

INSPECTION REPORT

ELEMORE HALL

Pittington, Durham

LEA area: Durham

Unique reference number: 114337

Headteacher: Mr. M. Davey

Reporting inspector: April Dakin
25441

Dates of inspection: 2 – 5 July 2001

Inspection number: 195440

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community Special
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Elemore Hall School Pittington Durham County Durham
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. P Buxton O.B.E.
Date of previous inspection:	May 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
25441	April Dakin	<i>Registered inspector</i>	Music; Religious education.	What sort of school is it? How high are standards? The school's results and achievements; How well are pupils taught? How well the school is led and managed? What should the school do to improve further? How well does the school monitor and evaluate pupils' academic performance?
9561	Husain Akhtar	<i>Lay inspector</i>		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? Extra-curricular activities and links with the community.
29452	Christine Emerson	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science; Art; Special educational needs.	How well the school is led and managed? (Staffing, accommodation and resources).
27409	Susan Hunt	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography; History; Personal, social and health education and citizenship; Equal opportunities.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
2746	Roy Lund	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information and communication technology; Design technology.	How high are standards? Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development.
10781	Robert Thompson	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics; Physical Education.	How well the school is led and managed? (Finance)
3838	Aileen Webber	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Modern foreign language.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students? (Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development).

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Elemore Hall School is a co-educational community special school in County Durham. It caters for secondary aged pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. It has places for 70 pupils aged between 11 and 16. There were 52 pupils, 43 boys and seven girls, registered at the school at the time of the inspection as all Year 11 pupils had left. The school has residential provision for up to 48 boys and also offers an extended day provision until 8.00pm. The school is large when compared with other schools of this type, and its pupil population has risen since the last inspection. Every pupil in the school is the subject of a statement of special educational need. The school is now receiving a significant number of pupils who display complex levels of disturbance and almost 60 per cent of the pupils have been, or currently are, involved with the Child and Family Mental Health Service.

A significant proportion of pupils have additional learning difficulties, including very low levels of literacy and numeracy on entry to the school, and have been assessed as dyspraxic. Low-level attendance is also a feature of the pupils' previous placements; some have not attended school for up to one year prior to placement at Elemore. Ninety seven per cent of the pupils have had fixed-term exclusions from their previous schools. Fifty per cent have been permanently excluded from previous schools. Fifty per cent of pupils are active cases with Social Services. Of these, 16 per cent (8) are accommodated by the Social Services department. All pupils receive free school meals. Pupils are grouped mainly by age, and there is often a wide range of needs within class groups. All pupils are white, and none speak English as an additional language. Pupils come from areas as far afield as Darlington and more rural areas to the west of the County such as Rookhope in Weardale. Pupils travel to school by local education authority (LEA) transport; some travel up 40 minutes to get to the school. No pupils are from out of area.

There is slightly better pupil-teacher ratio than at the last inspection of 1:5.2 in comparison with 1:5.8, and it is higher than other schools of this type. The school has had difficulties in recruiting a specialist modern foreign languages teacher and this subject is not taught at present. The member of staff who is responsible for English has been ill for a long time and has only very recently returned to the school.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is very effective in providing for the personal, social and emotional development of its pupils and pupils achieve well in the majority of subjects. The leadership and management of the school and the residential and extended day provision are very good. Teaching is good overall with some very good features. Considering the low unit costs, the school provides very good value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- Very good provision for pupils' personal, social and emotional needs includes excellent provision for their spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. This enables pupils to make a new commitment to education, as is shown by their very good attitudes, personal development and relationships, and their good behaviour.
- Makes very good provision for pupils with additional special educational needs through early identification, planned teaching opportunities and withdrawal arrangements.
- Teaches pupils very well in mathematics, careers and vocational education, art, physical education and music, and ensures pupils' progress in these subjects is very good.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- Although satisfactory overall, pupils could achieve better in English, particularly in writing, where achievements are not as good as they should be.
- The provision for learning a modern foreign language.

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

When the school was last inspected in May 1997, the inspection identified a number of key issues, mainly related to the provision for religious education, geography and music. Teaching was also unsatisfactory in around 22 per cent of lessons and was not rigorously monitored or evaluated. No system for the appraisal of teachers was in place. The provision for spiritual development was unsatisfactory. The school has addressed all the key issues. The provision for geography, music and religious education means that these subjects now meet statutory requirements. Standards have risen in these subjects and are at least satisfactory overall. Teaching is now good overall, a very significant proportion of teaching being good and very good. Provision for spiritual development is now very good. Appraisal arrangements are now very secure and the school has attained Investors in People status. The school has made very good improvement since the last inspection.

STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	By age 16	Key	
Speaking and listening	C/B	<i>Very good</i>	A
Reading	B	<i>Good</i>	B
Writing	D	<i>Satisfactory</i>	C
Mathematics	A	<i>Unsatisfactory</i>	D
Personal, social and health education	A	<i>Poor</i>	E
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A		

*IEPs: Individuals Education Plans

Pupils achieve well in the majority of subjects. They make satisfactory progress overall in English, and achieve well in reading and listening, but they do not make enough progress in writing. Pupils' achieve very well in mathematics and well in science, and this is reflected in this year's statutory test results for 14 year olds. Pupils' achievements in art, music and physical education are very good. Those with particular talents in performance with percussion instruments are progressing very well, and are achieving standards in line and sometimes above their mainstream peers. Pupils, whatever their prior attainment are achieving well and making good progress in information and communication technology, design technology and personal and social education. Pupils of differing abilities make similar progress in the vast majority of subjects. All pupils make very good progress towards targets identified in individual educational plans, but few pupils have high enough targets for independent writing.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils say they like school and appreciate the work of all the staff in the school and residential settings.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Pupils behave well both in and around the school. Behaviour during after-school activities and in the residential setting is very good.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils become increasingly responsible and co-operative as they get older and have excellent relationships with their peers and with the staff.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Most pupils attend school regularly and punctually.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged 11-16
Lessons seen overall: 73	Good, with some very good features

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

Teaching is good overall. It is satisfactory or better in 97 per cent of lessons, good or better in 86 per cent, and very good or better in 38 per cent. It is unsatisfactory in 3 per cent. This 3 per cent represents unsatisfactory teaching and learning of independent writing skills, although the teaching of English overall is satisfactory. Teachers meet the differing needs of pupils well in the majority of subjects, but do not always meet their writing needs, therefore pupils do not always extend their writing skills. Speaking is taught satisfactorily in English and often well in other subjects. Pupils learn the meaning of technical vocabulary particularly well. Reading and listening are taught well and pupils learn to use a range of strategies to read new words. The teaching of numeracy in mathematics lessons and in other subjects is particularly strong. Pupils learn to measure accurately using standard units of length and mass, to calculate periods of elapsed time, and to tabulate data and represent it in graphical form. The teaching of science is good overall Pupils' make good gains in knowledge and understanding across an appropriate range of personal, social and health education contexts in specialist lessons at both key stages because teaching is well planned and generally good.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a very relevant and broad curriculum that is extended by a very good range of extracurricular activities. The school does not meet statutory requirements for the teaching of modern foreign language at Key Stage 3. Not enough time is allocated to science at Key Stage 4, and this limits opportunities for pupils to take GCSE.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Excellent. The school plans very well for these areas of pupils' development in subjects of the curriculum, in school meetings and in the extended day and residential provision.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school has a very good understanding of pupils' personal needs and is vigilant about health and safety matters. The monitoring and evaluation of pupils' academic progress is satisfactory overall.

The school has good relationships with parents and provides them with good quality information about how their children are getting on. Parents are well involved in supporting pupils' personal targets.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good overall. The headteacher is a charismatic leader who insists on high standards in all of the school's work. The school leadership team very ably support these high expectations and clear vision for the future of the school. Co-ordinators work hard to achieve their personal and professional targets, but the leadership of English is unsatisfactory.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Satisfactory overall. The chair of governors plays a very active part in the management of the school and his and others' expertise in finance and personnel is used very well. Most governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, but have not ensured that all statutory requirements are met for the prospectus and the curriculum.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. The school has already identified its strengths and weaknesses and has very good formal plans for further improvement. The school consults widely to get the best for its pupils, and challenges its own performance by comparing its practice and standards of achievement with other schools.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. Staff are well deployed both in the school and in the residential setting. There are enough resources of good quality, and accommodation is satisfactory overall, but some classrooms are cramped and facilities for science are unsatisfactory for the oldest pupils. The school makes good use of community resources for gymnastics, but this does use up teaching time.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• How approachable the school is.• How well the school is led and managed.• The wide range of extra-curricular activities.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Homework provision.• The behaviour and attitudes of pupils.

The team agrees that the school is very approachable and that the school is well led and managed. There is a wide range of extra-curricular activities and the team were happy that all pupils had equality of opportunity to take part in them. The team agrees that homework provision could be usefully extended, but found the behaviour and attitudes of pupils were good overall.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Pupils enter the school with a very low attainment profile. Almost all pupils have been excluded for extended periods of time and about half of them have been permanently excluded from their previous schools because of their emotional and behavioural difficulties. Consequently, all pupils have significant gaps in their skills, knowledge and understanding of all subjects. A high percentage of pupils have additional needs relating to dyspraxia and related difficulties in the areas of literacy and numeracy. Pupils, whatever their prior abilities, achieve well overall during the time at the school and make good progress in the majority of subjects. There is no significant difference between the achievements of boys and girls in any subject. The school received the School Achievement Award for Excellence for improved results in 1999- 2000.

2. Pupils make very good progress in personal, social and health education and achieve very well in relation to their prior abilities. A very good wholeschool approach to promoting pupils' personal and social development includes a timetabled course of personal and social and health education plus an additional course in citizenship. Pupils' make good gains in knowledge and understanding across an appropriate range of personal, social and health education contexts in specialist lessons at both key stages because teaching is well planned and generally good. In addition, the extended day curriculum and residential provision greatly enrich pupils' experiences, and also offer additional opportunities to gain certificates of achievement relating to their individual personal and social development. All subjects offer an element of personal and social education within their planning for groups and individuals, and the behaviour in and attitudes to lessons are very effectively evaluated at the end of each lesson. Very good wholeschool monitoring and evaluation of individual and group progress, together with mentor support and reward systems, ensure that pupils make very good progress by the time they are 16 in understanding about the issues they are taught and in relating these to their own lives.

3. The programme for careers education and guidance is very good and the school has successfully tailored work experiences to match very individual needs. Pupils gain key skills and an understanding of what is required to gain successful employment, and these are accredited through Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). The school also provides additional opportunities to try out vocational courses at college. On leaving school, 42 per cent of pupils go on to further fulltime vocational courses at their local colleges, and another 42 per cent start training programmes. Around 7 per cent find employment, often as a result of successful work experience placements.

4. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall in English. They make good progress in reading and listening, and satisfactory progress in speaking, but unsatisfactory progress in writing. Standards of achievement in speaking and writing are not as good as those found at the last inspection. The coordinator has been absent for most of the time since her appointment and non-specialists and supply teachers have taught pupils over the past year. The scheme of work for writing has not supported these teachers in their planning. A new scheme of work has been developed since the coordinators' very recent return to school, but has not yet been fully implemented.

5. Pupils with dyspraxia make excellent progress in improving their handwriting because of the intensive individual programmes of exercises that are carried out each day. Pupils with additional learning difficulties make very good progress in the specialist withdrawal groups for reading. However, because the needs of these groups of pupils are not always reflected in teachers' planning, opportunities in lessons to consolidate developing skills are sometimes lost.

6. Standards of achievement in mathematics are very good overall. This is a marked improvement since the time of the last inspection when standards of achievement were found to be satisfactory overall. By the age of 14, pupils are achieving standards higher than those seen in other schools of this type. Results in Standard Assessment Tests show standards are rising year on year. By the age of 16, pupils are gaining external accreditation through the Certificate of Achievement. Higher attaining pupils have taken the General Certificate of Secondary Education for the first time this year. Pupils with additional learning difficulties make very good progress in lessons and in withdrawal groups. Assessment is used well to plan work for pupils of differing abilities in this subject and teaching is very good overall.

7. Pupils' achievements in science are good overall. They make good progress between the ages of 11 and 14. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when progress was described as satisfactory for pupils of this age. Although achievements for the majority of pupils are below national expectations, some high attaining pupils achieve in line with national standards. Overall, achievements, by the age of 14 are above those expected in similar schools. Progress between the ages of 14 and 16 slows because some higher attaining pupils lose interest and begin to absent themselves from lessons. Pupils have been entered for the Certificate of Achievement this year, but higher attaining pupils are not challenged to achieve the General Certificate of Secondary Education in the subject. Currently, the school does not provide enough time to cover the Single Award examination syllabus and the science room does not have a fume cupboard. Homework is not a feature of lessons. All these factors limit the range of work pupils can cover and the standards they can achieve by the age of 16.

8. Pupils achieve very high standards in relation to their prior attainment in music by the age of 14. Pupils achieve well, and make very good progress in art and physical education across the school. These high standards are directly related to the high quality of teaching and very good leadership and management of these subjects. Pupils' achievements in music are much improved since the appointment of a music specialist last year, and are much better than at the time of the last inspection, when they were judged to be unsatisfactory. Talented percussionists are achieving very well since they have had been provided with additional tuition, and are achieving standards that are comparable to and sometimes above those of their mainstream peers. All pupils make very good progress in performing on electronic keyboards and in composition using information and communication technology software, albeit from a very low baseline. Pupils' high achievements in art have been maintained since the last inspection and the breadth of the provision continues to improve because of the exacting standards the art coordinator sets for the subject. Consequently, pupils learn to work in a wide range of media and make very good gains in observational drawing and painting and in three dimensional work. Older pupils are working towards accreditation in art, and the coordinator plans to enter the present Year 8 pupils for the General Certificate of Secondary Education in Art in two years time. Standards in physical education have improved since the last inspection. The school uses the community well to make up for the deficiencies in the physical education

accommodation, and this and the high quality of the teaching are raising standards for all pupils. Pupils learn to play a wide range of games, including golf, football, cricket and softball. They excel in athletics and have won county and national championships. Pupils of all ages successfully participate in local, county and national events. Many pupils have won local and county awards. Pupils also learn to ski, sail, swim and develop orienteering skills through the extended day provision.

9. Pupils' achievements in design technology and information and communication technology (ICT) are good overall. Standards of achievement are higher in both subjects since the time of the last inspection, when standards were judged to be satisfactory. Pupils now make very good progress in making and satisfactory progress in designing and evaluating their products using a wide range of materials. Pupils' achievements have improved in both subjects because of improved planning and teaching and interdepartmental teamwork. There have been specific improvements in pupils' achievements in control technology, which were found to be unsatisfactory at the last inspection. Pupils make good progress in learning to use a range of software for word processing and desktop publishing, and to design databases, spreadsheets and graphs. They become confident Internet and E-mail users. Pupils make good progress in using ICT software to support learning in other subjects, either for research or for communication purposes.

10. Pupils' achievements in geography and history are good overall for pupils aged between 11 and 14. The subjects are not taught after this age. High attaining pupils make good progress and lower attaining pupils make satisfactory progress. The differences in the rate of progress directly relate to teachers' failure to ensure that pupils' differing literacy needs are met in the subjects.

11. Pupils' achievements in religious education are satisfactory overall. Standards have improved since the appointment of a new religious education coordinator last September, and they have improved overall since the last inspection, when they were found to be unsatisfactory. Higher attaining pupils make good progress between the ages of 11 and 14, and lower attaining pupils make satisfactory progress. Work is not always set to meet lower attaining pupils' differing literacy or subject needs. Samples of work from the oldest higher attaining pupils, and discussions with pupils in Year 10 show that they have not always had systematic teaching and pupils have many gaps in their knowledge of other religions. However, they are making satisfactory progress from a very low baseline in learning about other religions, and good progress in discussing their own beliefs and values. Older lower attaining pupils have better attitudes to the subject and are making good progress, again from a very low baseline.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

12. Pupils' attitudes to their work and to the school community are strengths of the school. They were judged to be good in the last inspection and are now very good indicating a significant improvement. Behaviour remains good overall, but has improved considerably in lessons. These very good attitudes and good behaviour are the result of excellent relationships between the pupils, and between the pupils and members of staff. They are also the result of effective policies and procedures for behaviour management, and a very good system of recording and monitoring the pupils' behaviour, which clearly demonstrates a fall in serious incidents of inappropriate behaviour over the last year.

13. The pupils also make very good progress in personal development because of the school's excellent ethos, within which each member of the school community is valued and individual successes are celebrated. The pupils value the merit system and work hard to achieve points and the adults' praise. The inspectors observed at first hand the pupils' joy at having their achievements recognised during the weekly school meeting. The whole school community demonstrated considerable pleasure at each person's success. Success is also celebrated through high quality wall displays, which use digital images very effectively.

14. In lessons, pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good overall. They are satisfactory overall in English, although attitudes to reading have much improved since the last inspection. Attitudes to work have improved in all other subjects. There have been significant improvements in pupils' attitudes to mathematics and music, and the high standards of behaviour and attitudes to work in art have been maintained. Attitudes and behaviour are now excellent in music, very good in mathematics, art, and physical education, and good in all other subjects except geography, where they are satisfactory overall. The younger pupils, who have been in the school for the shortest time, sometimes become restless in lessons, but respond well to the staff's support and guidance. Where there are incidents of unsatisfactory attitudes and behaviour, they are related to pupils being given work that does not match their writing needs or lacks challenge, and to insecure relationships with pupils, particularly in English and geography. Pupils of all ages and abilities have unsatisfactory attitudes towards writing because they are not well enough supported in this area of the curriculum.

15. As the pupils progress through the school, their attitudes become noticeably more positive and their behaviour more mature and sensible. Most pupils take a great interest in their work and take pride in it, looking after it well. They are keen to show it to visitors and to discuss it with them. They work hard and pay attention in lessons. These positive attitudes and behaviour relate to stimulating and appropriate activities and to skilled support from teachers and support assistants. The same applies to the evening activities provided by the care workers within the residential provision. The pupils know that they are being given work they can do, and they respond with trust. They respond positively to the staff's very good use of praise and encouragement and to the teachers' and care workers' built-in behaviour management within lessons and evening activities.

16. The pupils behave very well around the school and in the residential provision. They are well mannered and polite, courteous and caring to visitors. They move around the school in an orderly fashion and respect both the fabric of the building and the displays. There is no evidence of graffiti or vandalism. They look after their own property and the property of others well. Break times and mealtimes are calm and orderly with a pleasant atmosphere in the dining hall, the residential areas and in the school grounds. Throughout all their activities, the pupils demonstrate care and consideration for others.

17. The needs of those pupils with extreme emotional or behavioural difficulties are very well met, particularly through access to the range of excellent extracurricular activities. Consequently they make very good progress in managing their behaviour and emotions.

18. Bearing in mind the disrupted schooling which most pupils have had prior to entering the school, the very positive ethos, orderly and calm atmosphere and excellent relationships are a great credit to all the staff and reflect very effective practice.

19. Pupils' attendance has improved since the last inspection and is satisfactory, being in line with the average for this type of school. Attendance of residential pupils is good. Illness accounts for most of the authorised absences. The rate of unauthorised absence remains high since a significant number of pupils never attend despite the schools' considerable efforts. Irregular or nonattendance has a damaging effect on the achievement and personal development of the pupils concerned. Pupils come to the school promptly. Once pupils arrive, most remain in the school and attend lessons swiftly. There are recorded incidents of internal truancy, including some by the residential pupils.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

20. The quality of teaching is good overall. It is satisfactory or better in 97 per cent of lessons, good or better in 86 per cent, and very good or better in 38 per cent. It is unsatisfactory in three per cent. Teaching seen on inspection shows a considerable improvement since the last inspection, when teaching was satisfactory or better in around 78 per cent of lessons and unsatisfactory in around 22 per cent. At the last inspection, very good teaching was seen in only one out of ten lessons; at the time of this inspection it was very good in almost four out of ten lessons. Almost all teachers have improved their daily planning, a weakness which was another key issue identified at the last inspection. This is now good overall. Teachers are well supported in their planning by revised and improved schemes of work in many subjects. The school has addressed the key issue to improve the quality of teaching in geography, religious education and music. Teaching is now very good in music, good in geography and satisfactory overall in religious education. However, teachers do not always identify objectives for pupils of differing needs, or plan questions that will involve all pupils, in geography and religious education, so pupils do not always learn equally well in lessons.

21. A significant strength of the teaching is in the way pupils are managed. Targets for pupils' personal and social development within individual educational plans are very well integrated into daily planning. This has greatly improved the behaviour and attitudes of pupils to work and has ensured that pupils learn to listen well in lessons. The vast majority of teachers manage pupils' behaviour very well, and the care and learning support assistants make a significant contribution to pupils' learning by their sensitive support and counselling. Together they have established routines in which pupils feel confident and secure. This is a strong feature of almost all lessons. As a result, pupils learn to behave in a safe and responsible manner and to begin learning as soon as they enter the classroom. Teachers and their assistants have a calm yet firm approach and make clear what is acceptable and unacceptable behaviour. Because teachers and their assistants have such very good relationships with pupils, not only in the classroom situation but also in the residential and extended day setting, pupils learn to trust the adults they work with and are keen to please them on the whole. They rise to challenges and often put a lot of effort into their work. Teachers and classroom and care assistants are skilled in defusing situations that might lead to disruption of learning. Pupils are counselled well and encouraged to work hard for their rewards. Additional help is available to teachers through an 'on call' system, so pupils who find it difficult to conform to expectations receive additional support and guidance when necessary. This reduces the time spent on managing difficult behaviour and allows lessons to proceed at a good pace with minimal disruption to learning. At the end of each lesson, the assessment of targets relating to behaviour and attitudes to work at the end of each lesson are consistent, firm and fair.

22. Another significant strength of the teaching is the specialist knowledge of the teachers. Almost all subjects have subject specialists who teach their own subjects and who have good experience in the management of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. Teachers know the personal needs of the pupils well and use assessment well enough to plan work for the most part. However, where teaching is unsatisfactory, it is related to teachers not having enough knowledge and understanding of how to support pupils in their writing. Although the teaching and learning of English are satisfactory overall, the teaching of writing is unsatisfactory overall both in English lessons and in many other subjects. The teaching and learning of speaking and writing skills are not as good as at the last inspection. This is due, in part, to the fact that the English co-ordinator has been absent for most of the time since she was appointed and it has not been possible to carry out all the new developments that were planned to begin last September. Where new developments have been implemented, the learning of pupils is good, in withdrawal lessons, for example.

23. Because there are weaknesses in the way independent writing is taught, both in English lessons and in other subjects, pupils' attitudes to writing are unsatisfactory. This is because teachers do not always use their assessment of pupils' writing skills to plan for individual recording needs in lessons. Targets for independent writing are not specific enough in individual educational plans to support teachers in this respect. Teachers' expectations that higher attaining pupils will write independently to any length are too low, and they are unsure how to support and build on lower attaining pupils' writing and spelling skills. Teachers and classroom assistants support lower attaining pupils well by scribing key points on white boards, or by writing down what they say, so pupils can organise their ideas or new information. Good teaching of phonics in withdrawal classes is helping the lowest attaining pupils to learn how words are built, but these new skills are rarely extended in other lessons. The very good structured work offered to pupils with dyspraxia helps these pupils to improve their handwriting skills. The vast majority of teachers have high expectations that work will be presented neatly and accurately so pupils make a concerted effort in this respect in most subjects.

24. Higher attaining pupils most often record what they have learnt in lessons by copying the shared notes gathered by the teacher, and they lack confidence in their own independent writing skills. The use of dictionaries or thesauri was not a feature of any lessons seen. There were good examples of story boards being used to support and structure writing about film music in samples of music work, and of ICT being used by pupils very effectively to record compositions in music lessons. Higher attaining pupils are encouraged to take notes during in religious education lessons, but these are not often used as a basis for independent writing. They are offered alternative methods of responding to learning through discussion, and question and answer sessions, and through musical and artistic composition or model making, but there were few examples of pupils' independent writing in any of the work samples. All too often teachers rely too heavily on standardised worksheets that limit the length of writing for higher attaining pupils, and they cannot be completed by lower attaining pupils unless they have considerable support. Recording in mathematics is very good because the teacher ensures that worksheets are very closely matched to individual needs. The teacher provides opportunities for investigation, and has high expectations that pupils will record accurately and neatly as they move through the investigative process. Key vocabulary is often identified in daily

planning in most subjects and teachers have high expectations that pupils will extend their understanding and use of technical vocabulary during lessons. In the best lessons it is on permanent or on target board display. This is a strong feature of mathematics lessons and helps pupils learn how to spell, read and understand the meaning of specific mathematical terms. This very good practice could be usefully shared with other teachers.

25. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics is now very good and much improved since the last inspection, when it was judged to be satisfactory overall. The teaching of numeracy across the curriculum is a particularly strong feature of design and technology, science and information and communication technology, but is also well taught in many other subjects. Pupils learn to measure accurately using standard units of length and mass in design technology; to calculate periods of elapsed time in history, and to tabulate data and represent it in graphical form in science and in ICT.

26. Teaching and learning in science and ICT are now good overall, which is also an improvement since the last inspection when teaching was found to be satisfactory. Work is now set that meets pupils' differing needs, although this is not always identified in planning. Pupils learn to observe very well during investigations and to understand what constitutes a fair test. However, as they get older, learning is affected by the limited accommodation and time spent on the subject. Whereas teaching and learning was fragmented in information and communication technology at the time of the last inspection, it is now systematic, well planned and based on good ongoing assessment of skills. Resources have also been much improved in this subject and have made the enhanced planning much easier to deliver. Pupils learn a range of word processing skills, and they use the Internet to research foods from different cultures in design technology and to investigate data from history, for example.

27. The high quality of teaching and learning seen at the last inspection in art has been maintained and there are now some excellent features in aspects of this teaching provision. One is the high quality of planning, which is very well informed by exemplary on going assessment and the exacting standards the teacher sets for pupils' finished work. Pupils learn to improve their observational drawings and paintings through the regular use of sketchbooks, and use a range of materials to make three-dimensional sculptures which are displayed on the nature trail in the school's grounds. Homework is offered through attendance at the extended day art club, which builds on learning in lessons.

28. Visual and practical activities are now more often used to provide a focus to learning for pupils who are lower attaining and for those who have attention deficits. Lessons almost always proceed at a good pace so that interest does not wane. In mathematics, design and technology, physical education, art and music, investigative approaches, supported by practical resources and clear instructions and demonstrations are used very well to establish basic concepts and skills. For example, pupils of differing abilities learn very well about fractions in relation to their prior attainment because practical tasks have been set and resources have been provided at different levels of difficulty to challenge individual pupils in their thinking and actions.

29. Homework is not a significant feature of lessons. Although some very good opportunities are offered for pupils to build on learning in lessons through the extended day and residential setting, more systematic homework needs to be set, particularly in English, mathematics and science.

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

30. Since the last inspection the school has made good progress in developing a highly relevant and balanced curriculum. Improved schemes of work for almost all subjects identify key learning objectives for each programme of units. Most define the vocabulary to be learnt and understood and link it to the key learning objectives. All define the broad outcomes expected for the majority of the class. Teachers' daily planning in most subjects broadly estimates the learning expected of the more able and less able groups. However, these outcomes are not always stated within individual units of work. This would improve the schemes further. Strong crosscurricular links between all subjects are helped by the regular practice of inter- department meetings. However, opportunities for independent writing are not so well planned, either in English or in other subjects.

31. The school does not meet statutory requirements to teach a modern foreign language at Key Stage 3. It is disapplied in Key Stage 4 to allow for more time for the teaching and learning of vocational education. The National Numeracy Strategy at Key Stage 3 has been fully implemented, ahead of time, and is helping to raise standards throughout the school; the mathematics teacher has been identified as a trainer for the county. However, due to staff absence, the National Literacy Strategy at Key Stage 3 has yet to be fully implemented and this is having an adverse effect on achievements in literacy throughout the school, particularly in the development of writing skills.

32. There has been an improvement in the provision for religious education, ICT, music and geography, which were criticised at the last inspection. They are now stronger subjects in the curriculum, particularly music, and are providing pupils with good and very good learning experiences.

33. Although provision for science is good overall, not enough time is given to the teaching of the subject for pupils aged between 14 and 16. This restricts the higher attaining pupils' achievements in the subject.

34. The specific curriculum provided for pupils with additional special needs in the withdrawal sessions is very well adapted to take account of their individual learning needs. All pupils have full access to the other curriculum opportunities through the very good withdrawal arrangements that are made. There is an extended individual education plan (EIEP) for every pupil with additional educational needs who are involved in withdrawal activities, such as those for reading, numeracy, and dyspraxia. Pupils with more complex behavioural and emotional needs are well supported by good quality positive handling plans. There is very good additional provision made for pupils who show talents in playing percussion instruments.

35. Work related education is very good. All pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow an ASDAN- accredited course, which emphasises the skills required for successful employment. The basis for this is laid with Year 9 pupils in their personal, social and health education lessons, and in Year 10, pupils undertake work experience tailored to their special needs. A work experience coordinator support worker runs this scheme successfully. The school has an excellent record of success in placing pupils effectively. Pupils take part in a range of 'taster' courses at local colleges, including painting and

decorating, catering, and the travel trade. Pupils also undertake local community work, in local old peoples' homes, for example. All pupils have valid destinations when they leave school. Some obtain full-time employment, often as a result of a successful work experience placement. Many return to a college as full time students.

36. There is a good scheme of work for personal, social and health education, and a new separate scheme for citizenship, which is proving a very successful addition to the broad range of opportunities provided. These schemes include sex education and drug misuse as well as healthy eating and fitness. The opportunities offered within the extended day and residential setting provide very good continuity in the process of educating the whole individual. Comprehensive care plans, written by pupils' personal tutors, support the personal and social education of the pupil and contribute strongly to the extra-curricular opportunities within the school. Also, an inclusive, phased integration programme helps the resident pupils reintegrate into their home environment. However, re-integration opportunities for pupils into mainstream provision are limited. The school has provided and supported a short-term placement for Year 7 pupils. It is working hard to improve integration opportunities by extending links and providing support for teachers and pupils in a local comprehensive school. The present inclusion initiative is focussed on supporting comprehensives in the area. During the inspection, a group of disaffected Year 9 pupils from the local Belmont School took part in a teamwork and co-operation skills exercise in the woods, organised by the Elemore Hall School through the Belmont Inclusion Project. The school also provides placements for trainee teachers who help in generating fresh areas regarding pupils' work and development.

37. The curriculum and pupils' personal development are very well supported by excellent provision for extra-curricular activities, particularly through residential arrangements, and very productive use of the community. Residential pupils have a range of well-organised recreational activities like chess and model making, which they thoroughly enjoy. There are visits and visitors that extend pupils' experiences. Educational visits to places further afield include residentials in the north of England like the Lake District. There are active links with other schools and sports clubs in physical education.

38. The additional opportunities provided by the school to cultivate pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, are excellent overall. Opportunities for their social and moral development are excellent and for their spiritual and cultural development they are very good. This represents a very good improvement since the last inspection. Following a wholeschool evaluation of its provision for these elements, all subjects identify where they provide opportunities for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. There are numerous examples of excellent practice and it is only possible to select a few of these to illustrate opportunities provided within the school and the extended day and residential provision.

39. Opportunities for pupils' spiritual development have developed from an unsatisfactory situation at the last inspection to being very good now. Teachers and pupils value each other and show this during wholeschool meetings when they celebrate achievements and thank each other for the opportunities given and work completed. 'Thought for the Day' gives opportunities for pupils to reflect on their own and other peoples' situations and beliefs and values. For example, in the week of the inspection, pupils were given very good opportunities to reflect on a world without music on one day, and to think about 'What can I do to make this day more successful' on another. Religious education, music, art, personal, health and social education (PHSE) and citizenship all

make a significant contribution and pupils are uplifted and challenged by experiences within these subjects. For example, pupils spontaneously celebrate and express their feelings in a musical performance. They also think about fundamental questions such as What is life? and What is death? and how different countries mark these occasions.

40. Pupils are helped to recognise that there is more to life than routines and everyday experiences. For example in art, pupils were invited to select some part of the school's nature trail and to create an artefact in response to something in the natural environment that caught their interest. They made spiders, bees snakes and many other artefacts and chose where they would be hidden– some being high up in the trees. In English, pupils, in shared writing with staff, captured the essence of the school's motto: 'TEAM Together Everyone Achieves More' through writing poetry.

41. Provision for pupils' moral development is excellent. The ethos of the school, the good role models and excellent relationships with staff all help pupils to have a clear understanding of right and wrong. A very good behaviour policy, with a clear system of points and rewards, is consistently followed and valued by pupils and staff. The management of pupils' behaviour in lessons is almost always good. The availability of senior staff to talk situations through with pupils after incidents helps pupils to manage their own behaviour and understand the consequences of their actions. Within the excellent range of extended day activities and the residential setting, the pupils have further opportunities to understand what is expected of them and they rise to the very high expectations. They are proud of their achievements and they work very hard to gain points for aspects of relationships, behaviour on task and individual targets, which go towards weekly Bronze, Silver, Gold and Platinum awards. This system aims to provide structures which allow pupils to progress to levels of independence and autonomy. Pupils can also be awarded merits – a credit-card-sized award, which they can exchange at the school shop. Pupils are given opportunities in lessons to reflect on the actions of themselves and others and to think about other people's beliefs and values, for example within PHSE and citizenship and religious education lessons. In an English lesson, older pupils watched a video and discussed what they imagined were the feelings of a family of three boys who wanted to leave home and follow their own destiny. They thought about whether the actions of the boys and the reactions of their parents seemed to them to be morally right or wrong.

42. Opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills are also excellent. Within lessons, pupils are encouraged to work together. Curriculum subjects include many visits out, such as the outdoor education option for older pupils, when they learn military skills, skiing and camp craft. In the extended day, numerous exciting activities are laid on, such as canoeing, golf coaching, model-making, cycling, water sports, gardening, digital photography and badminton. There are also opportunities to stay away from the school, for example there was a Girls' Camp and a residential stay at the Leyburn Camping Barn. Every pupil has at least one out of school residential opportunity each year. Activity days provide further opportunities for pupils to mix in different social groupings, and they take part in canoeing and rafting, visiting the Sea Life Centre, historic quay and Wildfowl Trust. All these activities give the pupils an opportunity to develop personally. As a result, they learn to behave appropriately, to be polite and respectful when they are in the community and in their interactions with each other and the staff.

43. Provision for pupils' cultural development is very good. All subjects ensure that there is an emphasis within their policies and practice. Art and music ensure that the pupils gain a good understanding of their own culture both within school and on visits out of school. For example, they explore the expression of feelings when they respond to Edvard Munch's picture of 'The Scream,' using colours of their choice. In music and religious education they are given very good opportunities to listen to and appreciate a range of music from different cultures and times, when they listen to music that portrays feelings of life and death, for example. Multi-cultural understanding is extended through learning to value music from other countries and cultures, such as North American Indian Chants, Indian/Hindu music and Reggae music.

44. Pupils also have very good opportunities to experience the multicultural aspects of society within other subjects. For example, in mathematics they develop a display of the currencies of different countries. In food technology they look at the foods, cultures and traditions of other countries and cultures and produce dishes from around the world. They visit China town in Newcastle and prepare Chinese dishes. In 'Thought for the Day', they reflect on the fact that in other countries they might be forbidden to play music and in geography they compare and contrast facilities for newly born babies in England and in developing countries such as Sudan.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

45. Care and support for pupils were very good at the time of the last inspection, and they remain so. The school provides very well for pupils' emotional and personal needs. Staff ensure that children settle well into school and the residential units, beginning with effective induction of pupils and their parents and maintaining regular contacts with parents and carers. Pupils have a teacher tutor, a pastoral tutor and a case coordinator who provide them with good support. Staff know individual pupils, including the residential pupils, and their home circumstances very well and respond to them warmly. As a result, pupils establish happy, confident, trustful and constructive relationships with adults and with one another. They enjoy the living and learning experiences. All this has a positive impact on their performance.

46. Procedures for pupils' welfare are good in many respects. The school implements a sound health and safety policy. The Finance and Administrative Officer and a governor make informal safety checks on a regular basis. Teachers pay good attention to safety matters in lessons and activities, some of which take place in the surrounding woods. Pupils are also very well guided on matters relating to their welfare, development and futures through the curriculum and by talks from visitors like the school nurse, a police officer and careers officers. Parents feel that their children are safe and secure in the school. The school is aware of the local child protection procedures and has appropriate links with the support agencies. Staff training, support, and monitoring and recording procedures for de-escalation and intervention strategies are all good. Whilst pupils in public care are well catered for, there is no formal policy on 'pupils in public care'. Unwell pupils are warmly attended to, but first-aid treatment is not separately recorded, and there is no appropriate medical room. It is, however, well recorded in hand over diaries, and parents are made aware of any medication that is given. There are excellent procedures for supervision and recording of regular medication.

47. The residential units provide a good environment. There is good interaction between the care and teaching staff, and pupils are very well looked after and closely supervised, including during the night. The school provides healthy meals, which are very well cooked and presented by the cheerful kitchen staff. The local education authority has awarded the 'Heartbeat Healthy Eating Award' to the school for the last two years. Elemore is the first special school in Durham to achieve this award. A weakness in the provision for the health and safety and care of pupils is that the Social Services Department has never inspected the residential provision despite considerable efforts and encouragement by the school. The Head of Care has however, taken suitable advice, evaluated the provision against National Boarding Standards, and has identified areas for development. At present he recognises that pupils have little privacy in the bedrooms, and no independent listener or free access to a telephone in the units.

48. The school works hard to improve pupils' attendance but procedures for promoting improved attendance are not effective enough to achieve good attendance. An administration assistant helps in processing attendance information. Registration requirements are now fully met. Absences are appropriately identified and followed and a printout of the register is now made and kept. A deputy headteacher monitors attendance and works closely with the education welfare service. The system to detect internal truancy early works well.

49. The school promotes good behaviour very well through a system of simple rules and awards for good efforts, which are incorporated in the school's behaviour policy. Standards of behaviour across school and residential settings are consistently maintained. The school's policies on bullying and other oppressive behaviour are very well understood and regarded by the pupils and the staff. All pupils know that good behaviour is expected of them. Pupils value rewards, as when their good performance is acknowledged in the weekly school meetings. The school is very successful in creating an environment where all groups of pupils work and play well together. Relationships are excellent throughout the school. This has a positive impact on learning and on personal and social development. There is very good adult supervision and staff provide pupils with good role models. Procedures for recording and monitoring inappropriate behaviour are firmly in place. The school monitors pupil's behaviour very effectively through the extensive record of incidents and a well-developed score system. This promotes positive and non-oppressive behaviour.

50. Procedures for supporting and monitoring personal development are very good. The key personnel effectively oversee the implementation of the individual care plans. Residential experience and an extended day for non-residential pupils help integration and have a very beneficial effect on pupils' personal development. Pupils grow in self-esteem and confidence, and develop relaxed relationships with adults and peers. The highly effective opportunities, including excellent extra-curricular activities, which the school provides for pupils' social and moral development, have a positive impact on raising pupils' achievement. Pupils are very well managed in lessons. Standards of behaviour are good and relationships are excellent as a result, so that pupils work well together and make good progress in lessons and activities. Pupils' personal development is very effectively monitored, for example, through regular PAM (*Progress and Achievement Meetings*) and Child Care meetings. Effective exchange of information is achieved through detailed duty officers' log and productive changeover meetings (*between teachers, learning support assistants and residential care staff*).

51. The school is focussing on the development of assessment procedures and how they are used at the present time, and is striving to make them more consistent throughout the school. The school has consulted with outside agencies in order to be better informed and this has enabled the school to put good overall procedures in place. However, the way that assessment information is gathered and used is inconsistent across subjects. The school has gathered information from previous placements about pupils' performance, where these are available, and assesses all pupils on standardised reading and numeracy tests at the beginning and end of each year. Pupils' work is assessed and recorded at the end of each year against National Curriculum Levels of attainment. Teachers are trying out new tests in order to ascertain what pupils know, understand and can do when they enter the school in geography and history, for example. This work should give a clearer picture of the value the school adds over time.

52. Assessments of reading and numeracy have helped the school target groups for additional withdrawal work in reading and numeracy, and this is working well and raising standards further. All pupils who are lower attaining have been assessed against P levels in the core subjects of English and mathematics, and the targets being set within extended individual educational plans are relevant and achievable, and on the whole specific, in reading and numeracy. However, assessment is not used well enough to set targets for writing.

53. The assessment procedures for art are exemplary, with ongoing assessment and end of unit assessment being used very effectively to plan work for pupils of differing abilities, and annotated samples of work being kept to track pupils' progress. Pupils are very well involved in their own assessment in this subject. This work is testimony to the assessment co-ordinator's vision for assessment in the school. However, this vision is not yet fully communicated or agreed with all staff. The whole system of assessment is not yet supported by an up-to-date, clear and comprehensive assessment and teaching and learning policy or a marking policy.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

54. As at the time of the last inspection, partnership with parents is effective and the school can rely on parents to support its work and address any concerns about their children's performance. Parents take satisfactory interest in their children's work. Consultation meetings are well attended. Some parents voluntarily help with activities outside of normal hours. There is no parent-teacher association at present.

55. Parents have very favourable views about many aspects of the work of the school. They feel comfortable about approaching the school. They are pleased with the school's expectations, which are high, and very pleased with the activities that the school provides outside lessons. They are happy with the progress that their children make, which is good, and with the support for their children's personal development, which is very good. Some parents are not satisfied with the amount and consistency of homework or with pupils' behaviour in the school, and feel that their children do not like school. Inspectors found that pupils take some work home but not regularly, and that homework is not consistently set in all subjects. Behaviour in the school is good and most pupils like school. The school does very well in reaching out to parents, and teaching and the support staff warmly attend to parents' concerns.

56. The quality of information provided for parents is good, overall. The frequent consultation and curriculum information meetings for parents are well attended. There are regular phone contacts with parents, including the parents of residential pupils, daily if needed. Some parents felt that they are not well informed about how their children are getting on. Inspectors found that pupils' reviews and annual written reports are helpful, giving good information about pupils' progress in their academic and personal development and targets for improvement. The prospectus and governors' reports are informative but the current prospectus does not include all the statutory information. Parents of pupils who have special educational needs are very well involved in working out plans for their children's care and support.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

57. The quality of leadership and management is very good overall. The headteacher is an excellent, charismatic and visionary leader of the school who provides a very strong and exacting role model for the school team. He has built up a very strong leadership team that provides very good leadership in school and in the extended day and residential setting. His management of the school's affairs is very good and the very strong team ably supports him in this. The school motto, 'Together Everyone Achieves More' is reflected in the exemplary team work and commitment the whole school has to raising standards of behaviour, attitudes to learning and academic achievement, and to continual improvement to all aspects of the school's work. The headteacher has worked very hard to build up a team of staff who have excellent relationships with pupils in the school day, the extended day and the residential setting. He is not afraid to take some hard decisions in order to improve the quality of provision at the school. All these features have had a considerable effect on the overall provision and progress of pupils at the school since the last inspection.

58. Co-ordination of subjects is good overall, with some significant strengths in the co-ordination of mathematics, art, music, and physical education. This has led to higher standards of provision and achievement in these subjects since the last inspection. Co-ordination of design technology, geography, religious education and history has also improved and standards are now at least satisfactory and often good in these subjects. All these subjects now meet statutory requirements, a key issue identified at the last inspection. There are weaknesses in the management of English, mainly due to the co-ordinators long-term absence since her appointment at the school.

59. The special educational needs co-ordinator has worked hard to provide, ahead of time, adjustments to the school's provision for literacy for pupils with additional special educational needs, and this has led to good improvements in standards of reading for these pupils. He is well supported in this by the school's literacy co-ordinator, a support assistant who is well experienced in supporting reading. However, the school has not been able to move forward with the planned developments in writing because of the English co-ordinator's absence. The special educational needs co-ordinator, in his additional role as assessment co-ordinator, has ensured all pupils have been assessed in writing, but as yet this assessment has not been used well enough by teachers to plan work for pupils, both in English and in other subjects. As a result pupils are not achieving as well as they should in this aspect of English.

60. In addition, the school has had considerable difficulties in appointing a specialist teacher for a modern foreign language. The school therefore does not meet statutory requirements for the teaching of the subject for pupils aged between 11 and 14. The headteacher has made considerable efforts to find a suitable person with relevant expertise both in the subject and in the teaching of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The post has been widely advertised and the headteacher has tried to enlist a teacher from secondary schools that he has established good links with. All efforts have been unsuccessful. From September, a German teaching assistant is to take over the role with mentor support from an experienced senior teacher. He has been enabled to make these arrangements by the very good links the deputy head (Curriculum) has established through the Comenius Project. Meanwhile, the school has very successfully made provision for pupils' knowledge and understanding of world culture through other subjects. Consequently, pupils are making very good progress in their cultural understanding.

61. School governors are diligent and conscientious in their support of the school. The chair and other finance governors have a good understanding of the schools' strengths and weaknesses. The chair of governors has considerable expertise in the management of budgets and people, and the school uses his skills and expertise very effectively. He meets regularly with the headteacher to focus on improvements and development at the school. The governing body is properly constituted and roles and responsibilities are clear. However, a number of governors are very new and have not yet undertaken formal training. They meet regularly, and the headteacher provides them with very detailed information about the developments in the school. A weakness in the governors' leadership is that they have not ensured statutory requirements are met in relation to the school's prospectus and the curriculum. The governors are taking responsibility for the writing and publication of the governors' report to parents for the first time this year, and in a new initiative, governors have taken responsibility for specific aspects of the school's work including developing links with subject co-ordinators. This should ensure governors are more proactive in seeking information and even better involved in the life of the school.

62. All members of the school leadership team share the headteachers' vision to be a service provider for other schools in Durham. The headteacher and governors have enabled and supported the deputy head (Support Services) in a new inclusion initiative, which is called the Belmont Project. The aim of the project is to provide support and help to teachers and disaffected pupils in a local secondary school. Additional monies from the local education authority have been used wisely to support this initiative. The whole school team is committed to providing help to support inclusive practice in the educational community and to establishing links that could provide additional re-integration opportunities for the pupils at the school.

63. The school manages its financial and other resources very well. It allocates a relatively high proportion of the budget to teaching and support staff, as at the time of the previous inspection. The school has high levels of staffing for learning support assistants and residential staff, but levels of teaching staff are low when compared to other schools of this type. Teamwork between care staff and education staff is extremely beneficial and enhance standards and pupil progress.

64. The school improvement plan very successfully supports developments and improvements in standards of provision and achievements. It is formulated following wide consultation with the LEA, parents, pupils, teachers, care staff and governors. It reflects local and national priorities, such as the implementation of Key Stage 3 National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies and inclusion of pupils, as well as specific areas the school has identified for further improvement. It is fully costed and linked to training needs. The headteacher, senior leadership team and governors monitor and evaluate progress towards targets within the plan very effectively through the very good systems for self-evaluation.

65. The school applies best value principles well. For example, it compares its performance with that of similar schools, where it can, and involves the LEA for advice, as when purchasing learning resources for the school or comparing direct works bids against private bids, and consulting about developments in subjects. All coordinators and senior managers have their own budgets, which they are expected to account for in terms of improvements in standards. Action is taken to help senior staff become more knowledgeable about school finances so that money is spent wisely. The school makes good use of the very little available information by which it can improve its performance with that of similar schools. The school is using its information and communication technology expertise to set up pupil data files, which will help set school and pupil targets and make future comparisons even more reliable. The school is also a member of the Hermitage Learning Community and the Belmont cluster of schools, consisting of two comprehensive high schools and several primary schools. They use these links for two way consultation and support. This helps the school keep up with mainstream developments and practice.

66. The Standards Fund is spent appropriately to extend the management and teaching skills of staff, the implementation of National Numeracy and National Literacy strategies and ICT developments for example.

67. The secretarial and administrative team gives very good support to the governors, headteacher and teachers. This is much appreciated by governors when interpreting the financial reports, and by the teachers who are able to pursue their primary job of teaching pupils. The latest auditor's report was very complementary. Controls were in place and operating satisfactory, and financial records well maintained. Minor recommendations were made, and these have already been fully implemented. Very good use is made of new technology for administration, financial accounting, and recording of pupil attendance. Co-ordinators make good use of information and communication technology to support their subjects. The school is currently using it very effectively to record and plot pupil personal development and behavioural patterns.

Staffing

68. With the exception of modern foreign languages, where there is currently no teacher in post, there are sufficient appropriately qualified and experienced teaching staff to deliver the curriculum effectively. Staffing for English has been affected by the long term absence of the coordinator. Apart from modern foreign languages, a subject coordinator manages each subject area. Many of the coordinators, including those for English, mathematics and science, have an original qualification in their subject area. Teachers' good subject knowledge enhances the progress pupils make in lessons. Since the last inspection, one of the three deputies has taken on the additional role of special

educational needs co-ordinator. He ensures that the additional special educational needs of some pupils are very well met, and that the school fully complies with the Code of Practice. The number of learning support assistants is sufficient to ensure that lessons are always well supported. Many of the assistants are very experienced and have undertaken additional training. Consequently they make a very positive contribution to pupils' learning. Care staff are very effectively deployed. The way in which the school uses all staff flexibly enhances the learning opportunities for pupils significantly. For example, teachers and learning support assistants work with care staff outside school hours to offer a wide range of extra-curricular activities. Teachers, learning support staff and care staff form a seamless team. The very good procedures for liaison result in a very good level of continuity in the management of pupils.

69. At the time of the last inspection, statutory requirements for teacher appraisal were not met. All staff now have job descriptions which are regularly updated. Very good procedures are in place for the induction of new staff. Procedures for performance management have been implemented to include all staff in the school. They receive both formal and informal observations of their teaching, which are based on their own evaluations of their practice. Staff have a good awareness of their individual targets as well as more general school initiatives. The significant investment that the school makes in training staff ensures that the high standards in care and teaching are maintained. Current focuses identified within the school development are literacy training and the training of all care staff to National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 3 in the Care of Young People. The school obtained Investor In People status in December 2000.

Accommodation

70. The school provides a very pleasant learning environment for the pupils. It is situated in a fine Grade 1 listed building and surrounded by extensive grounds that include a very attractive nature trail made by staff and pupils. It is in very good decorative order. The standards of cleanliness are very high in both the classrooms and residential accommodation and bear good testimony to the high standard of work of the cleaning and care taking staff.

71. Since the last inspection, the residential accommodation has been refurbished and provides a comfortable home base for boys who sleep at school. Boys are encouraged to personalise their sleeping area and are provided with lockable cupboards to keep their belongings secure. However, there are no screens between the beds in the communal bedrooms, which means that there is not enough privacy. The social services department has never inspected the residential accommodation, despite the considerable efforts to encourage them to do so. The school has conducted its own evaluation of the residential accommodation in relation to the National Boarding Standards and other relevant requirements, and is already aware of its deficiencies and is doing all it can to improve them.

72. The adequacy of accommodation for teaching is satisfactory overall. However, there are some weaknesses in the teaching accommodation. The school has a large art room with good light, and good accommodation for design and technology (resistant materials) and ICT. However, the classrooms that are used to teach science, mathematics, music, and geography, history and food technology are cramped and affect the quality of provision. For example, the music room is too cramped to allow for pupils to stand up to sing and perform as an ensemble group. The school is aware of the difficulties with some

aspects of the classrooms and is looking for ways to improve the teaching area. There is no gymnasium and no separate changing facilities for girls. Although the school makes very effective use of local sports facilities and its extensive playing fields and outdoor areas, the lack of a gymnasium impedes the school's capacity to deliver the physical education curriculum on site. The school dining hall provides good accommodation for eating, but is not large enough to use for the teaching and performance of drama, gymnastics or music, for example.

Resources

73. The quality of resources to support the majority of subjects of the curriculum is good. Resources for music are very good. They are satisfactory in religious education and science but unsatisfactory in modern foreign languages. The school has a small library. It is well looked after and books are well organised so that pupils can use it independently. Although the content of the library is currently rather limited, a sum of money has been identified to purchase more book resources, including materials suitable for low attaining pupils.

74. At the time of the last inspection, the quantity of resources for information technology was reported to be too limited to promote pupils' skills in the subject across the curriculum. This has now been addressed and, in addition to a well equipped ICT room, there are networked workstations with printers in all classrooms.

75. Taking into account:

- The good overall progress pupils make;
- The high standards of behaviour and very good attitudes of the pupils to work and the excellent relationships within the school;
- The improvements, including teaching, since the last inspection;
- The excellent provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development;
- The very good leadership and management of the school and residential provision;
- The low unit cost.

The school is judged to give very good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

76. In order to improve the quality of education provided, the headteacher and governors should

- Improve the achievements and progress of pupils in writing by: **
 - * Completing the implementation of the National Literacy Framework for secondary schools for those pupils who did not reach Level 4 in Key Stage 2 assessment tests;
 - * Implementing the long-term planning for the range of texts to be used in the school and linking them to opportunities for shared and independent writing in English lessons in order to provide a more stimulating approach;
 - * Providing more planned opportunities for independent writing in subjects other than English;
 - * Ensuring assessment of pupils' writing skills is used more effectively to plan writing tasks, both in English and in other subjects;
 - * Assessing pupils' abilities in spelling and using the assessment to inform teachers' planning;
 - * Providing training for non-specialist English teachers and teaching assistants, so they are better informed in how to support independent writing for pupils of all abilities;
 - * Further developing software and other resources that will support writing tasks.

- Improve the provision for pupils to learn a Modern Foreign Language by: **
 - * Implementing the plans to appoint a German teaching assistant and to provide an experienced mentor to support them in their management of pupils and teaching.

77. In addition to the key areas above, the following areas of development, some of which are already identified by the school in its development plans, should be considered for inclusion in the action plan.

- * Further development of the assessment systems used in the school and of the use of assessment to inform curriculum planning; **
- * Extending the range of accreditation offered by the school; **
- * Ensuring the residential accommodation is inspected on a regular basis and that all requirements are met in relation to the National Boarding Standards; **
- * Ensuring that the school provides a systematic programme of homework, particularly in English, mathematics and science, which can be used to support learning in lessons;
- * Ensuring statutory requirements are met in relation to the Prospectus by publishing national figures of achievements in National Tests.

** *Issues already identified in school development plan.*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	73
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	48

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
1	37	48	11	3	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll. Year 11 pupils had already left the school.	70 (52)
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	70 (52)

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

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

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	9.66	School data	9.44

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 Year 2000

These tables below show the number of Year 9 pupils achieving each level at the school in 2000. There were 14 pupils in total.

Key Stage 3 SATS

TEACHER ASSESSMENT												
Number at each level												
	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	% Achieving L4+	% Achieving L5+	Pupils absent
English	2	2	2	5	3	0	0	0	0	21 (30)	0 (8)	0
Maths	0		3	3	5	3	0	0	0	57 (43)	21 (16)	0
Science	0	1		4	9		0	0	0	64 (42)	0 (14)	0
RESULTS OF TEST												
Below level 3	3	4	5	6	7	8						
English	8	4	2		0	0	0	14 (16)	0 (4)	0		
Maths	2	3	3	3	0	0	0	43 (39)	21 (13)	3		
Science	0	5	3	2	0	0	0	36 (34)	14 (11)	4		

(Figures in brackets represent average percentages found in other EBD schools nationally)

No pupils were entered for GCSE in any subject in Year 2000. However, Y11 pupils did achieve a range of other accreditation.

<u>ACCREDITATION</u>	NUMBER ACHIEVING
<u>AQA UNIT AWARD SCHEME:</u>	
- Food Technology :Health and Safety	8
- Food handling, preparation and storage	7
- Making an artefact using casting or vacuum forming	5
- Characteristics of food	1
<u>NPRA UNIT AWARD SCHEME</u>	
- Drama	6
- Basic Cookery Skills	6
- Safe use of cookers	5
- Planning and making a snack meal	5
- Making home made soup	5
- Safety and hygiene in the kitchen	5
- Life skills – washing up	5
- Making sandwiches	5
- Convenience foods	4
- Camp craft	2
<u>AEB ACHIEVEMENT TESTS IN NUMERACY</u>	
Level 1	8
Level 2	6
Level 3	1

<u>AEB ACHIEVEMENT TESTS IN LITERACY</u>	
Level 1	10
Level 2	6
<u>ASDAN YOUTH AWARD</u>	
BRONZE	5
BRONZE & SILVER CHALLENGE	3
BASIC FOOD HYGIENE CERTIFICATE	4
MINES RESCUE FIRST AID COURSE	10

All pupils also achieved a range of AAA Athletics Five Star Award certificates and ASA Swimming certificates.

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	70 (52)
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	26	2
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:

Y 7– Y 11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	12.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	5.5
Average class size	8

Education support staff:

Y 7 – Y 11

Total number of education support staff	8
Total aggregate hours worked per week	297

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000-2001
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	£
Total income	1282935.00
Total expenditure	1268492.00
Expenditure per pupil	18122.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	40576.00
Balance carried forward to next year	55019.00

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	70
Number of questionnaires returned	25

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	36	36	20	8	0
My child is making good progress in school.	52	28	12	4	4
Behaviour in the school is good.	24	48	20	8	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	16	28	24	12	4
The teaching is good.	68	20	8	4	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	76	12	8	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	72	24	4	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	72	16	8	0	0
The school works closely with parents	72	12	4	8	0
The school is well led and managed.	72	20	4	4	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	68	20	8	0	4
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	72	24	0	0	0

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

ENGLISH

78. Pupils make satisfactory progress in English overall. Pupils make good progress in reading and listening and satisfactory progress in speaking. Drama is not yet offered and although there are often good and sometimes very good opportunities for pupils to extend their speaking and listening in other subjects, in English lessons the opportunities are limited. Pupils' achievements and progress in writing are unsatisfactory. As a result, the present Year 11 pupils have been unable to obtain the Certificate of Achievement, as their work was not of a good enough standard.

79. The long absence of the co-ordinator has delayed important developments in the subject and set back pupils' progress. Standards in speaking and writing are not as good as at the last inspection. The provision to extend lower attaining pupils' reading on a withdrawal basis is good and structured approaches are used well. This significantly boosts pupils' confidence to use a range of strategies to work out new words when reading texts. However, the secondary model of the National Literacy Strategy has not been fully implemented to include extending pupils' independent writing or to provide enough help with spelling. The school does not assess spelling and independent writing well enough to identify individual needs. The help provided for pupils with dyspraxia is improving pupils' fine motor skills and co-ordination. This, in turn is helping with basic skills such as handwriting and the sequencing involved in building up new words.

80. The quality of teaching in English is satisfactory overall. Of the ten lessons seen on inspection, five were good, three were satisfactory and two were unsatisfactory. This is a similar overall picture to that found at the last inspection.

81. The teaching of listening skills in other subjects is good. Because teachers manage pupils well on the whole in the vast majority of subjects, pupils make good progress in listening to instructions and teachers' expositions and explanations. They listen very well to music in all its forms both in music lessons and in religious education lessons, for example. Teachers give satisfactory opportunities for pupils to listen to stories in English, and good opportunities to listen to others during discussions and presentations in religious education, and in personal and social education and citizenship. Pupils listen well to their peers' prepared presentations about their favourite hobbies, for example. They make relevant responses to questions and build on their peers' responses in discussions. By the time they are 14, higher attaining pupils begin to show confidence in speaking and listening, particularly where the topics interest them. Lower attaining pupils discuss story lines, after listening to a story, and talk about television programmes. Pupils could make better progress if they had more opportunities for group discussions, debate or drama in English lessons. By the age of 15, higher attaining pupils tell a story in an appropriate style for the audience and express opinions about a range of stories and topics. For example, they discuss some of the differences between tabloid and broadsheet newspapers and the types of audience the papers are aimed at. Lower attaining pupils talk about the relationships between different characters in a story they have heard. The older pupils are given good opportunities to discuss issues with the teacher and learn to talk enthusiastically about topical news stories in religious education. Pupils learn to listen to each other and to put forward their own views whilst showing respect for other people's points of view, in discussions about life and death, for example.

82. The teaching of reading is good overall. Lower attaining pupils' progress in learning to read has been less of a casualty because the school has provided well for these pupils in withdrawal classes taken by learning support assistants. There is commercial scheme and graded readers for pupils of average ability, which support these pupils in their learning. Sensitive support is given in lessons both in English and in other subjects to enable pupils to read to learn. In the withdrawal sessions for reading, teaching is consistently good. The work is very structured and builds clearly on previous learning. Pupils are well aware of what they have to learn and how well they are doing. Teaching assistants build up strong relationships with pupils based on trust and a valuing of pupils' efforts. Consequently, previous non-readers or early readers change their attitudes towards reading and work very hard. They develop positive attitudes to reading and see themselves as readers when previously they were frustrated by their inability to read. There is an emphasis on learning strategies for reading as well as a strong phonics approach. They use prediction, picture and context clues to read new words. Records show that both younger and older early readers increase their reading ability over a period of nine months, by two and sometimes three years. Test results show that most pupils make at least steady progress with their reading and reading records show that all pupils read a number of books, to adults and on their own. Higher attaining pupils are confident to read aloud in class and choose books from the library, which they read with confidence. Good opportunities are provided subjects other than English to develop higher order reading skills when using information and communication technology for research purposes, for example

83. The teaching of writing is unsatisfactory and pupils make unsatisfactory progress in this aspect of English. In the best lessons, the activities are interesting and relevant to the pupils. This motivates them and they use their imagination and creativity well and make good progress. Different work is set for pupils of differing abilities, and all work within their capabilities, yet are fully challenged. However, in other lessons pupils are all given the same work and on occasions higher attaining pupils who are imaginative and creative do time-filling and routine exercises. A study of the work completed during the past year with supply teachers shows there has been an overemphasis on worksheets and few opportunities for pupils to carry out imaginative and creative writing. There is evidence of work often being unfinished. Work was rarely set that met pupils differing needs. Pupils' results in the Standard Attainment Tests (SATs) at age 14 show that their achievements are significantly below those found in science and mathematics, frequently by as much as two levels. Work in other subjects also shows that they are having difficulty expressing what they know and understand in a written form.

84. More recent work completed in English lessons is of a better standard. In Year 8, pupils write 'Shapes' poems, where the poem is written within a shape of the subject matter, such as a snake or a cat. They write amusing limericks, which they read out confidently to the whole school. By the age of 14, lower attaining pupils dictate their work to an adult and then copy out what is written. By the age of 16 they use a supportive writing frame, which asks the questions, Who? What? When? and Where? to plan their writing. They continue to dictate to adults and word-process their work. They draft and re-draft their work. Non-English specialists who teach some English lessons often provide motivating activities for pupils that are appropriate to their needs. For example, they use word-processing, including writing a newspaper article using computer software to organise their work on the page, and the pupils learn to find out facts by watching a video of a story. However, information technology is not used enough in other English lessons and pupils are not given enough help to improve their spelling or the opportunity to use technology to assist them in their spelling. Overall, pupils do not have

enough opportunities to write for different purposes or to extend their creative writing. Pupils therefore continue to lack confidence in their writing skills. For example, one pupil, who has a reading age of 11.7 years, is unable to write without constant requests for spelling and confirmation that his work is appropriate. Lower attaining pupils are given good opportunities and support to dictate their creative efforts. However, withdrawal classes do not have a writing focus and there are few pupils with specific and measurable and challenging targets for independent writing. Higher attaining pupils often insist that they should be able to scribe to adults when they are clearly capable of writing independently. ICT is used well in English lessons taken by the coordinator for ICT, and writing frames are used in the best lessons to support the structure of writing.

85. Teachers mostly manage pupils' more challenging behaviour well and the pupils' response to English lessons on the whole is satisfactory. The overall picture is similar to that found at the last inspection. However, attitudes to reading are much improved. The best response is to reading, listening to stories and to discussion activities. The best teachers of English make it clear from the onset what behaviour will or will not be accepted. Pupils generally settle well to work secure in the knowledge that they will be assisted to manage their own behaviour. Poor response directly relates to tasks that are dull and lack challenge. Worksheets are too often used. Pupils therefore lose attention and begin to test the boundaries because it has not been made clear to them how they should behave. This, in turn, affects relationships and occasionally pupils are negative in their responses to staff and unkind towards each other.

86. The curriculum for English is satisfactory overall, but there are weaknesses in the planned curriculum. The written scheme of work, which includes a longterm plan for the literature the pupils will study, is not yet completed or implemented. Currently, there is an over-emphasis on worksheets and written work does not always meet the needs of pupils with differing abilities. Non-specialist English teachers and teachers of subjects other than English do not have the support of a written scheme of work provided by the English department to extend pupils' writing. The school uses a structured multi-sensory approach for lower attaining pupils and commercial schemes, which support the teaching and learning of reading well. Graded readers, provided through the 'Better Reading' scheme is supporting the teaching and learning of pupils of average ability. Pupils of differing abilities are supported well to enable them to read to learn about other subjects through a shared reading approach, although not all teachers make worksheets accessible enough for lower attaining pupils to read independently.

87. Assessment procedures are satisfactory overall. However, assessment is not used well enough to plan how pupils will be supported for their writing needs. Reading records are carefully kept; reading tests are carried out regularly, and usefully show the good progress pupils make with learning to read. However, no corresponding test comparison is carried out with spelling. Pupils work towards the Certificate of Achievement and there are plans to introduce General Certificate of School Education (GCSE). The leadership and management of English are unsatisfactory. The lack of a coordinator has led to unsatisfactory progress in writing. The staffing to teach English is also unsatisfactory. Although the subject leader is a specialist teacher, she has been absent for most of the time since she was appointed, and the previous subject leader was also absent over a long period. Other teachers do not have specialist English knowledge, although they have very

good management of pupils' behaviour and they make the work interesting and relevant. Teaching assistants who withdraw the pupils for reading, one of whom coordinates the work, have good experience in the teaching of reading skills. The school uses their expertise very well to improve lower attaining pupils' reading skills. However, they do not have specialist qualifications or additional training for working with pupils with literacy problems and are unable to extend lower attaining pupils' writing skills.

88. The library is very small, but adequately stocked. The books have all been labelled according to reading levels, which is very helpful for pupils when they are choosing books. There are monies set aside to improve the range of books, particularly for those pupils who are lower attaining. Overall resources are satisfactory, but there are limited resources for extending pupils' writing skills.

MATHEMATICS

89. Pupils' achievements across the school in mathematics are very good. Many pupils enter the school with very limited mathematical skills and with attainment well below national expectations. On entry they lack confidence and have a negative view of their ability in the subject. This changes as they move through the school. Pupils become progressively more confident, especially in their number work and use of mathematical language. Results in Key Stage 3 tests are improving year on year. By the age of 14 pupils are achieving above the standards expected of pupils in similar schools, with almost a quarter of pupils achieving Level 5. Pupils at the age of 16 gain the Certificate of Achievement in mathematics and one pupil is being entered for the General Certificate of Secondary Education Foundation Certificate this year. The number of pupils entered will be increased year on year, and results in this examination should improve over time as a result of the very good teaching. However, if this progress is to continue, a formal homework policy needs to be developed by the department to ensure pupils have sufficient time to complete the extra work involved.

90. The quality of teaching and learning has improved significantly since the last inspection when the quality was satisfactory overall. It is now very good overall. Of the seven lessons seen, three were good and four were very good. This judgement was strongly supported by the high quality of pupils' work that was analysed. Because teachers have high expectations of how work is to be presented and recorded, pupils present their work neatly and accurately to show how they have worked problems out. Samples of work from the withdrawal groups showed that teaching assistants for lower attaining pupils present very good opportunities for pupils to learn about number and algebra. Work is very well matched to their individual needs; linked to individual educational plans, and based on very good assessment.

91. The teaching of numeracy in other subjects is also very good. Pupils learn to apply their mathematical skills very effectively across a broad curriculum. In physical education, for example, they learn to use timers and stop watches to time their own performances and each other's. They also use a metric tape to measure their throwing performances and compare their past and present performances. In science, pupils use their measuring, counting, estimating and recording skills when preparing graphs and recording experiments. In design technology and food technology they learn to weigh and measure accurately. In art they use their ability and skills to measure and show their understanding of shape and properties. In music they understand rhythm and timing, and in history and geography, they collect and interrogate data and use it in a meaningful way.

Literacy skills are used particularly effectively way in mathematics. There are always language boards prepared to reinforce key mathematical language and illustrate new vocabulary being introduced. This allows the pupils to consolidate their listening, speaking, reading and writing skills very well.

92. The significant strength of the teaching is in the way pupils are managed. Management is based on providing work that matches pupils' needs and on the very good relationships teachers and support assistants have developed with pupils, both in the classroom and in the extended day and residential setting. Very good ongoing assessment is used very well to plan lessons that move individuals and groups of pupils on and build very securely on their prior attainment and skills. As a result pupils become steadily more confident about their abilities and work hard to improve further. Teachers have high expectations that pupils will listen and sit properly before teaching begins and throughout lessons. Learning therefore starts from the beginning of lessons and pupils work hard and behave very well. Because of this very good management, lessons proceed at a brisk pace and no time is wasted. Pupils are enthusiastic about mathematics. Pupils are very polite to visitors. They ensure that the inspector in lessons was always kept aware of the purpose of the lesson and that he had all the necessary books, work sheets and equipment to keep up with the class.

93. Planning is very good and objectives are made clear to pupils at the beginning of lessons. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and this is shown in very good explanations of new work and in the enthusiasm and confidence of the teacher, which makes learning fun. Because of this approach, pupils respond with enthusiasm; they are eager to answer questions and take great pride in completing their work, and in the recording and presentation of it. Praise and feedback are used well, successfully motivating pupils and helping them to remain on task.

94. Mental warm ups at the beginning of lessons set a good pace. Consequently, by the age of 14, low attaining pupils show good achievement in their mental mathematics in lessons. They learn to double and halve numbers up to 20 and count on and backwards accurately, for example. Higher attaining pupils show great skill and confidence in their mental warm up and accurately double and halve numbers up to 100. They double and half odd numbers and use numbers with decimal fractions, such as half 2.4 is 1.2, or double 3.5 is 7. Questioning is used very well to develop thinking and improve understanding. The way in which learning resources are provided and used, many made in-house by the co-ordinator and matched to pupils' needs, enables pupils to build up concepts in a practical way. As a result lower attaining pupils by the age of 14 know the properties of a triangle, and explain 'Tri' means three, as in 'triathlon'. They learn that a triangle has three sides and three angles and that the angles add up to 180 degrees. Many learn to name types of triangles correctly, such as 'equilateral' and 'isosceles', and define a scalene triangle as one that has sides of three different lengths and three different angles. Higher attaining pupils learn to use their knowledge of doubling and halving when working out the relationship between the radius and diameter of a circle. Pupils are given very good opportunities to investigate number. They investigate how many tenths make a half and how many different ways a half can be made up by using practical apparatus. They learn to convert fractions into decimals. In their geometrical work, they learn to construct triangles accurately using a pair of compasses, a protractor and a rule. Pupils' use of language is excellent. This is because the co-ordinator ensures that key words are displayed on boards, and are available during the lessons for pupils to use as reference. Consequently pupils learn to read and use specific mathematical vocabulary such as 'denominator' and 'numerator', 'obtuse,' 'reflex' and 'right angles', for example.

95. ICT is used well in mathematics lessons. By the age of 16, lower attaining pupils develop a good understanding of collecting, recording and interpreting data. They plot or graph their results and use ICT programmes effectively to present their findings in a range of forms, which they print out and display. Higher attaining pupils learn to present their findings as bar graphs, pie charts, scatter grams and pictograms. They learn to discuss which presentation best illustrates the data collected, is which is more appropriate and easily understood.

96. The co-ordinator had done much preparation in readiness for the introduction of the National Numeracy Framework. For this work she has been recognised as one of a limited number of team leaders in the authority. The school has greatly benefited from the work the co-ordinator has put into this project. The subject is very well led. A comprehensive policy and relevant scheme of work ensure the practical use, and application of mathematics across the curriculum. The subject makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development through pupil evaluation, teachers valuing pupils' work and efforts, and through research, into the currencies of the world, for example. Displays of pupils' work are very good both in the mathematics room and in corridors throughout the school. Displays are very well presented and there are no graffiti or vandalism of this work

SCIENCE

97. By the age of 14, pupils have generally made good progress in all aspects of science. This represents an improvement since the last inspection when progress was described as satisfactory. Although attainment for the majority of pupils is below national expectations, some high attaining pupils achieve national standards. Overall, standards are above those expected in similar schools.

98. Pupils in Year 7 make good progress in developing skills in investigation and in their knowledge of scientific facts. They learn to use specialist equipment, such as Bunsen burners, and to record the results of simple experiments with support, tabulating data and representing it graphically. For example, they carry out and record their findings in an experiment to demonstrate the different cooling times of water in lagged and unlagged beakers. In biology, pupils make good progress in learning about the differences between animals and plants and about variations in reproduction. Low attaining pupils learn that some animals produce a large number of eggs because there is a high probability that not all the eggs will develop fully. Through their work with electrical circuits, pupils attempt to link cause and effect. For example, high attaining pupils learn to use a simple circuit to test fuses.

99. Lower attaining pupils in Years 8 and 9 respond well to the good individual support given by the teacher and learning support assistants and make good progress. They develop their investigative skills and learn what a fair test is. Their ability to measure and record results shows satisfactory improvement and they take care with the presentation of their work. However, oral skills are in advance of written skills. Many low attaining pupils write laboriously and slowly. Consequently, on occasions pupils are unable to complete their work during lessons and there are examples of unfinished pieces of work in their exercise books. Some high attaining pupils make very good progress. This is exemplified by their performance in the National Tests for science at the age of 14. For example, two pupils have improved by three levels, rather than the two levels generally expected. They show a developing understanding of scientific concepts and

apply this knowledge in different situations. Good learning is evident in their ability to analyse and describe what they have seen during the process of diffusion in gases, for example. However, class records indicate that the progress of a minority of high attaining pupils is impeded because they have been absent from a number of lessons because of absconding or exclusion from school. The lack of opportunities to consolidate learning through homework also limits the progress of some pupils.

100. Because the oldest pupils had left school at the time of the inspection, only one science lesson was seen for pupils between the ages of 14 and 16. In this lesson for low attaining Year 10 pupils, very good learning was evident in the way pupils came to an understanding of the process of distillation. This was because the teacher used very good questioning and repetition of key facts to ensure that all pupils understood the scientific terms and concepts involved. However, progress over time for pupils aged 14 to 16 is satisfactory. This is because there is not enough taught time, which is compounded by pupils in Year 10 being absent from lessons and by the fact that homework is not set to support learning in the classroom. The accommodation for science is unsatisfactory for the oldest pupils; it has no fume cupboard and is cramped. This also affects the progress of the oldest pupils because it limits the range of investigations pupils can undertake.

101. Teaching is good overall. Of the five lessons seen, teaching was good in three lessons, very good in one lesson, and satisfactory in the other. The strengths of teaching are in the teacher's very good subject knowledge. This enables him to present information in a stimulating way at the pupils' level of understanding. Good questioning and repetition of facts enhance pupils' understanding. The teacher and support staff have very good relationships with the pupils. They manage behaviour well so that lessons run smoothly and the majority of pupils participate fully and try hard to complete all tasks set. Good behaviour management was evident in the calm and measured response to a high attaining pupil who tried to opt out of a lesson. This ensured that the lesson was not interrupted so that the remaining pupils in the class made good progress. Because they understand pupils very well, support staff provide very good support to low attaining pupils and pupils with additional special educational needs. However, daily lesson plans are not sufficiently detailed and do not clearly state how tasks are to be broken down for those pupils who find learning more difficult. This has most impact on the quality of pupils' written work where worksheets are not suitably adapted so that all pupils can complete their work independently in the time allowed.

102. The subject co-ordinator, who teaches all lessons, manages the subject well and has instigated a number of improvements since the last inspection. For example, he has produced good schemes of work which correspond well to the National Curriculum programmes of study. The links which are being developed with a local secondary school will have a very positive impact, if, as planned, they enable pupils to access a broader range of resources and more suitable accommodation. They will also promote opportunities for inclusion. The intention of the headteacher to review the accommodation and amount of teaching time so that the school is able to prepare pupils for the single award GCSE in science will ensure further improvements. This should enable high attaining pupils to achieve in line with their ability by the age of 16. Pupils no longer benefit from lessons in rural science. However, the science co-ordinator is planning to use the new greenhouse to promote studies in horticulture. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

ART

103. At the last inspection, art was reported to be a strength of the school. Since then the high standards have been maintained and good progress has been made in developing the subject further. Pupils make very good progress in working in both two and three dimensional form in each of art, craft and design. Standards achieved are well above those expected in similar schools. The achievements of high attaining pupils are nearly in line with national expectations. Low attaining pupils and pupils with additional special educational needs participate well in lessons and make very good progress. This is because of the very good individual support and because the work is adapted carefully to meet pupils' needs. The recently introduced schemes of work are excellent and challenge and stimulate pupils so that they make very good progress. There is a very good focus on helping pupils to develop their own ideas through visual research. They are encouraged to work in a wide range of media and to produce imaginative and thoughtful finished work of a high quality. For example, in their project on 'Shared View', younger pupils took photographs of views of the landscape around the school and recorded how the landscape made them feel. They then sketched the view they had chosen and developed the drawings very well using pastels. Pupils observe how various artists have viewed landscape, and they experiment in different styles and with different media. The landscape paintings, which are on display in public areas, demonstrate the very good progress that pupils make in observational drawing and painting. This is supported by the practice of the art teacher in encouraging pupils to use their sketchbooks in their recreational time at evenings and weekends.

104. Pupils are introduced to a very good range of exciting opportunities to create models and sculpture both in lessons and in the excellent art club which takes place after school. Consequently, they are very enthusiastic about three-dimensional work and make particularly good progress in this area. The sculpture trail, which has been created around the nature trail, is outstanding and displays highly imaginative sculptures produced by the pupils using a wide range of materials such as chicken wire, string, clay and neoprene.

105. Teaching is consistently very good. A particularly strong feature is the exemplary strategies for assessment, which are carefully linked into all lesson planning and teaching. This enables the teacher to measure individual pupil's progress very effectively so that activities are very well matched to what they can do. Older pupils are supported in evaluating and planning their own work through using the recording forms which the teacher has designed. They respond very well to this and behave in a mature manner, working sensibly and conscientiously to complete their work. The high quality displays of pupils' work, which are evident in the school buildings and the grounds, are highly motivating for pupils and effective in raising their self-esteem. The teacher and learning support assistants have very good relationships with pupils. They are sensitive to their individual needs and manage their behaviour very well. This means that lessons run very smoothly and all pupils make very good progress. Resources are used very effectively to enhance pupils' learning. For example, in one lesson seen, an overhead projector was used to enable a pupil with weak drawing skills to produce a recognisable cartoon character.

106. The subject is very well led and managed by the subject coordinator who is also responsible for all teaching in the subject. Although he has no formal qualifications in art, he has put enormous effort into building up his own skills and understanding and brings real enthusiasm to this subject area. His commitment to improve and develop teaching in art and design is outstanding. This is reflected in the numerous initiatives for which he has

been responsible and includes the new schemes of work and the sculpture trail. He has introduced the opportunity for older pupils to gain accreditation in art and is planning towards pupils who are currently in Year 8 being entered for the GCSE examination. Pupils' study of various art forms and the work of a range of artists from different cultures make a good contribution to their cultural development and awareness of the richness and diversity of other cultures.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY (DT)

107. DT (resistant materials) and DT (food technology) are taught as separate subjects, with different co-ordinators. However, the organisation of these two elements of the subject, including the curriculum, makes them entirely compatible and standards are very similar throughout the school. Standards of achievement in design and technology are good in relation to those in similar schools. Pupils of all attainment levels are making good progress throughout the school. This is an improvement since the last inspection when standards were found to be satisfactory overall. By the age of 16, most pupils have achieved National Curriculum Level 5 in making and Level 3 in design. This good progress is associated with appropriate schemes of work and good teaching. Lower attaining pupils cover the same work, with more support, and produce the same artefacts and dishes, albeit with less refinement.

108. By the age of 14, the pupils are familiar with the basic making tools in the workshop and the basic equipment in the food technology room. They pay good attention to the health and safety issues surrounding the use of cutting tools, knives, machinery and hot cookers. They discuss what they want to make and how they could make it. They learn to make sketches of the products they want to make and to suggest different materials or tools that could be used. They complete design and evaluation briefs, select and prepare different ingredients, and know the most effective equipment for preparing food. They measure and mark out work, cut different materials using saws, and fasten them together using glue or screws and pins. They work with different ingredients and prepare them to make different healthy dishes. They understand the importance of healthy eating and the sources of essential vitamins and minerals. Using this knowledge, the pupils make acrylic key fobs, vacuum formed frisbees, MDF door plaques, pen and pencil holders from wood, and badges with light-emitting diodes. They make fillings for jacket potatoes, pizzas, crumbles and snack bars.

109. Pupils build well on their previous knowledge and skills and, by the age of 16, they complete design schedules, with sketches and suggestions for features, materials and tools using resistant materials. In food technology, pupils list ingredients and equipment and write recipes. They produce a desk tidy from wood, a bird feeder, presentation box, key fob (from enamelled copper) and an acrylic clock. They know about convenience foods and produce a variety of healthy alternatives, such as, pastry/tuna turnovers, buns, burgers and bread. After they have completed the making element, they complete evaluation sheets, explaining if the device worked out and what they would do differently, if they were to repeat the project.

110. Teaching and learning are good overall in all aspects of the subject. Of the ten lessons seen during the inspection, two were very good and eight were good. This is an improvement since the last inspection. A strength of the teaching is in the way pupils are managed. Teachers offer appropriate and interesting activities and lessons proceed at a

good pace. Well-focussed support from the teachers and support assistants maintains the pupils' interest well and keeps them on task. The way in which pupils enter the room, settle for work and then organise themselves for the practical work ahead is impressive, and illustrates the teachers' insistence on clear routines. There is some restless behaviour from the youngest pupils, who have been in the school for the shortest time, but skilled support and use of praise and encouragement soon brings them back on task. It is noticeable how the pupils' maturity and responsibility increase as they move through the school. Attitudes and behaviour have improved since the last inspection when they were judged to be satisfactory overall. Most pupils work independently for long periods of time, requiring minimum support from the teachers or the support assistants. They look after their work well and are keen to show it off to visitors. Completed work is of a high standard of presentation and this stems from high expectations on the part of the teachers and an insistence on quality. The pupils take good care of the workshop and food technology room and the tools and equipment.

111. Lessons are well planned, in the form of ongoing projects, which contain processes that enable the pupils to develop their design and make skills well. The teachers use questioning well in order to enable the pupils to recall what they know, and to make them think about what they will need for the project and how they will organise their work. Good use is made of what if? and why? questions. The teachers insist on high standards of presentation and so each pupil's design and make brief is neat and tidy. During practical tasks, there is a good mix of direct instruction, questioning and enabling, so that the pupils work on their own for a lot of the time. Low attaining pupils are enabled to join in through the sensitive use of ongoing support from the teachers and support assistants. There are very good routines for teaching and learning, within which the pupils feel secure and confident and behave well. The teachers make good use of ongoing assessment based on the National Curriculum Levels and the Certificate of Achievement assessment procedures to monitor pupils' progress and to offer appropriate support.

112. The curriculum has improved considerably since the last inspection. It now has a good link to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study and uses the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority schemes of work well. Pupils now learn to use a wider range of materials than at the last inspection. There are also now better links with ICT through the use of control technology and electronics. Pupils have good opportunities for research using the Internet. Studying and preparing the foods of other cultures enrich pupils' cultural understanding. The teachers and support assistants clearly enjoy their work and pass on that enjoyment to their pupils. There is a happy buzz of activity in lessons.

113. The two elements of the subject are well led and managed by their respective coordinators, who are well qualified and have a wealth of relevant experience. The accommodation is good: the workshop has recently been refurbished and re-equipped to a high standard and the food technology room is well equipped. However, the maximum number of pupils observed in the food technology room was five and it was somewhat cramped then. Any more than five pupils in the room would raise concerns about the pupils' safety in the vicinity of sharp knives and hot cookers. Resources are good and are well maintained.

GEOGRAPHY

114. Pupils' achievements in geography by the age of 14 are good overall. In the last inspection pupils made unsatisfactory progress in the majority of lessons. Overall pupils now make good progress, although progress is better for the higher attaining than for lower attaining pupils. A more practical approach and better target setting for lower attaining pupils would improve this disparity in progress. Geography is not taught to older pupils.

115. Teaching is good overall, although the teaching of lower attaining pupils is not as good as that for higher attaining pupils. Learning has a similar profile. Teaching was good overall in the four lessons seen. Teaching has improved since the last inspection, when it was judged to be unsatisfactory overall and the management of behaviour was poor. The management of behaviour is now satisfactory overall and is well supported by teaching assistants. Over lengthy introductions and work that does not always meet pupils' needs affect the attitudes and learning of younger and lower attaining pupils, who need a more practical approach. The style of teaching is much better suited to higher attaining pupils. Consequently, by the age of 12, higher attaining pupils learn to understand and explain the growth of settlements and the development of amenities. They learn to use their map-reading skills and graph skills to plot and compare two climates and begin to understand the factors affecting British weather. They link weather conditions and river and tide states and begin to predict and discuss outcomes. By the age of 14, pupils have some understanding of the effects of flooding and how we try to stop it.

116. Lower attaining pupils learn most when out on field trips. This part of the teaching and provision is a strength of the subject. Locally, they study the car industries and identify where certain cars are produced around the United Kingdom. They explain why the Japanese make cars locally and why some car factories in the United Kingdom are being sold or closed. Pupils of all abilities gain first-hand knowledge of rivers through field trips to Chester Moor, and of the car industry through visits to the Nissan car plant as part of a secondary industries project. They also visit Hartlepool Nuclear Power Station as well as Pitington Hill to see emergency evacuation plans in the event of a volcanic eruption. Year 7 pupils are enthusiastic and well informed about their involvement in a village and site survey in Sherburn, and Year 9 pupils are involved in visiting Durham University's gardens to experience the climate and vegetation of the tropical rainforests and view some of the insect and animal life in the tropical house. Year 9 pupils have also visited Dryburn Hospital Baby Care Unit to compare facilities available in the developed world with those in less developed countries like the Sudan. All these visits, and subsequent discussions, strongly promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

117. ICT is used well in lessons to support learning in the subject. Pupils are communicating with other parts of the world very effectively by email. In Year 8 pupils are emailing an Englishman aboard a Russian ship in Antarctica. When this man arrives back in England he will visit the school and present a slide show of his journey. They learn to use a digital camera to record their visits and findings.

118. There are some good examples where literacy skills are extended in lessons. In Year 9, for example, pupils are sending letters via their teacher this summer to an American Indian village in the rain forest of Guyana. Higher attaining pupils in Year 9 are encouraged to write independently about the cause and effect of acid rain. Atlases and maps are used well to extend reading skills. Year 7 pupils used maps very effectively to find out about and then describe Britain's population distribution. Support assistants help

lower attaining pupils to read text books and work sheets and, in one lesson, lower attaining pupils in Year 8 made good gains in learning about global warming by playing a snakes and ladders game with simple messages read out by the teacher and support assistant. Higher attaining pupils have good opportunities to read a range of non-fiction texts. However, pupils' writing needs are not always well enough planned for. Numeracy is promoted well, particularly graphing and data-handling skills. Survey findings are drawn up in graphic form and pupils learn to interpret graphical information.

119. There are good quality displays, notably those on the production of electricity, research work by Year 8 and 9 showing pictorial evidence of a visit to the Wind Turbine at Cassop Primary School, and a study of a rainforest by Year 9. All support pupils' learning about a range of topics

120. The co-ordinator, who is very well qualified in her subject, is the sole teacher for geography; she manages her department well. She has worked hard to improve provision. Since the last inspection there has been very good improvement in geography. A comprehensive policy and a scheme of work are linked to the National Curriculum programmes of study. Medium-term planning is informed by her assessment of what pupils are learning best. Resources have been extended and are now good. She recognises the need to develop her own strategies for encouraging and supporting writing needs in lessons.

HISTORY

121. Pupils' achievements in history are good overall. High attaining pupils make good progress and lower attaining pupils make satisfactory progress in the subject by the age of 14. This works an improvement since the last inspection, when progress in the subject was judged to be limited.

122. The quality of teaching and learning in history is good and improved since the time of the last inspection. Five lessons were observed; the quality of teaching in one lesson was judged to be satisfactory, two lessons were good and two lessons were very good. A very good learning assistant works with the teacher and pupils in a very supportive and imaginative way. This was very evident during practical sessions involving making tepees and shields.

123. A strength of the teaching is in the way teachers use a practical and hands on approach to the subject. Pupils are given good opportunities to respond to history teaching through working in pairs to make models of key artefacts, such as North American tepees, Mexican Indian ovens and medieval shields. This particularly helps lower attaining pupils to remember key facts about a particular culture or period of history. Displays show that Year 7 pupils have used surveying instruments to plan straight Roman roads and Year 8 pupils have made authentic copies of Charles 1's death warrant. Visits extend pupils' learning very well. These include visits to Hadrian's Wall and Vindolanda, the national coal-mining museum for England in West Yorkshire and Eden Camp in North Yorkshire. The teacher has put in a bid for a culture club to be run as an extracurricular activity to enable pupils to visit historical places of interests further a field such as the Tower of London and Westminster Abbey. Pupils' good attitude and behaviour reflect this more practical approach to this academic subject.

124. Numeracy skills are taught well in the subject and support learning of chronology. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when teachers were criticised for not developing this area of historical study. Pupils are given good opportunities to calculate periods of time and to gain an understanding of key time vocabulary such as ‘decade’ and ‘century’. Lower attaining pupils learn how to order the inventions of the 20th century, using a time line for example.

125. A greater emphasis is now placed on developing pupils’ knowledge and understanding of key events in history and explaining why they happened. Higher attaining pupils at Year 7 give reasons for the end of the empire; describe different Roman soldiers from paintings, and construct a time line of castle developments over the medieval period. Lower attaining Year 7 pupils sequence pictures to show urban growth in Roman times, and recall five important roles played by the Church. By the age of 14, all pupils place dates and terms in a time line, and link pictures and portraits with events associated with them. The higher attaining pupils identify the main religious changes during the reign of Edward, Mary and Elizabeth 1, and evaluate evidence to decide whether Guy Fawkes’ gang were acting alone. The teacher looks for opportunities to develop pupils’ spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. During a Year 9 lesson on Hiroshima, there was great empathy with the victims of the atomic bomb.

126. Basic communication skills are taught well in lessons overall. Pupils are given good opportunities to speak in class at their own level of understanding. For example, in Year 9, lower attaining pupils gave a definition of a slave and the higher attaining pupil took part in a debate over the abolition of slavery. The teacher uses ICT well to support the subject. For example, one Year 9 pupil researched his surname while studying the First World War and retrieved information from the Internet about his namesake, a Durham infantryman who had died on the 3rd July 1916 aged 21 years old. The teacher, through reading and the use of key vocabulary, promotes literacy and numeracy for each unit of work. Pupils learn to calculate periods of elapsed time, or how long someone lived or how far armies marched. They plot and plan graphs, which include bar lines and pie forms of charts. Writing skills could be better developed in the subject if the assessment of pupils’ writing was better used to set written work. This weakness in the teaching particularly affects the progress of lower attaining pupils in the subject.

127. Since the last inspection the department has acquired a new coordinator who over the past 3 years, has worked extremely hard to build up a good department. An up to date policy and a good overall scheme of work are linked to the National Curriculum programmes of study. This could be further improved by adding more detail in terms of objectives to be set for lower and higher attaining pupils. Medium term planning includes evaluation and assessment of pupils’ progress. However, this could be more succinct and finely tuned to assess pupils’ needs more quickly. Daily planning lacks detail of how work will be set to meet differing literacy needs. Resources are now good and used well.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

128. The standards of achievement in ICT are good in comparison with similar schools and have improved since the last inspection. Pupils of all attainment levels are now making good progress throughout the school. This good progress is associated with appropriate schemes of work, good teaching and good resources.

129. Teaching and learning in ICT are good overall. Of the four lessons observed, three were good and one satisfactory. Teaching has improved since the last inspection, when it was judged to be satisfactory. In the satisfactory lesson, the teacher's explanation of the tasks was not sufficiently clear at the beginning. Lessons are well planned in the form of ongoing projects, which the pupils find interesting and stimulating. Good questioning enables the pupils to recall what they already know and to explore what if? and why? Whilst pupils are involved in working on the computers, the teachers and support assistants offer a good mix of support and enabling so that the pupils are encouraged to work through any difficulties on their own. Lower attaining pupils gain the confidence to join in the same activities through sensitive support and a good use of praise and encouragement.

130. By the age of 14, pupils are skilled in starting up computers and logging on. They open files and use the keyboard adeptly to enter data, text and graphics. When word processing, they change fonts and font colours and fill with different colours to produce a personal profile, and insert clip art to make their work more interesting. They enter data and produce tables and graphs about local and national weather conditions. They use more sophisticated software to produce an election poster or an invitation to a coffee morning. Pupils show good research skills, accessing the Internet in order to find out information about the election in the USA or to help with a project about sharks. They are confident e-mail users: Year 9 pupils have a link with a school in Venice and another pupil has an e-mail friend in the USA. ICT is used well to support learning in other subjects. Pupils use their ICT skills to find out about families in the past or to record their own compositions in music, for example.

131. By the age of 16, the pupils have extended the range of their uses for ICT. For example, they produce curriculum vitae with varying text boxes and an inserted digital image which they have taken themselves. They produce databases about where to buy compact disc (CDs) or to classify national and local football results. Their use of the Internet is more sophisticated and they use it to find out about a wider range of subjects, researching the Tyne Bridge, pop groups or their favourite football team.

132. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are good in ICT lessons. This is an improvement since the last inspection. They are now motivated by well-chosen activities, and have plenty to do and good resources within a good computer suite. Most pupils work independently for much of the time, requiring minimum support and guidance from the teachers or support assistants. They look after their work well and are keen to show it off to visitors. They also look after the resources well, leaving them as they found them at the beginning of the lessons. These good attitudes and behaviour are largely due to long established routines for using the computers. It is noticeable that the youngest pupils, who have not been in the school for as long as the other pupils, do occasionally become restless before the staff's sensitive support enables them to become motivated by the activities on offer.

133. The curriculum has improved considerably since the last inspection. It is now linked fully to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study and is informed by the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority guidelines. The pupils enjoy the opportunity to join in the weekly Computer Club, as one of the residential evening activities. ICT is used

very effectively in other subject areas to enhance the pupils' learning and to enable them to access the curriculum. This is an improvement since the last inspection when ICT was not well used in other subjects. Every subject has planned opportunities for the use of ICT, and a good-shared initiative in control technology and electronics with design and technology ensures that statutory requirements are now met in this respect.

134. The subject is well led and managed and the co-ordinator is well qualified and experienced. He offers good support to colleagues in other subject areas. The staff are well motivated and interested in ICT, and have undertaken in-school training. Very recently, a technician has been employed to help the teacher set up and maintain the network and software. This has been managed by sharing costs with Belmont secondary school. The resources have improved considerably since the last inspection. There is now a well laid-out computer suite and personal computers (PCs) in each teaching area and in the residential accommodation. The PCs are all networked and all have Internet access.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

135. There is no provision for a Modern Foreign Language at present and the school does not meet statutory requirements for teaching the subject at Key Stage 3. For many pupils, the experience of learning a language has been negative, and the school recognise the importance of ensuring that any future experiences are positive. They have not been able to appoint a subject specialist and are therefore waiting until they have a German teaching assistant in school in September, who will work alongside an experienced non-specialist teacher from the school. The pupils currently have Internet pen pals from other countries, including France and Italy. There are plans to host visitors from Portugal, Holland, France and Czechoslovakia as part of their Comenius Project work. The school's curriculum makes a very good contribution to the pupils' multicultural development through experiences within other subjects.

MUSIC

136. Pupils' achievements in music are very good in relation to their prior attainment by the age of 14. Pupils have made very good progress in the subject since the appointment of a music specialist last September. Pupils who take additional tuition in percussion, some of whom are talented, are making very good progress and achieving standards of performance in line with and above their mainstream peers. The school is getting good value for the money they are spending from the New Opportunities Funding to support this new initiative. Standards of achievement are much higher than they were at the last inspection when they were judged to be unsatisfactory.

137. Four lessons were observed during the inspection, three given by the teacher and one by the peripatetic percussion teacher. Teaching is consistently very good, and in one lesson it was excellent. The enthusiastic and expert demonstrations of the use of the electronic keyboard and very good use of time to practise their skills, ensure that pupils learn to play, with the correct fingering, a variety of pieces. The teacher sets increasing challenges as pupils progress in the lessons. Higher attaining pupils learn to play the melody accurately, and in time, by ear. Lower attaining pupils increase their accuracy of reading and following the lettered notation to play the melody in time with the backing rhythm. The highest attaining pupils learn the bass riff and melody parts and are beginning to play them together to accompany their own and the teachers' singing. The

provision of extension activities for highest attaining pupils ensures they make the best use of their time and learn to play a complex rhythm on a full set of drums. This ensures also that gains in learning made in additional tuition time for percussion are built on in lessons. The quality of the teachers' daily planning is very good, it includes objectives for pupils of differing abilities and relevant and exciting activities and ensures pupils, whatever their prior ability, make very good progress in lessons. It also ensures that attitudes and behaviour in music lessons are at least very good and often excellent.

138. The teacher identifies key vocabulary to be taught in lessons and explains it very well. In this way pupils learn to understand, and sometimes to use, words such as 'dynamics', 'melody' and 'bass riff' when talking about their work. Pupils are given good opportunities to learn the words of popular songs through shared reading techniques and the sensitive support of the learning assistants. The teacher helps pupils to gain an understanding of the words used by questioning, and by defining them. In this way, pupils in one lesson learnt that 'shorty' was a fond term used to describe a girlfriend, and that 'peeps' meant friends in Reggae culture. Pupils learnt the words of the song 'Angel' by Shaggy. They sang along, sometimes very enthusiastically, and often left the lessons singing or humming the tune.

139. Planning for the use of information and communication technology is very good and it is well demonstrated and explained. Pupils learn to select samples using click and drag techniques, and to lay down tracks by placing them in layers at different intervals of time in order to compose a simple layered piece. They learn to save their pieces in their own file and to retrieve them in order to redraft and improve the quality. At the present time there is only one computer available for pupils in the music lesson, but this gives pupils valuable experiences of working co-operatively in pairs and of persevering with practice while waiting their turn. They develop a good understanding of fairness in this respect. However, progress in composition is limited by these circumstances.

140. The teacher offers additional opportunities to compose and practise out of teaching time, and those who take additional tuition have their own set of drumsticks to practise with on pillows at night. This strengthens their wrists and makes them better performers. The school has already set aside a sum of money to improve music facilities and resources because they recognise how the new music provision has improved pupils' behaviour and attitudes to the subject. There are plans to move to a bigger room; to set up a recording studio with a mixer and CD recorder, and to invest in a bass guitar and a new set of drums. This should extend pupils opportunities considerably.

141. The leadership and management of the subject are very good. The coordinator has a clear vision for achieving even higher standards in the subject, and her ambitious plan for improvement is very comprehensive and appropriately costed. She hopes also to extend the cultural development of pupils by bidding for monies for a Culture Club so pupils can visit and enjoy an even wider range of musical performances. Assessment is well used to inform planning for lessons, although recording methods could be improved to show how well the lower attaining pupils are progressing over time.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

142. Standards on entry are below national expectations, but they quickly rise to come into line with average expectations. By the age of 14, standards match national expectations and continue to do so up to 16. Achievement and progress are very good across the school for both boys and girls.

143. There has been good improvement since the last inspection in the quality of teaching and learning and in pupils' achievements. There is a wide range of abilities among pupils. A significant proportion of pupils have dyspraxia, which makes their achievements all the more commendable. The very good standards pupils achieve directly relate to the high quality of teaching

144. A strength of the teaching is the teachers' very good knowledge and understanding of both the subject and the pupils. The quality of teaching and learning is very good across the school and was consistently very good in the six lessons observed. Teachers have a very good level of knowledge and understanding of pupils' emotional and intellectual abilities. This enables teachers to give the best possible support to pupils' learning and extend the opportunities available. Teachers' high expectations of pupils' behaviour, participation and performance enable them to provide effective management of pupils. An excellent example of this was in an athletics lesson that had a very high level of success in motivating pupils, introducing new skills and redirecting inappropriate behaviour. Pupils are challenged and well motivated by the enthusiastic teaching and the wide range of activities provided, which are relevant to their needs. These are well explained and presented in a stimulating and interesting manner, with clear instructions and demonstrations of how to carry out the activity. Pupils are continually challenged. Praise, humour and encouragement are used particularly well. Good evaluation and assessment of pupils' achievements are used to further modify the curriculum programme.

145. By the age of 14, pupils improve their individual skills in cricket, softball and athletics. They learn to field, throw, hit and catch cricket and soft balls over greater distances and with improved accuracy and fluidity. Pupils gain AAA Five Star Athletics Awards by participating in events such as shot put, discus, 400 and 1500 metres. They learn to apply their mathematics skills well when measuring distances and timing events. They compare past performances with present to see if they are improving.

146. By the age of 16, pupils have improved their throwing and catching skills even more and reach good standards in cricket and softball. Pupils improve their overall fitness by pursuing the YMCA Fitness Instructors' Award. During these sessions, pupils are treated more as students than as pupils, and respond in a very mature way by organising sessions with little supervision, logging in and out of the fitness room and recording all their performances. Their behaviour and attitude are very mature.

147. Pupils of all ages successfully participate in local, County and National events. Many pupils have won local and county awards. The extended day provides further opportunities for pupils to succeed in events such as skiing, sailing, swimming, orienteering and camping.

148. The very good teaching and learning have a positive effect on pupils' attitudes and behaviour. There are numerous examples of pupils' showing tolerance, cooperation and politeness to one another and adults. Pupils first of all compete against their own performance, trying hard to improve at all times. This helps when they then compete

against each other. Pupils show great composure when winning or losing. They accept both with good grace. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons, and in activities after school, are very good. They are very well behaved and quick to support and praise each other. They willingly set out equipment, and put it away at the end of lessons. They listen carefully and observe sensible safety rules at all times.

149. Physical education is very well led. A high quality curriculum and scheme of work identify how the subject is developed across the whole curriculum, including the contribution that it makes to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Very good assessment and records are kept, showing the progress pupils make, and informative reports are made to parents. All pupils know exactly how well they are performing because of the good feedback from teachers, and also through their own self assessment. The scheme of work has been amended to comply fully with Curriculum 2000. Although outside facilities are good overall, the school does not have a gymnasium or sports hall and this makes it difficult for the school to make provision in inclement weather. It uses community facilities in the wintertime and for activities that are planned for the extended day, but travelling does take up teaching time. Lower attaining pupils would benefit from a larger area in which to carry out their planned programme & withdrawal for dyspraxia, which makes a considerable impact on their physical competence. As well as being timetabled as part of the school day, many pupils volunteer to participate in further activities after school as part of their extended day programme. Although the majority of pupils are boys, several girls attend on a day or extended day basis. There are no changing facilities for these girls.

150. Pupils achieve a wide range of awards, such as British Gymnastics Awards (BAGA), Amateur Swimming Awards (ASA), ASA Water Skills Awards and YMCA Fitness Instructor Awards. In outdoor education, pupils achieve awards in swimming, skiing and sailing, as well as participating in an annual residential camp. These activities have a very positive effect on the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of pupils.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

151. Pupils' achievements in religious education are satisfactory overall by the ages of 14 and 16. Pupils of differing abilities do not always make the same progress in relation to their prior attainment. Higher attaining pupils make good progress up to the age of 14, but the work samples of the present Year 11 pupils, who have already left the school, show they have not had good enough teaching in the past and have large gaps in their learning, particularly in their knowledge of other religions. However, the outside moderator awarded the Sacre certificate to those pupils who had completed the course. Talking to pupils in Year 10 revealed similar gaps in their knowledge of other religions, although they were able to talk well about their own beliefs and compare them with other religious beliefs they had recently studied. The attitudes of the oldest higher attaining pupils are not as good as those who are lower attaining. They show a degree of disaffection in recording their work, with untidy presentation and unfinished projects. The

new co-ordinator has worked hard to provide an interesting range of activities, but has been unsuccessful in the short time she has been at the school in changing pupils' ingrained attitudes towards learning and writing about the subject. Pupils in Year 10 are responding well to the new scheme and are developing better attitudes, particularly those who are lower attaining who appreciate the teachers' practical approach to the subject. They will achieve accreditation through ASDAN by the end of next year if their work continues to progress as it is now.

152. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. It was good in two out of the four lessons seen, and satisfactory in the other two. This is an improvement since the last inspection when it was judged unsatisfactory. The teacher engages the youngest pupils well by starting discussions that are based on their own experiences and interests, or by using visual resources to make an initial impact. She creates a relaxed and reverent atmosphere in which pupils can talk freely about their beliefs. She leads the discussion well by open, challenging questioning of pupils, asking questions, such as, Why do bad things happen, and Do you think the punishment should fit the crime? She links discussions with previous learning about religion well by asking questions, such as, What does the Bible say about creation and what is the scientists' point of view? Discussion is well supported by the teaching assistants in the class, who offer pertinent points to think about and help pupils to stay on task. Year 7 pupils learn that people might blame God, or the devil, or wicked people for all the suffering that occurs in the world, but that some people think it just happens. They come to the belief that you do not have to be wicked to suffer, and that accidents happen and God is not to blame, and pupils learn to respect others' opinions. Pupils through their discussion have learnt to distinguish fact from opinion. Scrutiny of previous work and display shows pupils have learnt basic facts about a range of religions, such as their symbols and main celebrations, and have also completed an in depth study of Buddhism.

153. Pupils in Year 8 learn to reason why some people believe in the existence of God, and why others do not, because the teacher explains the different beliefs of people clearly and ensures discussions keep to the point and meet the objective planned for the lesson. She also ensures, with the help of the support assistant, that the more reticent girls have equality of opportunity to speak and be listened to in lessons, as a result the girls gain in confidence to offer their ideas. Pupils learn to consider that some people cannot reconcile their knowledge that there are wars, disease, poverty, homelessness, natural disasters and crime with the existence of a God, who is supposed to be a God of love. One higher attaining pupil stated that, The universe is so amazing, it can't be accidental. A lower attaining pupil asked, How can he exist, who could have made God?

154. The oldest pupils are inspired and challenged by the teacher to think about and express their personal beliefs because the teacher uses practical resources such as newspapers, magazines, music and art work that reflects other people's personal beliefs about life and death. Asking pupils to respond to learning through their art or musical compositions ensures a calm, productive environment, but there are missed opportunities to use this time for one-to-one discussion about individual faiths and beliefs based on a series of planned questions, which could be taped, to produce a record for accreditation purposes. Pupils have developed considerably in their ideas about faith and beliefs through this practical approach. They talk about the soul as being, 'inside you, like a shadow', or suggest that 'it rises after death, but the body rots away, leaving just the spirit.'

155. The teacher gives satisfactory opportunities for pupils to read a range of texts and pupils have undertaken some research projects using ICT. Key vocabulary is always identified in lessons, planning and the teacher explains new vocabulary well. Pupils show an interest in new words and their meanings and ask for a dictionary to look up new words for exact definitions, words such as 'omnipresent', for example. However, dictionaries are not freely available in lessons and there are missed opportunities for pupils to use them. Higher attaining pupils are encouraged to take notes as the lesson progresses and the teacher has high expectations that work will be presented neatly, but these notes are not used as a basis for any extended independent writing. Pupils of all abilities mainly copy notes generated by the teacher.

156. Pupils are, on the whole, well managed in lessons. They listen well and make appropriate contributions in discussions, for which they earn bonus points. Occasionally the lowest attaining pupils find it difficult to maintain full attention because visual resources are not used enough, for example, when the teacher is striving to link previous work about the Jewish Holocaust with the idea of suffering. Occasionally the pace slows in lessons because the teacher has not planned enough questions to be asked of pupils of differing abilities. At these times pupils get more restless. Even so, attitudes and behaviour in religious education lessons seen on inspection were good and often very good.

157. The new co-ordinator has worked hard to develop a fresh approach to religious education that appeals to pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties. The scheme of work is developing well, though not yet complete in terms of detail and objectives for pupils of differing abilities. It now meets statutory requirements. Durham LEA's Advisory Teacher for Religious Education has supported these developments. Assessment is against the key objectives within the Agreed Syllabus, but this approach, although satisfactory overall, needs to be further modified to meet the needs of the school more effectively. The subject makes a very good contribution to pupils' spiritual, social, moral and cultural development.

PERSONAL, HEALTH AND SOCIAL EDUCATION AND CITIZENSHIP

158. Standards of achievement are good at by the age of 14 and very good by the age of 16. Pupils make very good progress throughout the school.

159. Teaching and learning in personal, health and social education, careers and citizenship are consistently good and often very good. Out of the ten lessons seen, six were good and four were very good. Teachers give very good opportunities for pupils to discuss, and take part in role-play on, a range of issues and interests, and to evaluate their speaking and listening skills. The oldest pupils learn to prepare and present talks about their interests in plants, favourite books, pop groups and football teams, often using their information and communication technology skills to prepare a script, for example. The youngest pupils learn how to deal with medical emergencies such as choking and describe this as having a 'blocked airway'.

160. Teachers review previous work well at the beginning of lessons and provide good opportunities for pupils to answer and ask questions. They make the learning objectives for the lesson very clear to pupils so they know what they have to do and learn. Lessons often start from the pupils' own interests and grasp pupils attention from the outset. For example, in citizenship lessons the focus of discussion was The Hitch Hikers' Guide to the

Galaxy, and what it would be like to communicate with aliens from another planet. Younger pupils learnt that different people could live peacefully together if they understand each other, and that we can communicate without words. Older pupils were confident and open in their dealings with the teacher and politely commented that sometimes it was the other way round; that they got on with the teacher, but did not always understand what she said. In another lesson, the focus was the Young Citizens Passport and pupils learnt about their legal rights and living life in a global community. Lessons are planned in detail to meet different personal needs. In the best lessons literacy needs are met through asking pupils to design leaflets, on drugs, for example. However, literacy needs are not always met, because teachers sometimes rely too much on worksheets and give pupils too few opportunities to build on their literacy skills.

161. The oldest pupils learn the difference between an employer and an entrepreneur in careers lessons, which are very well taught. Pupils give examples of entrepreneurs, such as Bill Gates and Richard Branson. Questioning is used very effectively to assess pupils' prior knowledge and understanding, and the teacher's good knowledge of the subject is shown by the way he feeds pupils interesting snippets of information about the subject under discussion. For example, when he talked about how Richard Branson has shared out his wealth, pupils were overwhelmed by the thoughts of his generosity. Pupils talk maturely about their college placements and the contacts they have made. Brainstorming techniques and suitable resources were used very well in one lesson when the teacher gathered up suggestions from the class of how one finds a job. The teacher provides a good focus for job hunting in this way. Pupils learnt that they could find jobs that interested them and that were suited to their own skills and qualities.

162. Behaviour is well managed in lessons and is supported by humour, encouragement and praise from the teachers and the learning assistants, and from other pupils. They steadily gain in confidence to talk to a class audience and behave sensibly during roleplay of first-aid situations. They usually listen well to each other's contributions, are cheerful and behave well. Year 10 and Year 11s' written work displayed a very mature approach to sex education; this was supported by the use of diagrams and picture graphs.

163. The subject has a very strong link with the residential and extended day curriculum. Excellent relationships are built up in these settings and support learning in the school day. Pupils are also well supported by carefully written care plans, which enable pupils to be well involved in setting their own targets. These are well integrated into daily planning for pupils. It is a seamless approach, which has been established through very good interdepartmental teamwork.

164. At the time of the last inspection, personal, health and social education and citizenship were not taught as discreet subjects. They, and careers, are now on all timetables and provision is good. Leadership of all three aspects is very good. There are clear and comprehensive school policies for all three aspects of the provision, and good schemes of work which are very relevant to the pupils' needs for each area of learning. However, they could now be usefully combined into one overall scheme. The personal, health and social education scheme covers a suitable range of topics, including healthy eating, health and hygiene, first aid, bullying, social relationships, drugs misuse, safety first, fitness, sexual relationships and careers. Citizenship covers issues such as resolving conflict peacefully, voluntary work, human rights, and voting and human responsibilities.

165. Accreditation is offered through ASDAN Key Skills, and it is planned that accreditation will be extended for younger pupils through the Key Steps programme in the future. Assessment in citizenship is against National Curriculum descriptors, though ASDAN Youth Award Scheme's Key Decisions will be assimilated into the programme at Years 10 and 11. There is very good evidence that evaluation in the short term planning informs later teaching plans.