with the local community are also good. Pupils make many visits out of school to support their learning, including to local colleges. A good selection of visitors come into the school.
 25. A few parents expressed concern about the adequacy of extra-curricular activities. However, there is a good range although they take place largely at lunchtimes because of the difficulties arranging transport for after school activities. Pupils choose from a variety of things to do including indoor and outdoor activities. For example, make music playing electronic keyboards, use computers, play board games, use the ball pool, play on large apparatus or join a singing group. There are also visits and regular residential experiences that widen the curriculum and give pupils opportunities to develop and practise skills independently.
 26. The spiritual development of pupils is good, as it was at the time of the last inspection. This is a school where individuals are valued and their achievements celebrated. All members of the school community treat each other with dignity and respect. Religious education provides good opportunities to explore the values and beliefs of others both within the school community and further afield. The oldest pupils were helped through excellent teaching to reflect on the wonders of creation based on an Icelandic story. Parents, priests and visitors from the local community share their customs and faiths with pupils who also visit a number of local places of worship such as the parish church and the synagogue. Music and candles play an important part in creating focus and a calm atmosphere, for example, during a very good assembly for the youngest pupils. All were included by the holding of hands and the sensitive use of communication as feelings were explored and a birthday was celebrated. There was a moment for quiet reflection before a short prayer was said. There are some missed opportunities for reflection and the discussion of emotions during circle time and personal and social education because the sessions are insufficiently planned and are sometimes rushed. On the other hand, staff recognise other unplanned moments for pupils' spiritual development. This was seen in the sensory room where low lights and soft music created an atmosphere of tranquillity. Pupils are helped to appreciate the wonders of nature through examining bulbs as they burst into bloom or exploring the tinkling water in the sensory garden. Pupils are well prepared for their meal at lunchtime. There is a short period of calming after activities in each classroom as pupils volunteer their own brief prayers of thanks for food and a chosen grace is said or sung.
 27. The very good provision for moral development noted during the previous inspection has been maintained. Teachers' clear expectations help pupils know from an early age what is right and what is unacceptable. Parents are correct in thinking that behaviour is very good. Pupils understand that good work and behaviour and positive attitudes are praised and that unacceptable actions have consequences. Certificates of achievement celebrate kindness and sharing as well as good work. Older pupils are encouraged to develop their own class rules and to understand what they mean in real terms. Very good opportunities for choice play a significant part in helping pupils become independent and to consider cause and effect. This is particularly important for some pupils who, because of their complex needs, have restricted control over their lives. Pupils have to keep to their choice of lunchtime activity for that day and they have to commit themselves to French or German clubs for half a term. Older pupils are expected to evaluate honestly how well they complete their allocated jobs but are also guided to be sensitive in evaluating their peers' contribution to the group. Concern for the environment is demonstrated through the collection of items such as paper, cans and bottles, which pupils then take to the local recycling plant. Consideration for others is encouraged and often involves much physical effort. A sponsored run raised an impressive amount of money for the school's sponsored child in India, as did a fun school challenge to raise funds for research into childhood diseases.
 28. The social development of pupils continues to be very good. This is helped by the widespread use of alternative means of communication so that all pupils, regardless of their needs, are included in activities. Pupils have good opportunities to meet friends from other classes during well-structured lunchtime activities. Older pupils visit the Highdown café run by peers, which

gives good practice in using social skills in familiar surroundings. Staff help pupils to spend break times harmoniously with each other either browsing through books, listening to pop music or chatting informally. In the playground, they are encouraged to play together and be considerate of one another and take turns when using equipment. Pupils are given responsibilities within classes. For example, they take turns filling in the weather chart, taking the register to the office or giving out the drinks and biscuits. A few parents thought that pupils in the upper part of the school (not in the house) did not have special privileges. Staff do respond to them in a more adult way and these pupils have a variety of activities leading to independent living. Examples of this are visits to colleges, residential trips, and internal and external work experience. Parents are pleased with the emphasis placed on visits to the local community which pupils make each week. Pupils share local facilities and services and mix with the general public. For example, when visiting a local swimming pool, pupils have been taught to pay for their tickets, change in the communal changing rooms and share the pool happily with pupils from other schools. In other examples, pupils use the skills they have been taught to buy seeds at the local garden centre, eat in local cafés or visit the nearby builders' merchant. Links with former pupils are maintained and good role models observed as pupils visit the training centre, which provides stimulating commercial activities. An increasing number of pupils spend some time each week, making new friends at local mainstream schools. Work experience, either in school or in the community, and very good college courses, provide invaluable opportunities for meeting and working with different age groups. Self-esteem is raised significantly as they move with some independence around the colleges, mixing with other young adults and sharing courses and meal times with them. Successful residential experiences, such as those as the Youth Hostel in Salisbury, give students the opportunity to display the social skills they have learned throughout their time at Highdown as well as developing their skills.

29. The cultural development of pupils is very good, showing a considerable improvement in provision since the previous inspection. The school celebrates the festivals of the Christian church as well as festivals of other faiths and cultures such as Eid, Holi, Hannukah and the Chinese New Year. Music, from African drumming to Gregorian chants and pop music is used to set the mood and contribute to learning in many lessons. Traditional songs are sung during lunchtime sessions, accompanied by keyboard or guitar. Very well displayed artwork reflects the influence of European artists but also artists from around the world including native Australians. Cultural development is very well supported by visiting performing arts companies and artists in residence as well as by visits to local theatres, galleries and crafts people such as those who make stained glass. Pupils learn of their own heritage through visits such as those to the Amberley industrial museum and geography provides the opportunity to study people from around the world, for example the Inuits of the Polar Regions. Older students benefit culturally from their study of textiles and photography, which they share with mainstream students at local colleges or sixth forms.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

30. The health, care and safety of the pupils are good and support the pupils in their learning and progress. Arrangements for health and safety and child protection are good. The headteacher, who has undergone the appropriate training, is the named person for child protection. All adults are aware of the procedures and many have received training. However, there are some health and safety problems concerning the toilet arrangements. At the swimming pool, staff use the pupils' toilets and changing areas because there are no separate facilities. A number of the pupils' toilets have been improved since the last inspection but others remain unsatisfactory. There are inefficient or insufficient extraction devices. They lack facilities to help pupils gain independence in their personal hygiene. There are no changing rooms for physical education. Although boys and girls use separate classrooms, older pupils do not have sufficient privacy. The school is well looked after. Procedures for checking the swimming pool and the cleaning of the school are well managed by the site manager
31. The procedures for health and safety are effective. This ensures that the pupils are in a safe and stimulating learning environment where the care of pupils is paramount. As soon as they arrive in the morning they are met at the door and taken to the classroom. The escorts that accompany

pupils travelling to and from school act as a good link between parents and the school, bringing messages and giving relevant information.

32. Procedures for monitoring attendance are good. The education welfare officer visits regularly and is available if needed. Some information is kept on computer and shortly attendance registers will also be computerised. There is a late book and all people sign a book when arriving or leaving school; this includes groups going out on trips.
33. Staff work very well with visiting therapists and other agencies, thus ensuring that the pupils benefit from the expertise available. For example, programmes for physiotherapy are used well by staff to help pupils stretch and manipulate their limbs and bodies. Staff recommend pupils to work with a music therapist and the educational psychologist visits regularly. Provision for occupational therapy has improved considerably since the last inspection. However, despite the best efforts of the school there is currently no provision for speech and language therapy. In consequence, the requirements stated on a few statements of special educational need are not met
34. There are very good and effective ways in which staff monitor and help improve the difficult behaviour of some pupils. The behaviour policy has been updated and although in draft form, it is followed consistently throughout the school. Where appropriate very effective behaviour plans are drawn up for individual pupils. These are regularly reviewed and state clearly how to tackle difficulties. Pupils are aware that the school expects good behaviour and respond appropriately. Classroom rules are established and bullying is not tolerated. Any incidents are dealt with swiftly and effectively. The relationships between staff and pupils are very good because staff know the pupils really well. This provides a firm basis, for class teachers and support assistants to quickly be alerted should there be a problem. Any difficulties that arise are dealt with quickly and if necessary contact is made to the parent by telephone or by visit. The care and procedures for ensuring the pupils' welfare was good at the last inspection and continues to be so.
35. The procedures for assessing pupils' progress and monitoring how well they are doing remain, as at the last inspection, satisfactory overall. A policy and assessment system is in place. Targets are set for each pupil in their individual education plan. They are incorporated into shorter-term plans and daily lesson plans. Progress is recorded in detailed notes made during each lesson, which are then refined and added to the pupils' records and used to guide the writing of the next plan. Thus ensuring that they are taken into account when planning work. This is a very good system but the weakness is in the way, as at the last inspection, that it is inconsistently applied across the school. Records of pupils' achievements are in a range of forms. Many involve targets being highlighted when achieved and this indicates what pupils have learned. There are also tick lists. The records are not consistently completed or dated. It is therefore not possible to identify the rate of progress some pupils make in some subjects. The school is waiting until the curriculum guidance for pupils with learning difficulties is published to introduce new systems. In the meantime the system fails for some subjects. The quality of individual education plans is good in Key Stage 1 and Years 3 and 4. The targets are precise and easily understood, for example, 'To be able to add the eyes to a face'. Some targets in the individual education plans of pupils in Years 5 and 6 and Key Stage 3 are not as precise, which sometimes leads to them being repeated and makes pupils' progress difficult to determine. Targets set for older pupils are more specific and measurable. There is a good system of assessing progress as part of the ASDAN programme for older pupils and students.
36. Where possible, pupils are involved in assessing their own achievements and those of other pupils. The work of pupils is collected together and is annotated to form a very good indicator of progress and records of achievement are well maintained. Plans are being developed for a review of the assessment system to make it consistent throughout the school and to improve the quality of target setting and the accuracy of recording of the achievement of pupils, especially those whose progress is achieved in very small increments.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

37. The school has continued to maintain the good links with parents since the last inspection. Overall, the parents' views of the school are very positive. There was a good response to the questionnaire indicating the interest the parents have in the work of the school. Although fewer attended the pre-inspection meeting this is partly due to distances they have to travel and the need for child minding arrangements. Parents are particularly appreciative of the effort made by the staff on behalf of their children and are pleased with the good teaching and the progress their children make.
38. Parents feel they can talk to staff about any problems when they occur. A number help in the school, for example, they accompany pupils when they go on school trips and outings. There are opportunities to attend parents' evenings when speakers from various professions speak about subjects such as signing, but these evenings are not well supported. The school has tried various ideas, including coffee mornings, to encourage parents to meet together, but they do not receive a great deal of support. However, parents become involved when the pupils are taking part, for example, the Christmas pantomime. Overall the school's links with the parents are good. If there are any problems or concerns phone calls and visits to the home are made. The Highdown Association consists mainly of school staff with very few parents nevertheless a summer fair, quiz night and disco enable money to be raised for school funds.
39. The quality of information to parents is good. Newsletters are well produced and update parents regularly on the activities of the school. A parents' notice board in the entranceway also displays relevant information. There is daily communication through the home/school diary, which allows the school and the home to exchange information thus ensuring that there is a consensus of ideas and methods of achieving them. The diary is used less as children get older as a mark of their increasing independence. School reports are of good quality and together with annual reviews enable parents to understand the work that their children are doing and the progress being made. Reports for annual reviews allow time for parents to comment before the meeting or at the meeting. The school uses the opportunity to ask parents to sign home/school agreements, and this is planned to happen at each subsequent review, thus ensuring that parents, the school and where appropriate, the pupil reaffirm the agreement regularly. Both the school prospectus, which is produced in an easy to update format and governors' report to parents are informative. However, the governors' report does not meet statutory requirements because it does not report on the progress of the special educational needs policy.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

40. Leadership of the school is effective in securing good improvement since the last inspection. The headteacher has developed a clear overview plan for development over the next five years. This plan forms the basis for the annual management plan. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and governing body have worked together to ensure that developments take place. The plans ensure that the aims and values of the school are met. The recent move to dividing classes into key stage groups and appointing key stage co-ordinators has extended the senior management team. This is already showing its value in providing clear lines of communication and management. Since the last inspection the development of the role of subject co-ordinators has improved the planning and teaching of the subjects of the curriculum. There is a good commitment to improvement throughout the school and the willingness of all staff to work on new developments ensures a good capacity to succeed.
41. Management of the school is good. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and key stage co-ordinators form an extended management team. The team is already developing new ways of working that will help to raise standards in the school, for example, there are plans to ensure that key stage co-ordinators develop their skills in classroom observation. This will enable them to support staff in their departments in maintaining high quality teaching and learning. The deputy headteacher has a wide range of responsibilities for some important aspects of the school, for example daily staff deployment, staff training and analysing teachers' planning and feeding back. Her further duties include a whole school responsibility for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties and a subject responsibility for modern foreign language. Carrying out these duties has been hampered over the past term by an increased teaching commitment due to staff shortages. Subject co-ordinators are developing a clear picture of the work in their subject across

- the school and influencing it appropriately. The annual management plan for the school sets out the areas for improvement and development and those for maintenance. Where precise targets are set responsible personnel are identified. This is linked to funding and success criteria. The targets set in the plan are appropriate and link to the five-year overview, ensuring coherence.
42. Overall, the school monitors its performance well. Subject co-ordinators monitor the teachers' planning for their subject and sometimes observe colleagues in the classroom. They find this a useful exercise in developing a clear view of their subject throughout the school. The headteacher, deputy headteacher and governors all have monitoring roles, for example a governor is responsible for monitoring the provision for and progress of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties throughout the school. Careful monitoring has ensured good improvements in the standards of teaching since the last inspection. The curriculum is monitored by key stage co-ordinators but not as a whole, which is vital, to ensure there is overall breadth and a continuity from one key stage to another.
43. The induction of new staff is satisfactory. It is, at present informal and ensures that all new staff have opportunities to discuss their training needs and devise a plan that will allow them to develop their skills. Much of this work takes place in school especially with support staff, a good number of whom have gained, or are working towards, National Vocational Qualifications (NVQ). The school is at present developing a more formal system for induction and a staff handbook. Performance management and appraisal of school staff are developing appropriately with clear opportunities for staff to discuss their work and set targets for improvement. However, incomplete training for members of the senior management team has led to delay in setting objectives for all staff.
44. The governing body are active in support of the school and have good working relationships with the school's managers. They have a good committee structure and meet regularly. Several governors are very experienced. They are well informed about the work of the school and undertake an appropriate monitoring role. They visit the school informally as well as taking part in formal meetings. They have a good overview of the school and use this to help them make appropriate strategic decisions about finance and other matters. They fulfil their statutory duties well apart from ensuring the teaching of a modern foreign language to all pupils who require it and in reporting on the school's special needs policy in the annual report to parents. Additionally, the current provision of sex education and education concerning drug misuse is unsatisfactory.
45. The school makes good use of its financial resources. There are clear budget plans closely linked to the school's plans for improvement. There is a clear view by the governors of a need to improve the numbers of teachers in the school. An appropriate budget to allow this has been set. Difficulties in recruitment have led to the deputy headteacher being class based for a significant part of the week this makes carrying out management tasks significantly more difficult. However new staff appointments have been made for the summer term and budgets identified to fund them. The school has in the past used its accumulation fund, a fund of money set aside from the formula budget, to provide significant improvements and extensions to the fabric of the building. Although this fund is smaller than in the past, the school has appropriate plans to use it effectively to improve the accommodation. The school's bursar effectively manages the day to day running of the budget. This is monitored by the headteacher. The bursar also provides good quality clear information to the finance committee of the governing body to enable them to make informed judgements about the budget. Other members of the school staff have budget responsibilities. Subject leaders administer their own budgets and the deputy headteacher ensures that specific grants and training funds are well used. The school is beginning to use the principles of best value gaining quotes for purchases and comparing them and ensuring value in purchases made. They make good use of outside help and are supported both by the parent teacher association and by locally based businesses and charities. The administrative systems of the school are good and the clerical staff provides an unobtrusive but effective support system.
46. The number, qualifications and experience of the staff are well matched to the needs of the pupils and the demands of the curriculum offered by the school. Most teachers have good levels of expertise and experience. There is some difficulty in providing sufficient staff with language expertise to teach a modern foreign language but new appointments have been made to improve this situation. Overall the school is well staffed and the provision of an extra teacher from the beginning of the summer term is planned to reduce the teaching commitment of the deputy

headteacher. The comments of a few parents, that class sizes seemed too large, are not correct. The support staff employed at the school includes some local education authority funded time to meet the needs of individual pupils. This time is well used and the staff are very clear about the needs of the pupils they support. Many members of the support staff team are very experienced and have a wide range of skills that are used appropriately, for example many play musical instruments and this is used both in lessons and in choice times at lunchtime. Several members of staff have achieved accreditation for their skills through National Vocational Qualifications. This is supported by the school and ensures that staff expertise is fostered and improved.

47. In addition to the subject budgets all classes receive a small annual allowance for consumable materials. Teachers may bid for additional funds for activities provided they fit with the school development programme. Since the last inspection resource levels have improved. Resources are now adequate and at times good, in all subjects except information and communication technology, modern foreign language and geography. This is a good level of improvement since the last inspection when most subjects had inadequate resources available. Resources for pupils requiring mobility, ambulatory aids are barely adequate and some pupils share; an unsatisfactory arrangement. The school makes good use of the local environment as a resource for teaching and learning. Regular, planned visits are made to a wide range of locations in the immediate area of the school. In addition residential visits are made to locations further afield.
48. Overall, the accommodation is satisfactory. The previous report identified a number of areas requiring improvement and many of these have been addressed. For example a dedicated library area is now established, although it suffers from being open plan and at times, is not conducive to quiet reading or study. The facilities for design and technology are barely adequate; the resistant materials room is very small, contains much stored equipment, which is not part of the technology curriculum and is cluttered with too much redundant furnishings. There remains no separate provision for art and design, which limits larger scale work. The changing room and toilets in the swimming pool area also remain unsatisfactory as staff, contrary to requirements share the pupils' facilities. Although some toilets have been improved in the school, others are poorly ventilated and require modernisation to take account of the pupils' needs. Access around the school site has been improved and a building project is about to be completed which provides additional teaching areas. Parking remains an area of concern. Areas for pupils to play in are good and good attempts have been made to screen noise from passing traffic.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

49. In order to raise standards further, the headteacher, deputy headteacher, staff and governors should:
- Ensure all teachers are consistent in assessing and recording pupils' progress; (Paragraphs: 35, 69, 82, 89, 93, 101)
 - Plan what is to be taught for personal, social and health education effectively and ensure sex education is taught for secondary age pupils; (Paragraphs: 7, 21, 44, 118, 119)
 - Improve the resources for information and communication technology, geography and modern foreign language; (Paragraphs: 7, 14, 47, 83, 93, 97)
 - Meet statutory requirements by making provision for all pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 to study a modern foreign language. (Paragraphs: 7, 21, 44, 97)
 - Meet health and safety requirements by:
 - ensuring the pupils and staff do not use the same toilet and changing area as the pupils at the swimming pool;
 - improving the toilet facilities for pupils to enable pupils to gain independence in their personal hygiene;
 - improving the ventilation in the toilets. (Paragraphs: 30, 48)
50. The governors in drawing up their action plan may wish to consider the following points relating to minor weaknesses identified in the report:
- There is a very small amount of unsatisfactory teaching. (Paragraph: 13, 19)
 - Ensure the curriculum is monitored overall to bring it together as a whole. (Paragraph: 21, 42)
 - Improve the resources for pupils requiring mobility aids (Paragraph: 47)

- Comply with the requirement to report annually on the success of the school's special educational needs policy. (Paragraph: 44)
- Continue to pursue the provision of speech and language therapy to ensure provision set out in statements of special educational need are met. (Paragraph: 33)
- Improve conditions in those toilets that are unsatisfactory. (Paragraph: 30, 48)
- Improve the facilities for changing for physical education. (Paragraph: 30, 108)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	109
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	50

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6	28	53	11	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	Y1-14
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)	107
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	22

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs	Y1-Y14
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs	107
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register	107

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.24
National comparative data	N/A

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.19
National comparative data	N/A

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stages 1

Insufficient pupils to record attainment

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

Teacher Assessments		
	Working towards Level 1	Level 1
English	12	1
Mathematics	12	1
Science	12	1

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

Insufficient pupils to record attainment

Accreditation at Post-16

ASDAN Youth Award Scheme

Towards Independence Modules 1999 - 2000

Number of students gaining certificates

Starting Out 4

Printing 6

Current Affairs 4

Ethnic background of pupils

(of school age)

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	3
Chinese	0
White	83
Any other minority ethnic group	3

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	0	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: Y1 – Y14

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	15.8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6.77
Average class size	8.91

Education support staff: Y1 – Y14

Total number of education support staff	29
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Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	985429
Total expenditure	980832
Expenditure per pupil	9167

Total aggregate hours worked per week	912
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FTE means full-time equivalent.

Balance brought forward from previous year	-572
Balance carried forward to next year	4025

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	105
Number of questionnaires returned	53

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	77	19	0	0	4
My child is making good progress in school.	43	47	8	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	42	47	6	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	28	13	2	32
The teaching is good.	66	32	2	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	57	34	9	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	74	26	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	42	51	2	2	4
The school works closely with parents.	57	34	8	2	0
The school is well led and managed.	55	28	8	4	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	43	40	2	6	9
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	36	23	15	6	21

Other issues raised by parents

Parents expressed concerns about the lack of speech and language therapy in the school. A few felt there were not enough opportunities made for older pupils to feel part of the senior school. The size of classes was felt to be too large by a few parents.

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

ENGLISH

51. Good standards are achieved in English. Pupils in all key stages and students in Highdown House make good progress in speaking and listening, reading and writing. As found at the last inspection, the school places a considerable emphasis on the development of communication skills and dedicates a good proportion of curriculum time to English. However the influence of the National Literacy Strategy has led to some changes in teaching methods and a focus on developing literacy skills. As a result improvement in the subject since the last inspection is significant. Other factors that have contributed to higher standards include well-planned work for individual pupils, careful recording and analysis of progress and good quality teaching.
52. By the time they are seven, more able pupils listen and respond well to instructions, for example passing toys and objects during communication groups. They read along to stories, turning pages with the teacher and learning to use the mouse when listening to interactive stories on the computer. They begin to learn to write, demonstrating good control of pencils as they draw circles and straight lines. Less able pupils increase the number of signs and objects they respond to and learn to operate communication aids. These pupils respond positively to stories that include sensory experiences that involve them more actively. They enjoy manipulating play dough into shapes as part of their early writing experiences. By the time they are 11, pupils improve their communication skills through memory games and by joining in action songs and rhymes. All pupils show a great interest in books and the most able recognise familiar words, symbols and characters in the reading scheme. Some of these pupils are also beginning to write their own sentences using personal dictionaries to help them spell. Less able pupils develop writing skills by drawing straight lines in shaving foam and sand.
53. By the time they are 14, many pupils listen attentively and answer questions thoughtfully. They learn to use the telephone in emergencies, giving information carefully. In literacy lessons many are able to recognise rhyming words in the poems they study. Some read simple stories for pleasure. They talk and write about their interests and experiences, some copying from the teacher's model, others independently writing sentences neatly. Many pupils write sentences using computers that produce text alongside symbols. By the time they leave school, some students take part in role-play and consider ways in which people communicate their feelings to each other. Others pay attention and express their delight during sensory stories. For example during a dramatic reading of "The aliens are coming", students watched carefully as the aliens marched past them. More able students read for information as well as pleasure and complete portfolios of work for vocational courses.
54. In over 80 per cent of lessons teaching and learning are good and sometimes very good. However there are some small variations in teachers' skills, notably for pupils under seven years old, where there are a few instances of unsatisfactory and less effective teaching. There are very good relationships between staff and pupils and a good understanding of pupils' needs. This enables teachers to set highly appropriate learning targets for individuals in English. The majority of lessons are planned meticulously to provide instruction and practice aimed at helping pupils to achieve their goals. Classroom assistants often work with small groups or individuals and they make a significant contribution to pupils' success. In the best lessons teachers carefully record and analyse any progress and they summarise the pupils' learning in well-designed assessment folders. There is clear enjoyment of learning, particularly when teachers use resources imaginatively. For example lovely puppets and soft toys increase pupils' interest in the characters in the reading scheme. Apparatus made by teachers using text, symbols and pictures, is very effective in helping some pupils to read. The digital camera is used extensively as a stimulus to writing. Photographs are routinely taken during school trips and transferred to worksheets to inspire pupils to record their experiences.
55. Good use is made of set routines, for example at the beginning of the day. Good organisation and planning ensure that activities are set out on tables and that staff are well briefed. As pupils enter the classroom they are secure and know what is expected. They settle to work

immediately, often benefiting from one-to-one attention from the teacher or classroom assistants. These early morning sessions are often most productive. Communication groups are also effective because they are small and pupils are set for ability. During these sessions close attention is paid to developing speaking and listening skills. Small learning steps are identified and teaching and learning activities are focused on the achievement of these targets. Particular attention has been paid to the development of reading and as a result there have been improvements in resources and the library. The development of stories that include sensory experiences has been noteworthy and enabled pupils with profound and multiple difficulties to enjoy books and participate actively. A similar focus on writing is planned for the future. Drama is used most effectively to help pupils understand difficult concepts. For example pupils learning about deserts in geography, imagine travelling through a hot and arid climate. The teacher's skilful involvement and example help pupils pretend to be exhausted as they crawl through the desert in search of water.

56. On the few occasions when teaching is less than satisfactory, members of staff do not work effectively as a team. Roles and responsibilities are not clearly planned with the result that pupils become confused as teachers and assistants interrupt each other.
57. All other subjects contribute to the good learning that takes place in English. For example in religious education story telling is used to inspire pupils. In swimming lessons, rhymes are used very effectively and pupils learn positional words such as up, down, front and back as they improve their swimming strokes. In mathematics, pupils describe sections of fruit as they learn about symmetry. In all areas of the curriculum pupils record what they do by writing about their activities.
58. There have been significant improvements in English since the last inspection. The co-ordinator now monitors the work of teachers more closely and tracks pupils' progress in English. As a result there is a more consistent approach to teaching the subject. Members of staff make good use of their training in specialist teaching methods and structured approaches to learning. There is an increase in the number of books and resources and the library has been developed. Elements of the National Literacy Strategy have been incorporated into the curriculum but there is still scope to improve teachers' understanding of these methods and to develop the initiative further.

MATHEMATICS

59. Overall, standards of achievement and progress are good in mathematics. During Key Stages 1 and 2 they are satisfactory and they are good at Key Stage 3. At Key Stages 4 and at Post-16 achievement and progress in mathematics are very good, reflecting the enthusiastic, imaginative and very good teaching these pupils receive. Improved progress in numeracy is linked to the introduction of a modified National Numeracy Framework across the school. This works particularly well at Key Stage 2 when pupils are grouped by ability for numeracy sessions. Since the last inspection satisfactory improvement has been made.
60. By the time they are seven, more able pupils can recognise and sort numbers to 20, pointing out where numbers are missing from a number line. They can add 13 and 7 and recognise and name common two-dimensional shapes. Less able pupils count one and two and sometimes three. They will put balls into a box, clap hands with a special support assistant and match two similar pictures. They understand what is meant by 'up and down', 'over and under', 'on and in' and 'full and empty'. By the age of 11, more able pupils count to beyond 20 and understand the concept of 'one more' and 'one less'. Most can calculate with single digit numbers, some using their fingers to help, and write numbers zero to nine. They can sort into sets and understand how simple pictographs can be interpreted. Less able pupils can match pictures, complete inset puzzles and undertake pegboard and sorting activities. They begin to recognise number through one-to-one correspondence. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties experience mathematics through cause and effect in the sensory room using touch screen and switches.
61. By the time they are 14, more able pupils recognise and name coins and notes and are beginning to recognise the difference in value between, for example, the one penny and two pence coins.

They can write numbers to ten and add one and two giving three as the answer. They count squares carefully to copy a pattern accurately from one side to the other side of the line of symmetry and can collect data, representing their results by symbols. Less able pupils develop their ability to find 'hidden' toys and place objects in a box. By the age of 16, more able pupils follow symbols to distinguish the timetable for the school day and know the time in whole hours. They count to one pound in tens using ten pence coins, recognising and naming all coins and are becoming aware that ten one penny coins are equivalent to one ten pence coin and complete simple addition to 20 pence. Less able pupils recognise the one pound and 50 pence coins most of the time and can count confidently to two and sometimes to three. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties are able to communicate likes and dislikes through signs and sounds and anticipate familiar routines. By the time they leave school, more able pupils add coins to one pound confidently and calculate the change from five pounds using whole pounds. They know, for example, that 21 pence is one penny more than 20 pence. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties use information and communication technology to explore cause and effect. They match pictures and sounds, confidently moving the cursor on the screen. Some clearly understand ideas of place, for example, up and down, under and in and have developed a sense of direction.

62. Numeracy is taught satisfactorily in subjects other than mathematics. For example, during registration pupils learn to order the day in relation to the activities they will undertake and count those present. In an English lesson, a pupil counted the number of words he had recognised correctly. Pupils are able to recognise and name accurately a square, circle and triangle in a science lesson. Measurement of length occurs in design and technology. Older pupils organise a café and use a calculator to work out the cost of the goods purchased and the change to be given. Although some software to support mathematical learning is used, the co-ordinator plans to improve these resources.
63. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is good, but not consistently so. It is sometimes very good and occasionally excellent, though also, occasionally, teaching is unsatisfactory. Teaching is satisfactory at Key Stages 1 and 2, good at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4 and at Post-16. Enthusiastic teachers make a lively and prompt start with a well planned and executed mental exercise to focus the pupils on the subject and activities. This interests and helps all pupils in the class to learn. In one class they learnt to classify the contents of a tube of coloured sweets by colour, recording their results in the form of a bar graph. Learning is reinforced effectively at the end of the lesson by a plenary session where pupils are praised and rewarded for their efforts. Staff take the opportunity to check that pupils have understood what they have done. Pupils show their work to peers with great pleasure and others respond well to their success. However, several lessons are not well timed so that the plenary session is either too short or missing altogether if pupils return to the class from other groups. In most lessons there is very good teamwork between teachers and support staff, very good relationships between pupils and adults and pupils display good attitudes to their work. The grouping of pupils by ability is also helping to raise standards of achievement in the subject, as it enables the teachers to match what is being taught more closely to the needs of the pupils. These aspects are having a very positive effect and helping pupils to make good progress. Pupils are well managed, resources used well, and changes of activities well timed, resulting in interested pupils participating fully in their work. Support staff are effective. They often pre-empt potentially difficult situations arising, thus avoiding confrontations or problems in class. Through the good role models of staff, and the many activities which demand taking turns, working together, co-operating, collaborating, and thinking about the needs of others, mathematics contributes well to the moral and social development of pupils. In the lesson where teaching and learning were unsatisfactory, a short group session led to disruption when pupils changed from one activity to another and were distracted by a large drum, which caught the imagination of the pupils rather than the organised activity. Currently no homework is set to support pupils' learning in the classroom.
64. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection. The co-ordinator is effective and has produced a good annual subject report and subject improvement plan. He has supported teachers well in the introduction of the numeracy hour and has monitored teaching and learning during these times. A scheme of work has been written and introduced, though the co-ordinator is expecting to revise and re-write this when further national guidance is received. The previous report's recommendation to increase resources has been implemented, though further

improvement is planned, particularly in the quantity and quality of software to support the teaching of mathematics through information and communication technology. Teachers keep accurate records of pupils' attainment and use this information when planning future work, but usually these records are undated, so that it is difficult to recognise rates of progress. Older pupils have the opportunity to receive a nationally accredited award through the ASDAN Scheme of which one section is numeracy. Pupils' progress in mathematics is generally reported clearly to parents in pupils' annual reviews, which show what pupils can do, understand and know.

SCIENCE

65. Pupils' achievement and progress in science are good overall. During Key Stage 4 pupils are taught science through the ASDAN programme and not as a separate subject but the level of achievement in the science elements is similarly good.
66. During Key Stage 1, pupils learn to use their senses to explore and develop understanding of the world. They experience a range of light sources and darkness within the sensory stimulation rooms. A range of food and fruit is used to stimulate feeling, smelling and tasting. Seeds are planted to enable pupils to feel soil and develop understanding of the growth of plants. They use their bodies and play pushing and pulling games to develop understanding of forces, balance, space and weight. Throughout Key Stage 2, pupils further develop and extend understanding gained in Key Stage 1. They grow a range of plants and many make written records of their work. They learn that sun, rain and water are necessary for plant growth. Pupils learn that materials can be sorted into sub-groups, for instance bread comes in many forms and can have several uses. Their skills of investigation and experimentation are developed through testing the absorbency of a range of different kinds of paper. Their knowledge of animals is extended from farm animals to exotic ones such as elephants and giraffes. Visits are made to centres such as the Sea Life Centre in Brighton. Good use is made of facilities in the local area in all key stages and these include environmental centres, woods, beaches and fruit and vegetable farms.
67. Pupils continue to develop the use of their senses and thinking skills during Key Stage 3. They are able to understand sounds in different settings. More able pupils know that water can be a solid, a gas or a liquid depending on the temperature. Most can sort materials according to their texture and smell. Their ability to record their work increases as their ability to use signs develops. Pupils have a developing understanding of human bodies and many can label a number of the external parts. They know the function of teeth and how to look after them. No teaching of science was seen in Key Stage 4 and at Post-16. However a scrutiny of pupils' records of progress shows how science topics build upon previous learning as pupils' ability to learn increases. They again study plants but this time they learn about taking cuttings and compost, bulbs and different kinds and sizes of seeds. They learn of plants from cool, warm and very hot countries and make visits to garden centres.
68. The teaching and learning of science are good overall and always at least satisfactory. The planning of lessons is effective overall although there is no standardised way of planning and therefore quality varies from teacher to teacher. However, where there is a variety of activities and a good match to the needs of the pupils, they maintain concentration and learn well. Relationships between teachers, assistants and pupils are very good. Staff show a high level of warmth and care for pupils and pupils respond by working very hard and behaving very well. In many lessons, staff have high expectations and use science to develop literacy, language and numeracy. They very skilfully develop pupils' understanding and create opportunities to stimulate further learning. For example, pupils recognise their reflection in mirrors and are able to concentrate and show pleasure. They respond to requests to throw balloons and catch them. Pupils with additional special needs work with a very high level of independence and maintain concentration on their task for relatively long periods. Staff help pupils to carefully measure out flour and water and to draw conclusions about the thickness of the mixture and its texture. Although pace is maintained staff are careful to ensure pupils are given time to consider alternatives and to come to conclusions. When learning about parachutes, for example, pupils make predictions as to which shape will be most effective. They decide how they will test their predictions and then how to evaluate and record the results of their practical tests. Pupils work collaboratively and listen to each other carefully.

69. Leadership and management of science by the co-ordinator are satisfactory. There are schemes of work and a policy has been written. Staff are monitored by the co-ordinator who looks at termly plans. The scheme of work is currently under review to take account of developments in published science schemes. The co-ordinator is planning how to review thoroughly the recording of achievement and progress in science. The review the co-ordinator has planned is intended to achieve two goals. Firstly, to ensure that the science targets in individual education plans are precise and will enable pupils' progress to be very accurately measured. Secondly, to ensure that the recording system is capable of fully recording the achievements and rate of progress of all pupils at all attainment levels. Resources are satisfactory, well organised and readily available to staff. This is a very good improvement since the last inspection when resources were poor. However, the use of new technology is unsatisfactory as there are no science CD ROMs or interactive information and communication technology available. Only a very small use of computers was observed in science lessons.

ART AND DESIGN

70. Standards of achievement and pupils' progress in art and design are good throughout all key stages. Although lessons were only observed in Key Stages 1 and 2, scrutiny of pupils' work, displays around the school and discussions with staff and pupils shows that the good standards are maintained right through the school including Post-16. Improvements in the subject have been good; at the time of the last inspection standards were satisfactory.
71. During Key Stage 1 pupils work in a range of media. The very youngest pupils finger paint and explore other tactile experiences, for example a group of Years 1 and 2 pupils were delighted to be able to put their hands into a tray of paint mixed with wood shavings, others finger painted onto a range of smooth and coarse surfaces. They work with glue and are developing some understanding of how a picture can be made by sticking various materials together. Less able pupils overcome their aversion to working with messy resources and learn to tolerate, for example, having hands covered with wet paint or glue. By the time they are aged seven, pupils have experienced a wide range of art and design. They can choose where to place materials in collage work, use different textures, for example bubble wrap to create a painted pattern, and have some understanding of how they can choose to improve a piece of work, for example, by using more than one colour of paint. Throughout Key Stage 2, pupils develop and refine their skills, less able pupils become more confident in using materials they find difficult, such as liquid glue whilst more able pupils explore new media, such as papier mâché. For example, a class of Year 6 and 7 pupils model polar landscapes as part of a cross-curricular study of the Polar Region. By the time pupils are aged eleven they have the ability to use scissors and paint brushes freely and more able pupils are able, for example to print on cloth using rollers and sponges, producing a multicoloured tablecloth in the process. Scrutiny of work in Key Stages 3 and 4 and at Post-16 shows the high standards are maintained and built on. New media are introduced and there are many fine examples of pupils' work on display using clay, card, paper and recycled materials. Examples of pupils' painting show their increasing ability to appreciate beauty and quality of finished work. Work produced for sale by Post-16 students as part of their Team Enterprise activity is of high standard.
72. The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed is good, this represents an improvement since the time of the last inspection and has clearly contributed to the rise in the standards of pupils' work. There is evidence of careful planning in all art and design lessons particularly in terms of ensuring that pupils of different abilities and needs are catered for during the lesson. Teachers and support staff are very good at demonstrating techniques and they allow pupils to become messy in the course of the activity in order to meet the learning objective. For example in one lesson pupils were encouraged to feel the sensation of putting their hands into wet paint. Initially this resulted in their faces becoming painted but good humoured and prompt support ensured this did not disturb pupils. More able pupils are encouraged to experiment, for example in a Year 6 class pupils were encouraged to see what happened when they used a paint roller rather than a brush or sponge. Pupils responded well to the good teaching and their awareness that they are involved in a new activity maintained their interest in learning. They

clearly enjoy art and design lessons and behave very well. They complete tasks and show pride in the finished work.

73. The curriculum is good although currently under review to ensure that it is up-to-date and takes account of development within the National Curriculum. The subject is taught as a discrete subject but many good cross-curricular links are in evidence. The art programme is planned to cover a wide range of activities and it is very relevant to pupils' abilities and needs. The subject is very well managed by two co-ordinators who have good insight into the role that art plays in pupils' development; they have good subject knowledge and are very enthusiastic. A subject review has recently been undertaken, the findings of which are currently being addressed. Resources for art and design are good, however, the absence of a specialist room means that some opportunities within the subject are lost, for example large scale work which can be stored for pupils to work on over time, or pottery which can be fired using a kiln.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

74. Pupils' achievements and progress throughout the school are good. Although no lessons were observed in Key Stage 4 and at Post-16, displays of work, pupils' portfolios and discussion with staff and pupils confirms the good achievement and progress observed in other key stages is maintained. Since the last inspection standards in design and technology have improved, from being satisfactory they are now good in all key stages.
75. During Key Stage 1, pupils are experiencing the manipulation of a range of different materials using their hands and more able pupils are able to state their preference for the feel of, for example, paint or clay rather than more resistant materials. By the age of seven, most pupils have become used to handling different materials and some with resistance to new tactile experiences are becoming more comfortable with a range of new tactile sensations, for example the feel of flour on their hands during food technology lessons. In food technology lessons, all pupils through tasting are able to indicate likes and dislikes. During Key Stage 2 pupils continue to explore a range of technological experiences. They learn to use scissors and cut and stick making a range of simple products such as cards. They begin to explore design issues, for example they communicate their own ideas for making a snack and indicate preferences for filling and type of bread. By the age of 11, all pupils have mastered simple technological processes such as cutting sticking and more able pupils are showing increased co-ordination in their manual dexterity, which in turn enables them to make things to a higher standard. For example, they can cut along a line and colour within a shape. In food technology pupils understand the mixing of ingredients is an important part of preparing food; in one Year 4 class the more able pupils identify the ingredients for the pancakes they were making, whilst the least able pupils know that the frying pan will be hot. During Key Stage 3 pupils' work shows evidence of previous learning. They further develop skills such as sticking, mixing and cutting and by the age of 14, pupils have experienced working with resistant materials. One Year 9 class in making a small wooden box indicated they knew the importance of the accurate cutting of the sides. The more able pupils understand the importance of gluing and allowing the glue to set. In food technology pupils in another Year 9 class asked pertinent questions during the making of pancakes. For example, "Can you put two pancakes in the pan?" and "How hot is the oil?" During Key Stage 3, pupils' appreciation of design matures. In the making of a small box, pupils have clear ideas of how they wish to decorate it. During Key Stage 4 and in the Post-16 department, pupils produce work showing maturity and an understanding of standards and quality. Through the Team Enterprise scheme, students appreciate that if they wish to sell products, then they need to be of a certain quality. More able pupils can articulate this clearly. Throughout design and technology, in all key stages, pupils' ability to concentrate and listen, to follow instructions and to work with care is successfully fostered.
76. Teaching and learning in design and technology are good and have improved since the last inspection in that they are more consistently good across the school. Teachers' planning and the way they organise lessons and address the subject content are good and shows they have sufficient and sometimes very good understanding of the subject. Teachers exercise great care in interpreting the curriculum requirements, in such a way the needs of all pupils are met and activities are appropriate to the age and ability of the pupils. Teachers use good cross-curricular

approaches, for example weighing and counting in food technology and using art and design processes in the manufacture of models. Teachers pay good attention to pupils with additional special educational needs. For example in a Year 9 class assembling boxes, one boy whose physical co-ordination ability excluded him from hammering nails, nevertheless was given a hammer and a piece of wood so that he could experience the sound and sensation of the activity. Pupils respond well in lessons. They clearly enjoy the concept of making things and the support and encouragement, which teachers and support staff provide. Pupils try very hard, often overcoming great obstacles in their efforts to make things. The good quality teaching and support have a major effect on the work pupils produce in practical lessons and the evident enjoyment they show.

77. The curriculum is good. It provides a wide range of experiences, is an effective interpretation of National Curriculum requirements and is very relevant to pupils' needs. The subject is very well managed by the two subject co-ordinators who both have high standards and expectations and very good understanding of, and enthusiasm for, the subject. Resources are adequate but facilities are poor. It is testament to the efforts of the two co-ordinators and all other staff that standards in the subject are high, given the lack of an appropriate workshop area for work with resistant materials. The current room is very small, cluttered and used for storing audiovisual equipment and the food technology room has been used as a class base and is a main thoroughfare through the school. Schemes of work and subject documentation are being developed. A subject review of good quality has recently been undertaken and advice sought from outside agencies.

GEOGRAPHY

78. Pupils' achievement and progress in geography are good during Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. Geography is not a required subject for pupils in Key Stage 4 and at Post-16, although they have some provision for the subject through the nationally accredited ASDAN scheme. There were few opportunities to observe geography during the previous inspection so no comparison can be made about progress, attitudes or teaching from the report.
79. From first entering the school pupils learn about the weather. They choose from a range of pictures that best show the weather for the day. Their best learning comes from experience, however. They go outside in all weathers and in all seasons to explore weather for themselves. Seeing and feeling the effect of wind was obviously fun as pupils watched kite tails blowing in the sensory garden and held on tightly to their windmills. They watched and listened to the wind chimes and trailed their fingers through trickling water. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties show clearly by their expressions their likes and dislikes as the wind blows them on Worthing seafront. More physically able pupils explore the classroom and school with confidence. They can find their way to assembly and take messages to the school office. Weekly outings help them understand that buildings have different purposes and to recognise and name a range of transport.
80. Pupils continue to benefit from learning by experience throughout Key Stage 2. They learn about different styles of houses by visiting the homes of their peers. A topic on 'journeys' provides the stimulus to visit Shoreham airport and to use boats during structured water play. Pupils learn mapping skills as they compile their daily timetable using symbols. Building work at school complements work on 'changing environments' as pupils anticipate the completion of new classrooms. The language of the oldest pupils in this key stage is developed as they explore materials. They are keen to hold and name bricks, tiles and wood and to identify them solely by touch. Pupils display interest and good levels of independence as they work in pairs at the computer, sharing pictures taken with the digital camera on a visit to a construction site. Pupils of all abilities, including those with English as an additional language, make good progress because activities are planned so well to meet individual needs.
81. The recent adoption of an appropriately harder curriculum has contributed well to the progress being made by pupils during Key Stage 3. They not only learn about their local area but they begin to compare it with contrasting areas overseas. Pupils use simple reference books and develop information communication skills as they consult talking encyclopaedias to find out about

animals, weather and people in regions such as the Arctic and Antarctic or dry, desert lands. More able pupils write simple sentences such as 'penguins eat fish' or suggest that polar bears are 'furry and white' to help label the excellent displays, which contribute so well to learning.

82. Teaching and learning are strengths in geography. Teaching is imaginative, ensures all pupils are included in the lesson and ensures warm relationships are fostered. Very good methods are used to capture the pupils' interest and contribute to their very good attitudes as well as ensuring their understanding. The constant use of signs and symbols reinforce speech, and the close involvement of the high quality support staff helps to keep pupils with additional special needs on task. Pupils' behaviour is dealt with well which helps to ensure that time is used effectively. In a very good lesson focused questioning and an effective demonstration helped pupils predict, then understand, that the bulk of icebergs lie below the surface of the sea. Drama was used well in another lesson where the story of Noah's Ark was re-enacted with enthusiastic sound effects as pupils were taught about the consequences of too much rain. Although lesson planning is a strength, assessment of how well pupils are doing is not consistently good. Simple, dated records indicating the skills and understanding gained have not yet been established throughout the school.
83. There is sufficient time allocated to geography, which is taught for two terms out of three and rotates with history. Leadership of the subject is good, showing improvement since the last inspection. The co-ordinators are keen and open-minded, encouraging staff to share their ideas and expertise. Teachers' planning is monitored and a small amount of formal observation of lessons takes place. The co-ordinators are sensibly hoping to maintain successful elements of their own devised curriculum and incorporate them into the newly adopted EQUALS curriculum. This will be planned on a two-year cycle to take account of mixed age classes. A wide range of visits, orienteering in the local area and a residential trip to Salisbury support the curriculum well. Resources for the subject, whilst improved, are still insufficient for the age and ability of all pupils or to support the developing curriculum satisfactorily. This was identified as a weakness at the last inspection

HISTORY

84. No comparisons can be made on improvements in the quality of teaching and pupils' progress as no judgements were made in relation to these areas. During this inspection no teaching was observed at Key Stage 1. Judgements based on lessons seen in Key Stages 2 and 3, planning, teachers' records, displays, video evidence, photographs and annual review reports, indicate that very good achievement and progress are made by most pupils.
85. During Key Stage 1, pupils are introduced to history through daily routines, and the sequencing of daily events. By the time pupils are seven, most have made very good progress and developed a growing awareness of self and others. They respond to visual stimulus and can sequence events in a simple series, developing a sense of time passing. For example, more able pupils in simple terms are able to understand that the past exists when they see old toys and have a growing sense of enquiry.
86. Throughout Key Stage 2, pupils continue to make very good progress. This is because the use of stimulating resources, enriching experiences and intensive teaching by staff, which encourages pupils to explore a range of activities and increasingly develop their skills. By the age of 11, pupils increasingly recognise that life in the past was different, for example through their study of old homes. Well-planned activities supported by a rich variety of resources such as old bricks and pieces of flint, photographs of an old manor house, followed by a visit to the house, are used very effectively to help pupils learn. More able pupils were really interested by these resources. They understood that 'plastic was not used in house building in the past' and could say in simple terms, that heating and lighting was different also. Greatly enjoying the subsequent visit they asked simple but relevant questions of the owner, such as 'who lived here before?' Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties show curiosity when touching the stones and were able to sort the materials into old and new.

87. This very good progress continues during Key Stage 3, where pupils study life in Tudor and Victorian Times. Again resources, activities and visits illuminate the subject and provide exciting experiences, which prompt all pupils to gain knowledge. Pupils recognise the main characters in the periods and recall pertinent facts, such as the difference in the lives of rich and poor people in the time, the main characters and sequence of the main events. Observations of lessons and videos show pupils totally engrossed in the various activities, while drama, and art are used very effectively to enrich and reinforce pupils' learning. For example, pupils of all abilities played roles in a Victorian drama wearing costumes. Using actual Victorian items in a Victorian house and gardens, pupils re-enacted the lives of poor people sleeping on simple beds and toiling hard in the fields collecting potatoes while the rich owner was attended by servants. Visits and activities such as these have ensured that pupils are achieving high standards in relation to their abilities.
88. Teaching and learning overall are very good, in all key stages, with some excellent teaching seen. Teachers' very careful planning that uses a wide range of activities and resources makes a difference to the learning of the pupils. All are actively involved and their enthusiasm and confidence grows. Cross-curricular links, in particular the use of drama, videos, art and visits are very beneficial. The contribution made by the support staff is significant and teachers ensure that they are not only fully briefed as to their part in lessons but actively help learning. In one excellent lesson, music, Tudor spices and herbs created a stimulating 'Tudor atmosphere' with pupils totally engrossed in a variety of activities for over an hour. During this time comments such as 'Tudor ladies must have had sore fingers', when making a clove pomander, indicates the depth of pupils' appreciation of that period in history. Evidently proud of their achievements pupils eagerly discussed their workbooks recalling the names of characters and events of the time.
89. The subject is managed very well and has developed effectively since the last inspection. Teachers have been very ably supported to develop their teaching skills and their confidence to use a variety of approaches when teaching history, which has raised standards. The scheme of work has been further developed since the last inspection and resources have been improved and are now adequate. The co-ordinator has appropriately identified the need to further develop these, to support the revised scheme of work fully and further to develop assessments to indicate progress in skills better. Although the scheme of work has been recently revised and is appropriately broad and balanced this does require some further minimal adjustment, to take fully into account the recently revised National Curriculum.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

90. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress in information and communication technology. Despite the lack of adequate computers, software and peripherals, at times, progress is good, for example, older pupils and students learn to use sophisticated presentation software.
91. During Key Stage 1, pupils learn to produce a desired effect using information and communication technology, for example, they complete picture building programs and operate lights in the white room. Pupils operate switches and improve the accuracy of their touch. By the time they are seven, a number have learnt to communicate using a grid and symbols. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties use switches and touch screens to operate cause and effect programs and toys. Big Macks are used to communicate in greetings sessions and to indicate choices. Many pupils learn to use a digital camera successfully during Key Stage 2. They develop mouse control using interactive stories. Most improve understanding of cause and effect. By the end of the key stage, pupils have experienced the downloading of digital pictures and a few are beginning to copy type simple sentences. They use a program for writing using symbols, some with help, to illustrate their work. Pupils enter records into a simple database and compile menus and shopping lists. They select and load programs using a mouse. Throughout Key Stage 3, pupils build on the skills they have learnt. Many locate and run their favourite programs, and improve control of the mouse. Records show pupils have used a 'foamer' in the past to experiment with entering accurate directions, controlling movement. By the end of the key stage, they have used the INTERNET with assistance to get information and to download pictures for projects. Pupils use art programs to design pictures with changes of colour and design. Working alongside staff some pupils dictate sentences, which are produced using the symbols program, other pupils continue to copy type their work. A few pupils make very good progress, for

example, moving from using a touch screen to using a mouse in a short period of time. During Key Stage 4, pupils use the digital camera increasingly as part of their work. They are able to take pictures, some with a steady hand, and many print a picture from a file. They enjoy seeing themselves on the screen. More able pupils use word processing programs including a symbols writing program effectively. Touch screens are used well and by the end of the key stage most know how to make changes on the screen either from direct touch or through a mouse or keyboard command. Students older than 16 have good opportunities at college to improve their information and communication technology skills. They use a range of programs, for example, 'Power Point' to present their work in a professional way. Students with profound and multiple learning difficulties work hard to operate a Big Mack. One pupil improved his co-ordination and control successfully through tracing the route of a car on a touch screen to park it in the garage.

92. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. This is largely because the expertise of the staff has improved considerably since the last inspection, through good quality training. This ensures they feel confident using information and communication technology to help pupils learn in most areas of the curriculum. Staff use their skills effectively to provide tailor made materials for pupils. For example, a story is enlarged, encased in plastic and used with symbols to ensure a pupil is reading words, rather than guessing from the picture. Staff use questions well to encourage pupils to try things for themselves. They prompt pupils using the equipment in the light room to look and touch. As far as possible they encourage pupils to be independent in their use of information and communication technology. To operate switches, touch screens and a mouse without staff support. Well placed praise and encouragement ensures pupils do not slow down or give up when the going gets tough. Because pupils are interested in what they are doing they are very well behaved and very good attitudes towards their work. They like to demonstrate their skills, running through a counting program or pointing out 'their bit' in the rules program. The role of support staff is invaluable to the successful learning of pupils. They work with individuals or small groups and a number have developed a good level of technical expertise to help when there are malfunctions.
93. The co-ordination of the subject is effective and many new skills have been introduced over the last two years. The programme of staff training has been very effective and plans for the development of the subject are very good. This includes the provision of a clear plan of what will be taught throughout the school and revised recording sheet to ensure pupils' progress can be tracked from key stage to key stage. Currently, recording of progress is unsatisfactory as tick sheets are not consistently completed and targets set on individual education plans for some classes are the same for all pupils. This too does not provide a clear measure of progress. Whilst up-to-date computers have been purchased, previous machines have been retained with pertinent software and very good use is being made of them. However, in contrast to the last inspection, when resources were sufficient, they are now inadequate in terms of computers, software and peripherals and this is preventing pupils achieving higher standards. There are insufficient up-to-date computers for every classroom and there are no touch screens to fit them. The co-ordinators plan to audit the switches and other peripheral equipment but again much is not compatible with the new hardware.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

French and German

94. The progress and achievement of the two groups of pupils from Key Stage 3 who are taught a foreign language are good. One class has a weekly lesson in French and another group of pupils make a choice to study German as one of their lunchtime options. They make this choice for at least a half term.
95. The pupils who are learning French can greet each other and the teacher and can remember the phrase for please. They learn how to ask for something and enjoy trying simple French foods such as croissants and baguette. The pupils learning German make good progress in their studies learning the greetings for different times of the day so that they can say good morning,

good evening or good night. They concentrate hard when watching the video and answer questions enthusiastically enjoying practising the new words they have learned.

96. Teaching and learning of French are satisfactory and teaching and learning of German are good. The planning for both languages is good and clearly sets out objectives for the lessons. This is helpful to pupils as they have a clear idea of what they must do. The methods used for teaching French are satisfactory. The pupils listen carefully to the questions the teacher asks and reply confidently. However much of the teaching is carried out using English and praise and reinforcement is often in English. This detracts from pupils' opportunities to hear the language spoken by others. The methods used for teaching German are good the teacher uses German in her teaching, for example praise is given as 'sehr gut,' (very good) often supplemented with signing so that pupils have good opportunities to hear the language and understand what is being said to them. Assessment of progress made during German lessons is by careful questioning and making notes of new skills shown by individual pupils. Teaching in both languages effectively uses resources and staff skills to help pupils make progress. The pace of the lessons helps pupils to maintain their concentration and they try hard when taking part or answering questions. Pupils behave well and obviously enjoy taking part in the lessons they are keen to take worksheets to complete as homework.
97. The co-ordinator for modern foreign language is very committed to developing the subject further. However staff vacancies have meant that there have been gaps in the expertise of teachers, so pupils' opportunities to make progress in the longer term have been unsatisfactory. There is no provision in the timetable to teach a modern foreign language to all pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4. The school has been unable to make arrangements that focus on a language and give pupils opportunities to consolidate their learning over a period of time. Although improved, the resources available remain insufficient for the wider group of pupils. The school is aware that they fail to meet statutory requirements with regard to pupils studying a modern foreign language.

MUSIC

98. Pupils' progress and achievement in music are good in Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. It is very good in Key Stage 4 and for Post-16 students. This is because teaching is very good and there are good opportunities for students to study music in a college environment. Music is used throughout the school to enhance learning in a variety of other curriculum areas, for example, singing is used in mathematics to reinforce counting and in French lessons pupils use well-known songs to practise the new language. Music is also used to help create atmosphere in subjects such as religious education. An important use of music is as a therapy. The school has a music therapist for one morning per week. Many of the school staff including support assistants have very good musical skills, which are used in lessons. Staff join in activities at lunchtime when pupils make music and sing with very obvious pleasure. Music contributes well to pupils' personal, spiritual, social and cultural development throughout the school.
99. Key Stage 1 pupils know a variety of hello and goodbye songs. They react very positively to these songs clearly understanding their significance in the lesson and responding appropriately. They can play a variety of instruments. Most pupils know that some instruments need to be blown to create a sound. They blow a variety of instruments including kazoos, recorders, whistles, and even try blowing a trumpet. The pupils can identify a trumpet sound in music played to them. By the end of the key stage most pupils join in well-known songs and sing in tune. During Key Stage 2, pupils continue to play a range of percussion instruments. They can play loudly or softly and start or stop playing on request. They enjoy choosing and singing an increasing range of songs. By the end of the key stage, pupils begin to compose their own music using sound beam technology they tell the story of a picnic in sound. During Key Stage 3, pupils listen and move to music and match pictures of instruments to the sounds they produce. By the end of the key stage they use music to interpret poems and can play a range of tuned and percussion instruments rhythmically and on cue. Key Stage 4 and Post-16 students enjoy listening to an increasing variety of music. They react to sounds and compose their own music. They create notation and discuss the variety and quality of sounds they wish to make. They develop ideas and work to refine and improve them.

100. Teaching and learning of music are good overall and very good at Key Stage 4 and Post-16. Teachers plan lessons effectively and use a varied range of instruments to make music lessons meaningful and fun for pupils. Because of careful setting of objectives pupils are able to improve their skills learning how to blow to make sounds and listening intently to music that the teacher introduces. New instruments and sounds are introduced systematically, which encourage pupils to discuss their work and to identify sounds and rhythms. Good use is made of technology in Key Stage 2, with teachers guiding pupils in composing their own music. Pupils are encouraged to perform, to play instruments rhythmically on cue, joining in with whole school concerts. Teachers communicate well with older pupils and students ensuring they have a clear picture of what they must do to succeed. The content of the lessons are chosen to be appropriate to the age of the pupils and the music selected to achieve the desired atmosphere. Pupils composing their own music are helped through careful questioning to discuss and develop complex ideas. The teachers and support staff work very well together using a good humoured and positive approach to ensure that all pupils and students take a full part in the lessons and that their contributions are recognised.
101. Music is co-ordinated well throughout the school. The co-ordinator has a clear view of the work being carried out. Teachers have taken part in training and the co-ordinator has used this as an opportunity to gain new ideas, for example, about types of instruments to buy. The range of resources available in music is good. However there is still no suitable storage or specialist accommodation. The assessment of musical skills is unsatisfactory at present. Further work in this area forms an appropriate part of the action plan that the co-ordinator has written for music.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

102. Standards of achievement and progress in physical education are good across all key stages. The good or very good standards of all aspects of physical education identified during the last inspection have been maintained. There has been no progress in providing areas for changing which are hygienic and provide space and dignity for both sexes. Parents are therefore correct in thinking that arrangements are unsatisfactory.
103. Standards of achievement and progress during Key Stage 1 are good. As in all key stages, pupils work towards achieving their own personal targets which teachers devise in close co-operation with the physiotherapist where appropriate. Physically able pupils run and climb independently. They show good balance and are beginning to throw a ball with accuracy. In the pool they lie horizontally and propel themselves forward. Pupils on the autistic spectrum achieve well because of the security and structure of the Higashi programme of movement, which they perform daily. Other pupils with complex learning difficulties show by their expressions how much they trust their adult helpers and enjoy their individual exercises performed to music.
104. The continuing good progress and achievement of pupils in Key Stage 2 is helped by a varied and stimulating curriculum. Pupils with good levels of mobility show increasing preciseness of movement as they practise a range of jumps, forwards and backwards, using one or two feet. More able pupils accept the challenge of climbing on and off the apparatus and all are able to explore the limits of their personal space by reaching out and touching each other. By the end of the key stage, more able pupils begin to build up stamina, maintaining good pace as they run between mats, performing a variety of jumps in response to the beat of a tambourine. Pupils with less mobility happily participate in activities, including country and line dancing, with one-to-one assistance. The use of the ball pool at the local leisure centre helps to provide stimulation for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Pupils of all abilities make good progress and behave very well during swimming sessions well planned to meet individual targets.
105. The achievement and progress of pupils during Key Stages 3 and 4 are good and at times, very good. Swimming is a strength of the school and a small number of more able pupils achieve standards in line with pupils in mainstream schools. Long distance running is also a strength for a minority of physically able pupils, with some pupils completing runs of three or four miles in competitions with mainstream peers. These very good results are achieved through the hard work of pupils and good provision, which encourages them to do well. Social skills as well as swimming skills are developed by opportunities for deep water swimming at a local pool.

Community facilities provide facilities for developing games skills. Pupils have the chance to play in hockey, football, rounders, swimming, athletics and basketball teams against other schools, which contributes very well to moral as well as physical and social development. Pupils who are less physically able or with additional special needs also make good progress through well targeted activities. For example, in a very good dance lesson pupils respond with pleasure to the changing beats of African drumming and Western pop music. They suggest and demonstrate individual movements, which they then perform in sequence.

106. The standards of achievement and progress of Post-16 students continues to be good. They work towards individual targets for the ASDAN scheme and continue to benefit from a wide range of opportunities including those provided at the local leisure centre. They become more confident in the pool, picking up a brick from the bottom in increasingly deep water and with vociferous support from their peers! Pupils try hard to beat their personal best time for swimming up to ten lengths of the pool. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties benefit from a very well planned programme of supported movement.
107. The teaching of physical education is good and contributes significantly to the good and very good progress which pupils make. Planning for individuals and groups is very effective. Teaching is particularly strong in the middle and upper parts of the school and for the teaching of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. Subject knowledge is good, well informed by the physiotherapists. The input of support staff to teaching and learning is substantial. In a very good lesson the highly competent support assistant led the lesson and showed the very receptive teacher the skills of flexing and exercising the limbs of pupils with restricted movement. Quiet music and soft voices help pupils, who are treated with the utmost respect, to tolerate touch. Relationships are very good in all lessons and management of pupils is skilful, aided by effective communication, which includes signing and symbols. These features ensure all pupils make progress. Attention to health and safety is high and personal targets for dressing and undressing are incorporated into lessons. Assessment is satisfactory and sometimes good, especially for swimming.
108. The two co-ordinators are knowledgeable, lead by example and manage the subject well. They have developed a rich curriculum, which meets the needs of individuals, providing challenge across all areas of physical education. They have worked hard to find facilities and opportunities in the local area to test pupils physically and develop them socially. Links with other schools are very good. Accommodation, apart from the changing facilities, is satisfactory although at present there is no outside hard area because of building work. The two adventure playgrounds provide extra opportunities for exercise and imaginative use during lunch hours. Resources are sufficient.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

109. Judgements on standards were not made at the last inspection. It is clear from lessons, work seen and records, pupils achieve well and make good progress in religious education during Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 and in Key Stage 4 and Post-16, they achieve very well and make very good progress. This is due to consistently good teaching, improved resources and the consistent implementation of the scheme of work in all classes, which is an improvement since the last inspection. All pupils now study religious education, which fully complies with the Locally Agreed Syllabus.
110. The pupils' work reflects the school's aims. This is done through providing friendship and developing a growing awareness about how different people live and work together. During Key Stage 1, younger pupils use drama and carefully planned experiences using the senses to explore the world around them. They are encouraged to develop a sense of sharing and caring for others, through simple celebrations. For example, celebrating a friend's and member of staff's birthday. They are developing moral values when encouraged to sign or say 'sorry' and to appreciate the people who help them by helping when they can. Assemblies are used effectively to support learning and to develop awareness that 'God is here with us'.
111. Throughout Key Stage 2, pupils continue to make good progress and by the age of 11, are beginning to know the importance of Jesus within the Christian faith. They recognise a church building and some of the stories in the Bible. Their understanding of the idea of praying to God is

reflected in the simple prayers they have written to a sick friend on prayer leaves for example, or when they say or sign simple prayers they have made up themselves at the end of the day. One more able pupil in Year 5 for example saying simply "please God, help me to be nice to mummy".

112. Pupils at Key Stage 3, continue to make good progress and grow increasingly aware of other faiths, their festivals and associated symbols. Through participating in a variety of activities pupils begin to understand the traditions of these faiths and visits and visitors make a positive contribution to learning. More able pupils for example, know about the spring festival of Holi in the Hindu religion. In Key Stages 4 and at Post-16, pupils are making more rapid progress because of stimulating teaching, and the very effective wide variety of creative activities that are used to develop pupils' spiritual awareness. Currently pupils are becoming aware of the story of the creation from the Old Testament and are comparing this to stories from other cultures. They are very interested in these and they form an effective culmination of the schools efforts to enable pupils to be active and to experience a wide range of feelings and so develop understanding.
113. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good and very good in Key Stage 4 and Post-16. Teachers use role-play, stories and resources well to reinforce and stimulate learning. For example in one very good lesson, the teacher used a water tray; simple model house; large rock; sand and water to demonstrate the story of the house built on rock and sand. Pupils watched in awe, as the model house placed on the rock did not move when a pupil poured water over it, but fell as the sandcastle that it was placed upon collapsed when it became wet. Similarly, in an excellent lesson, the use of music, and projections onto the ceiling of illustrations from an Icelandic story of the creation, set within a darkened room and told with skill, totally enthralled older students. They could compare this with other stories and were so stimulated that they went on to create their own music and art in response.
114. The recently appointed co-ordinator has made a good and effective start in her role, and has appropriately identified areas for further development within the subject. Especially relevant is her appraisal of the current timetable arrangements, which are confusing. There is a need to clarify and distinguish a specific taught time for religious education as distinct from personal and social education and circle time, within the timetable so as to ensure fully that all pupils continue to have sufficient teaching. Good links have been established with local churches and other faith groups and resources have been improved. These ensure that religious education makes a positive contribution to pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION

115. Pupils are taught the basics of personal, social and health education through everything the school does. Across all key stages, pupils' achievements and progress are satisfactory. They gain knowledge and understanding of a healthy lifestyle and learn how to make and maintain positive relationships. Aspects of good citizenship and life skills are first introduced in the early years class teaching and follows through all key stages and Post-16.
116. By the age of seven, more able pupils understand the benefits of greeting people positively either signed or spoken. They learn about the importance of families and how to behave in an appropriate way. All pupils have targets on their individual education plans for personal, social and health education and they make sound progress towards meeting them. By the age of 11, pupils show respect for each other and demonstrate that they care about other people. This mirrors the good example of praise and respect show by all staff. Pupils with problems in making relationships or those whose behaviour is inappropriate, improve gradually helped by very supportive staff and the application of their behaviour plans. During Key Stage 3, pupils learn about citizenship in terms of the school. They devise and agree appropriate rules for an amicable class and illustrate them well. For example, demonstrating the need to give people space when talking with them. They use digital photographs effectively to produce an interactive sequence of shots with their captions recorded to explain each rule. They enjoy demonstrating what they have achieved.

117. The whole school approach to personal, social and health education ensures that pupils' learning in the area is at least satisfactory and the very positive school ethos and the high expectation of all staff are a major factor in this.
118. Insufficient evidence was available during the course of the inspection for reliable judgements to be made in the quality of teaching and learning in lessons timetabled as part of personal, social and health education. Although all classes have regular activities timetabled under the heading, for example tutor time, circle time, and personal and social education there is a lack of a formal personal, social and health education curriculum programme and staff are unclear about the content, purpose and status of the subject. For example, lessons visited which were described on the timetable as personal, social and health education were in fact unplanned circle time, registration, English or welcome time. Although these activities are legitimate in their own right and often of good quality they do not contribute currently to a coherent programme of personal, social and health education. One notable exception was the well-taught lesson on citizenship for pupils in Key Stage 3. This used information and communication technology very well to capture the interest of the pupils and skilfully encouraged them to make decisions about people's rights and responsibilities.
119. The subject is led by two co-ordinators who have a clear understanding of the current situation. They recognise the need for a formalised programme of work to be taught during personal, social and health education lessons and as part of a focus on this task are currently reviewing practice across the school. They have a clear understanding of the need to provide a coherent programme, which takes account of subject overlap, the role of citizenship and the need to clarify the policy for sex education.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

120. Standards achieved in vocational education are very good. Students make very good progress, many gaining qualifications and the skills to succeed when they leave school. The high standards found at the last inspection have been maintained. There are improvements in the range of opportunities available due to improved links with the sixth form college and college of further education. Provision for students with profound and multiple difficulties is much better. More students are gaining ASDAN Bronze Awards and Towards Independence qualifications.
121. Students improve their social skills and become more mature and confident through the many and varied opportunities to work in other settings. All students attend college courses. There is a sensory link for PMLD students and an extended education link for others in the further education college. The local sixth form college works closely with the school and offers an exciting range of courses including photography, music and information and communication technology. In this link students from Highdown are able to work alongside college students. As a result they make noteworthy progress, learning to work with others and to co-operate. There are very good links with local training centres. Some students are able to participate in work experience in local businesses. Therefore, students are able to sample what is on offer when they leave school and are in a good position to make decisions about their future.
122. Vocational experiences within school are also very interesting and productive. Students participate in Team Enterprise and learn how to run a business, making a profit from the goods they sell. They run a café, learning to make decisions about what to put on the menu, how to prepare refreshments and serve people. They learn about horticulture by working in the school garden and growing plants in the greenhouse. Work on communication, numeracy, physical and creative skills is not overlooked and students continue to make progress in these areas. This is particularly true for students with profound and multiple learning difficulties who can now participate more fully due to improved access into Highdown House and increased activities using the senses to learn.
123. For students aged 14 to 19, teaching is always good and in over half the lessons it is very good or excellent. Teachers understand how to capture the students' attention and maintain their interest. For example during a lesson on religious education, the teacher projected an image onto the ceiling that made the students gasp in amazement. Teachers have a real talent for story

telling. They use dramatic gestures and expression, often using sensory props to sustain students' concentration. They have excellent relationships with the students and treat them as young adults expecting them to make decisions and take responsibility. They are ambitious for the students and push them to do their best. Work for accredited courses is very well organised and students benefit from good feedback on their progress. The atmosphere in lessons and activities is very positive. Students thrive on the praise and encouragement from all members of staff.

124. The curriculum for students aged 14 to 19 is well designed and highly relevant. It continues to be developed and there are plans to improve it still further. The co-ordinator is most effective and focuses on raising standards. Resources are adequate although there are limited opportunities for students to work on computers in school. The oldest students benefit from separate accommodation in Highdown House.