

INSPECTION REPORT

THE PRIORY SCHOOL

Spalding, Lincolnshire

LEA area: Lincolnshire

Unique reference number: 120750

Headteacher: Brian Howes

Reporting inspector: Steven Parker
13033

Dates of inspection: 14th-17th January 2002

Inspection number: 222920

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: For pupils with moderate learning difficulties and autistic spectrum disorders.

School category: Community special

Age range of pupils: 11-16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Neville Avenue
Spalding
Lincolnshire

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Appropriate authority: The Governing Body

Name of chair of governors: Mrs P Hutson

Date of previous inspection: March 2000

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|--------------|--------------------|----------------------|---|--|
| 13033 | Steven Parker | Registered inspector | Art and design Design and technology Personal social and health education | How high are standards? How well is the school led and managed? |
| 31754 | Charlotte Roberson | Lay inspector | | How well does the school work in partnership with parents? |
| 1987 | George Davies | Team inspector | Geography History Physical education | How well are pupils taught? |
| 1358 | Glyn Essex | Team inspector | English Modern foreign language Special educational needs | How well does the school care for its pupils? |
| 1769 | Michael Holohan | Team inspector | Mathematics Music Religious education Equal opportunities | Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development |
| 3055 | Clive Tombs | Team inspector | Science Information and communication technology | How good are the curricular and other opportunities given to pupils? |

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The Priory is a mixed day special school for up to 95 pupils aged from 11 to 16. The local education authority (LEA) currently purchases 85 planned places for pupils with moderate learning difficulties and 10 places for pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD). The needs of pupils admitted to the school in recent years have become more complex. Besides 11 pupils with ASD, there are also a number with severe learning difficulties, emotional and behavioural difficulties, attention deficit disorder or complicated medical conditions. At present there are 83 pupils on roll. None of them is from ethnic minorities or families where English is an additional language. A third of pupils are entitled to free school meals. The school has a very wide catchment area, much of which has a generally poor and deprived economy.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good school in which pupils make good progress, because of the high quality of teaching. Strong leadership by the headteacher, working in a close and productive partnership with his deputy, has ensured that the school has successfully weathered a very difficult period in its history. There have, for example, been significant staffing difficulties, both in relation to long-term sickness and teacher recruitment. The school provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Good teaching, by teachers and classroom support staff, working in successful partnership, helps pupils to achieve well.
- Very good relationships throughout the school, based on mutual respect, successfully encourage pupils' good attitudes towards their learning and help them to behave well.
- Educational opportunities are enriched by wide-ranging activities outside the school day, high quality residential educational experiences, both at home and in Europe, and very effective career and vocational education.
- Pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) are very successfully included in all activities, often making very good progress in their learning.
- Very good personal and social education results in pupils leaving school as confident young people, well prepared for their future life.

What could be improved

- Funding of the school by the local education authority to take account of a more complex pupil population.
- The number of teachers.
- Parental involvement in their children's education.
- Aspects of the curriculum, including planned provision of music and the time allocated to core subjects in the curriculum, most particularly mathematics for older pupils.
- Attendance.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in March 2000, when it was judged to have serious weaknesses in some of its work, including curriculum provision, pupils' academic achievements and planning for development and improvement. Since then it has made good improvement across many aspects of its provision and no longer has any serious weaknesses. The quality of both teaching and learning is now good. Development planning accurately reflects and plans properly for improvement in appropriately identified areas. There have also been improvements in the curriculum, assessment, recording and reporting of pupils' progress, accommodation, learning resources, the way governors fulfil their responsibilities and the value for money that the school provides. There have, however, been continuing problems in staffing the school and there are still not enough teachers in post. In spite of this, standards in those aspects of the school that were judged to be good or very good last time have been sustained and in some cases improved.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

The school is ambitious for its pupils to improve and they make generally good progress across many subjects. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Pupils' achievements are good overall in English, although progress slows in reading between fourteen and sixteen. In mathematics, pupils make good progress up to the age of fourteen but, again, this is not sustained as they get older. This is mostly because of current staffing difficulties. Pupils make good progress in science and most other subjects across the school. Achievements in art have improved significantly and pupils now make very good progress. Design and technology is not being taught currently, because of the long-term absence of the specialist teacher. As a result pupils' progress has slowed. The teaching of personal, social and health education (PSHE), both in discrete lessons and within many subjects, is very effective and this helps students to make very good progress in this important area of their education. The school sets appropriate targets for pupils' achievements and older pupils are studying for an increasing number of externally accredited qualifications. Pupils are generally on course to achieve these targets. There is no difference in the rate of progress between boys and girls and those with particular additional educational needs. All pupils make good progress towards meeting the targets in their individual education plans. Progress is also good overall in working towards meeting generally appropriate and realistic whole school targets.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|---|
| Attitudes to the school | Pupils have very positive attitudes to all aspects of school life. They are interested and hard working in lessons and are highly responsive to other activities, such as work experience. |
| Behaviour, in and out of classrooms | Behaviour is good in the classroom, although some pupils can occasionally lose concentration if not fully engaged by the teaching. Behaviour around the school and when pupils go out into the community is consistently very good. |
| Personal development and relationships | Pupils' confidence and self-esteem is high, because of the quality and strength of relationships between staff and pupils. |
| Attendance | Unsatisfactory for the last academic year, but showing encouraging improvement recently. Procedures to record and monitor attendance and |

| | |
|--|--|
| | follow up any absences are satisfactory. |
|--|--|

Standards in pupils' personal development and behaviour have been sustained since the last inspection.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

| | |
|----------------------------|-------------------|
| Teaching of pupils: | aged 11-16 |
| Lessons seen overall | Good |

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

The overall quality of teaching is good and is much improved since the last inspection. During this inspection, teaching in over three-quarters of lessons was at least good and in one fifth was very good or excellent. All but a very small proportion of lessons was at least satisfactory. Teaching was consistently good for pupils up to fourteen, but not always up to this standard for older pupils. This was, in part, as a result of the staffing difficulties that the school is experiencing, despite the appropriate arrangements that have been made to alleviate the problem. Teaching in art was always very good across the school. Teachers' subject knowledge is often very strong and pupils benefit from the enthusiasm and commitment that this encourages. Teamwork between teachers and the very able classroom support staff is very effective and this ensures that pupils have sensitive and well-focused support, enabling them fully to participate in all activities. This is particularly apparent for pupils with ASD. The skills of communication, literacy and numeracy are well taught. Good planning for what pupils will learn contributes to these generally high standards.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

| Aspect | Comment |
|---|--|
| The quality and range of the curriculum | Good overall, but with some weaknesses in provision for older pupils and for music right across the school. The curriculum is very relevant, because of its emphasis on communication, personal and social skills and vocational education. It prepares pupils well for their life after school and is both educationally and socially inclusive. There is very good provision for activities outside the school day. Overall, this is an improvement since the last inspection. |
| Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development | Very good. Pupils are encouraged to take responsibility for their own actions and to consider the rights and needs of others. An extensive, valuable programme of cultural visits and visiting artists and performers to the school is provided. There is good provision for pupils' spiritual development. |
| How well the school cares for its pupils | Staff know pupils well and provide good levels of care and support for pupils. Although assessment of pupils' progress has improved since the last inspection and systems are now good, there are still some inconsistencies in practice. |

The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been successfully adapted and implemented and the school is continuing to develop opportunities for older pupils to participate in externally accredited courses. Provision for pupils with ASD is particularly effective. Membership of the new South Holland Rural Academy promises to sustain and improve opportunities for liaison and mutually supportive links with other schools and colleges of further education. The school has gained recognition through a number of awards for its very successful and beneficial twinning arrangements with schools in Europe.

The school works very hard to build and sustain a working partnership with parents, but there are many reasons why this is difficult and not always successful.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

| Aspect | Comment |
|--|--|
| Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff | The headteacher provides good leadership and management and is well supported by his able deputy. As a result, there have been many improvements in the school. However, they have both had to take on a very heavy teaching load during the period of staffing difficulties to ensure that pupils' education has not suffered. This has resulted in a number of aspects of management, most notably the monitoring of provision, not being fully carried through. |
| How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities | The governing body, with considerable help from the local authority, has developed a much more proactive approach to its work. There is, however, still a need for governors to become more involved in planning for the school's future and evaluating the impact of their own decisions on provision and pupils' achievements. |
| The school's evaluation of its performance | The school has a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses and its planning for development is clearly based on this knowledge. |
| The strategic use of resources | Effective systems are in place for good financial control and management. Staffing, accommodation and learning resources are used well to support pupils' learning. |

The school has to work with a budget that is lower than that received by the majority of similar schools. As a result the notional number of teachers that can be employed still falls below the national recommendations. Continuing difficulties in recruiting and retaining suitable staff exacerbates this situation. This was identified as a problem in both the previous inspections and, despite very strong lobbying of the local education authority, appears not to have improved. Extra funding to support the ASD pupils referred to the school has improved the provision of support staff, but, overall, the relatively low staffing levels continue to have a negative impact on some aspects of the school's work, particularly for older pupils. The principles of best value, which require the balancing of costs and effectiveness are integrated into the school's management thinking.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

| What pleases parents most | What parents would like to see improved |
|--|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children enjoy school and are helped to become mature and responsible. • They feel comfortable in approaching the school with questions or problems. • The school is well led and managed. • They are happy with their children's behaviour and the progress they make in their learning. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents would like more information on their child's progress on a day to day basis. • Some parents are unhappy with the arrangements that require their child to leave school at sixteen. • Some parents do not feel that their child gets enough homework. |

The inspection team fully endorses parents' positive views of the school. Inspectors found that annual reports contained sufficient information about pupils' progress in most subjects and a readiness on the

part of teachers to provide additional information if it was requested. The school has a well-argued and justified policy on homework and provides a very good handbook of suggestions on how parents could help their child at home. Inspectors were, therefore, re-assured that overall arrangements for homework were satisfactory. It is not appropriate for the inspection team to comment on the local education authority's policy on Post 16 provision other than to encourage parents to make their views known to the appropriate authorities.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils' achievements are good in English and science right across the school and for younger pupils in mathematics. Achievements are very good in art and design and for PSHE. In most other subjects, achievements are good. The great majority of pupils achieve their ASDAN Bronze Youth Award by the time they leave school and some gain higher Bronze/Silver Challenge Awards or Certificate of Achievements or Competence in other aspects of their work. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection, when achievements were judged to be only just satisfactory. There are, though, a few exceptions. Older pupils only achieve satisfactory standards in mathematics and religious education, because insufficient time is given to the subjects higher up the school. Pupils have not been taught design and technology for most of the current academic year because of the long-term absence of the specialist teacher. However, samples of their work and earlier records indicate that their achievements were at least satisfactory.
2. The school is ambitious for its pupils to succeed and has developed suitable systems to plan for and measure their progress against mostly appropriate targets for both individuals and the whole school. In relation to the targets set at their annual statement reviews and in their IEPs, pupils are making good progress overall. There is a wide range of skills and ability in the school, but all pupils, including those with the most significant learning needs, achieve as well as they can, as the result of good quality teaching. This is particularly so for the 11 autistic pupils, who are impressively well integrated into the life of the school and whose needs are very well met by good teamwork between teachers and classroom support staff. There is no evidence of any differences in the performance of boys and girls.
3. Successful adaptation of the requirements of the National Literacy Strategy has ensured that all pupils make good progress in their writing right across the school and in reading up to the age of fourteen. There is, however, a slowing in the development of their reading skills as they get older, mostly as the result of the staffing difficulties that the school has experienced. All pupils make consistently good progress in developing their speaking and listening skills and, as a result, communicate confidently and effectively.
4. The National Numeracy Strategy has clearly helped teachers to develop their skills and planning in mathematics and standards are, as a result, much improved. Last year, many pupils gained creditable results in Certificate of Achievement examinations and the school has a target for a third of this year's leavers to gain a basic grade GCSE pass.

5. Pupils' achievements are good overall in science and they make good progress over time. The consistently good and occasionally very good teaching has made an important contribution to the notable improvement in standards since the last inspection.
6. Pupils make very good progress in art and design between the ages of 13 and 15 because of the very high standard of teaching by a specialist teacher, working in successful partnership with a very good teaching assistant. Pupils make generally good progress in most other subjects as the result of teachers' good planning and the productive relationships between all staff and the pupils.
7. The school teaches personal, social and health education in discrete lessons, as well as focusing on it in many other subjects and throughout the social life of the day. In this latter context, lunch arrangements are very important and the mealtime is a civilised and educational occasion. The well-planned range of activities, including residential experience, both at home and abroad, enables pupils to make very good progress in developing a wide range of skills throughout the school. As a consequence, they leave school as adaptable, mature young people.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Pupils' attitudes to school are consistently good and the school has been successful in maintaining the standards identified in the last report. The pupils' enthusiasm for school has been maintained, despite considerable staffing difficulties. The beginning of the day sets the calm and purposeful atmosphere that pervades the school. From a science lesson, where pupils confidently organise their own experiments and work together well, to a mathematics lesson, where pupils handle a difficult task with enthusiasm and perseverance, they are committed to doing well. Pupils show both interest and curiosity in their approach to work. This trait was widely observed during the inspection, but a significant example was the response of Year 7 pupils to a personal education lesson on the dangers of drugs. They showed a maturity and insight that was impressive for pupils of their age, combined with the concentration that was common to most of the lessons seen. The school has a significant number of pupils who have autistic spectrum disorders. The strength of the relationships between pupils and staff, the orderly nature of the school combined with the friendliness that exists between pupils enables this group to make very good progress in the development of their social and learning skills.
9. The behaviour of pupils is good throughout the school and very good when pupils undertake activities out in the wider community. The school is an orderly community in which serious behavioural incidents are rare; indeed, last term there were no recorded incidents at all. No examples of bullying were recorded and observation of pupils at lunch and break time showed them to be friendly and polite. The strength of pupils' behaviour is exemplified in their visits to the local sports centre. Because of their high standards of behaviour pupils are given the rare privilege of using the fitness suite there.
10. There is a strong sense of community in the school. Pupils are aware that they are valued by staff and respond with trust and friendship. The atmosphere that prevails at lunchtime particularly illustrates this sense of mutual regard and support. Meals are conducted with politeness and courtesy, together with friendly conversation.

11. The outcome of this strong sense of community is indicated by the maturity of older pupils. Discussion with year 11 pupils about their work experience showed them to be confident young adults who are well prepared for life after school.
12. Attendance for the year 2000-2001 was unsatisfactory overall at 85.6% for the whole school. Unauthorised absences were very high at 6.2%, compared with similar schools' average of 2.4%. Both these figures are worse than in the previous inspection, when attendance was judged as satisfactory overall. The figures can, in part, be explained by a significant group of poor attenders in Year 11 who have now left the school. All the signs are that results in the current academic year will be much better. Figures for the autumn term show a definite improvement and strategies used in partnership with the Education Welfare Service are generally successful in raising attendance levels for the few pupils currently in the school who continue to cause concern. Pupils arrive punctually in the mornings in transport provided by the local authority.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

13. The quality of teaching is good overall. During the inspection teaching was good or better in over three-quarters of lessons. One in five lessons were very good or excellent and the same proportion was satisfactory. This represents very good progress since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching is better for pupils in years 7, 8 and 9, where there is a greater proportion of good and very good teaching. It is clear that, whilst appropriate arrangements have been made to counteract the effects of the staffing difficulties that the school is currently experiencing, the difference in quality for older pupils is, to some extent, related to this situation.
14. The overall good progress that pupils make is the product of good planning and the provision of interesting work that matches the pupils varied learning styles, including pupils with additional learning difficulties. In the majority of lessons, teachers build on what pupils have previously learnt; they share clear and achievable objectives with the pupils and employ teaching methods that challenge them appropriately. In addition, end of lesson summaries are consistently and effectively used to help pupils celebrate success; confirm what they have learned and provide a link to future work. The good quality of working relationships that exist between teaching and support staff, often the product of shared planning, also contributes significantly to the quality of teaching. Pupils respond well to the additional and carefully targeted help provided by support staff and work productively at a good pace. They show interest in their work in the majority of lessons and can explain what they are doing, with increasing clarity, as they progress through the school.
15. The effect of this good teaching is that pupils' achievements are good. For example, very high, but realistic expectations and the teacher's subject expertise in art lessons, results in pupils producing work of a very high standard. Similarly, in a history lesson about Anglo Saxon settlements, the teacher's high expectations were justified as pupils worked with effort and a high level of commitment when studying Ordnance Survey maps in order to produce lists of place names that had their roots in the language of past 'invaders'. Such was their interest that they wanted to continue with their work during breaktime. Staff know when to offer help and when to allow pupils to continue to tackle problems on their own. This careful and effective balance was well demonstrated in a science lesson about helicopters, as the teacher used her detailed knowledge of the pupils to say 'I am not telling you ...', with the result that they responded successfully to the challenge, with a consequent very positive effect upon their learning, self-esteem and enjoyment of the lesson.

16. Lessons are consistently well planned. In the majority of lessons introductory activities not only identify current objectives but also link these to previous work. As a result, pupils are helped to make progress in a systematic way. Pupils enjoy showing that they remember what they have learned and, as a consequence of the teacher's praise, are well motivated at the start of lessons and keen to continue with their work. Similarly, the use of lesson introductions to clarify objectives is a strong feature of planning, as exemplified in physical education lessons. Previously acquired or partially developed skills are identified and lesson organisation is shared, with the result that pupils start lessons with a clear idea of what they are going to do, why they are doing it and what level of performance is expected of them.
17. Pupils also make good progress because teachers consistently use teaching methods and approaches to class organisation that not only match the aims of the lesson but also the pupils' different learning styles and rates of learning. In the majority of lessons, pupils have opportunities to learn as a whole class, in groups, in pairs and as individuals. They will spend time listening, responding to questions, discussing, writing and reading and, in relevant subjects such as art and design, food technology, science and physical education, will learn through a significant number of practical activities. Such a range of activities not only makes lessons interesting, but also provides pupils with the opportunity to learn through activities that reflect their particular learning styles. Additionally, the careful allocation of pupils to groups makes sure that the tasks set are well matched to pupils' needs and the extra support that they require can be carefully targeted. In Year 7, the care given to the composition of groups and the variety of interesting tasks set for them in a history lesson resulted in all pupils working with effort and enthusiasm for the whole of the lesson. Higher attainers had a very good understanding of how a Saxon house was constructed, while lower attainers could compare Saxon household equipment with that of the present day. The care with which teachers make up groups not only makes it easier for teachers and support staff to support individuals, but also enables them to help pupils to tackle tasks that require collaboration and to develop the ability for independent learning. During ICT lessons, pupils are given regular opportunities to develop their independent learning skills as they explore the use of different keys and menus when word-processing. The sensitive monitoring of their efforts by the teacher and support staff leads to carefully timed interventions, in order to make sure that they do not get locked into a problem for too long.
18. Teachers effectively use these various approaches in their application of the National Numeracy and Literacy Strategies. Literacy is well promoted in subjects other than English, with teachers encouraging pupils to read out loud in class, writing lesson objectives on the white board in mathematics, offering small paragraphs for information in history and demonstration pieces in ICT. Written work, from single word to sentence to paragraph, is particularly well promoted in history and geography. Mathematical skills are well employed in many subjects, a good example being Year 10 and 11 pupils tracking their own progress in the fitness suite at the local sports and leisure centre.
19. The use of interesting, relevant and readily accessible resources to support learning through equally interesting activities contributes significantly to the quality of teaching in the school. Well designed work sheets motivate the majority of pupils, while the matching of these to the pupils' individual abilities also makes sure that all have the opportunity to succeed, with a consequent very positive effect upon their feelings of self-worth. The use of subject-specific resources, such as the story bag to help pupils understand the difference between nouns and adjectives, contributed significantly to their learning in English. The effective use of readily accessible wall maps and atlases similarly enhances teaching and learning in geography and history. In a mathematics lesson, the teacher's use of the human body as a resource, moving in different directions but not changing shape, provided pupils with a very effective introduction to

the subject of 'translations' of form. The accessibility of resources, including overhead and slide projectors, tape recorders and video material, means that there is very little time wasted. Pupils' motivation, effort and productivity are therefore sustained and lessons are able to proceed at a good pace.

20. End of lesson discussions, which summarise the work done, are a good feature of most lessons. Teachers use them effectively to assess what pupils have learned, provide opportunities for pupils to receive praise for the quality of work done and effort displayed and are also used to identify what will be tackled next. The de-brief at the end of a football game had Year 8 pupils identifying how they could improve their stopping, looking and passing, with the one pupil identifying with commendable honesty that he would try not to foul. His peers chuckled at his choice of what he had learned, but nevertheless showed respect for his honesty. Year 10 and 11 pupils also demonstrated respect for a girl's goal-keeping skills, with her demonstrating clearly that she knew that she had performed well. This respect that pupils have for each other is the product of an ethos that stems significantly from the role models provided by all staff
21. The quality of relationships between teachers and support staff is very good. The effect of this upon pupils' learning is good overall and very good when there is evidence of shared planning. When planning is shared, as occurs in most lessons, support staff have a clear understanding of the objectives of the lesson in general and the targets for individuals in particular. They prompt and question pupils effectively, praise good work when appropriate and encourage pupils sensitively if they are not working with sufficient effort. Pupils consistently respond positively and with courtesy to the help provided by support staff.
22. In the small number of lessons where teaching was less successful, lesson planning did not have all of the features that go to make up a good or very good lesson. Pace was variable, some time was lost when changing activities and work was not appropriately challenging.

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

23. The school provides a broad range of very relevant learning activities. The appropriately high priority given to the development of pupils' communication, personal, social, independence and vocational skills prepares them well for life after school, including continuing education and the world of work. The school's curriculum successfully includes all pupils in its organisation, is relevant to their needs and offers opportunities for their work to be accredited by external agencies. This enables all pupils, no matter what their abilities, to benefit fully from the opportunities on offer. Pupils follow the National Curriculum, including the provision of religious education and from fourteen to sixteen the curriculum is appropriately modified and complemented by a wider focus on work-related learning.
24. There have been a number of significant improvements since the last inspection, when the school's curriculum provision was judged to be unsatisfactory. Programmes of learning are now much broader and more balanced. Teachers' planning and their use of assessment to gauge pupils' progress and achievement are much improved, as is the recording and evaluation of pupils' progress in developing their social skills during lunchtime meals. The role of curriculum co-ordinators is clearer and more effective and there are increasing opportunities for pupils' work to be externally accredited. Provision for ICT now meets statutory requirements. Strategies for teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy are good and are continuing to be refined. As a result,

these skills are now more deliberately reinforced in all areas of the curriculum and pupils make good progress. The school is currently working towards achieving a Basic Skills Quality Mark.

25. However, despite these notable improvements, some important areas for development still remain. There is a lack of planned provision for music for pupils aged eleven to fourteen, which does not meet statutory requirements, and insufficient time is allocated to the core subjects for pupils aged fourteen to sixteen. Planning for English is not entirely consistent across the school because there is not a permanent co-ordinator for the subject. Design and technology is not currently being provided, because the teacher is on long-term sick leave.
26. The very good provision made for pupils' personal, social and health education has been maintained since the last inspection.
27. The curriculum is enriched in many ways and extra-curricular activities are very good. In spite of the short lunchtime there are clubs for art and reading and older pupils engage in a range of leisure and ICT activities. The school offers a very popular residential Basic Skills summer school to pupils in Year 7 during the summer vacation which, in addition to teaching basic skills, gives pupils the opportunity to go on a boat trip out into The Wash, along with designing and constructing their own kites. There are strong and productive links with and reciprocal visits to two French schools and one Dutch school. Pupils from Years 7 and 8 visit France to take part in an annual drama festival organised by one of the schools, whilst Year 9 pupils visit the other French school as part of a joint curriculum project. The Priory has been awarded a number of prestigious awards in recent years for these very successful European and other international collaborations. Sports and games feature prominently in the life of the school. In addition to the wide range of sporting activities, a group from Years 7 and 8 take part in the RDA regional horse riding event, while pupils from Years 7 to 10 participate successfully in the Lincolnshire Youth Games at Grantham. All these experiences have a significant positive impact on the quality of pupils' learning and their sense of self-esteem.
28. There is good provision for careers education and pupils are well prepared for life beyond school, with good support from the school's Connexions adviser. There are very good opportunities for work experience in Years 10 and 11 which enable all pupils to participate at their own level. Pupils have the opportunity to engage in either high quality work placements in the community or more sheltered, but equally valuable work within the school's garden centre. Building on skills learned during their horticultural course at college, all pupils in Year 11 take part in a successful Team Enterprise scheme, forming a company and running a productive business, based on growing and selling bedding plants and the manufacture of bird tables. Representatives of local companies assist pupils in this work, which results in produce of high quality. Other Year 11 pupils work in a range of jobs for one day a week in the community, at such places as a dog sanctuary, a residential care home, a hotel, a supermarket and a garden centre. These experiences are very well organised and monitored and develop pupils' confidence and self-reliance. They keep a log book/diary of their experiences, which is accredited as a Certificate of Achievement.
29. There is very good liaison and mutually supportive links with other schools in the South Holland Rural Academy and with local colleges of further education. The links with colleges are strong and pupils benefit from mixing with other pupils and students in an adult environment. There is, however, some expressed concern amongst parents and school staff about the Local Education Authority's approach to Post 16 education for

pupils with more complex learning difficulties. Many parents feel that they would prefer the opportunity for their children to stay on at the school until they are nineteen, where appropriate. They consider that the further education option is not suitable for many pupils and share the school's concern about the quality and relevance of some of the curriculum that is offered in the colleges. It is not part of the inspection brief to make a judgement about this situation. Shortages of staff have limited opportunities to integrate pupils into local secondary schools, but there are close links with the neighbouring mainstream school, which has been awarded Technology College status. Now the school has a skilled ICT co-ordinator in post, this link can be fully developed.

30. There are very good links with the local community, which holds the school and its pupils in high esteem. These links were recognised by the achievement of the Schools' Curriculum Award in 2000. Visits to local places of interest and the regular use of community facilities add richness and relevance to the curriculum for all pupils. In turn, local people visit the school and share their interests and skills with pupils. The school is also well supported by local fundraisers, such as the Lions and Rotary and by local businesses, who provide the work experience placements. The school site is used as a caravan park for the Spalding Flower Parade weekend and, as well as being a great fundraiser, it has become a social occasion for all involved, including the teachers, pupils and their parents who help. Access to the internet means that pupils have enhanced opportunities to link with other pupils and friends in Europe.
31. There is good liaison with other providers in order to address diverse other needs specified in statements. The time available for speech and language therapy, however, is restricted to one morning per week. This not only limits the number of pupils who can receive direct support for their needs, but also affects the amount of discussion and joint planning which can take place with staff. The previous inspection reported that there was insufficient follow-up of the therapist's advice in some classes. This situation has improved and staff are generally making good use of the information given and the strategies suggested by the therapist, who in some cases contributes specific speech and language targets to the annual review process. Fourteen pupils are currently attending groups taken by the speech and language therapist, but a significant number of other pupils, whose statements also specify additional support of this nature, can only be provided with assessment and review of their difficulties. The high quality of the provision which the school makes for all of its pupils in the area of speaking and listening skills, however, means that these pupils make good all-round progress despite their difficulties, which mainly relate to their expressive language.
32. The school has maintained the high standards of provision for pupils' spiritual, moral and social development noted in the previous inspection and has improved the provision for cultural development. The school now very successfully promotes pupils' personal development in all these aspects.
33. Well-planned whole school assemblies are held twice a week. Pupils learn the importance of being members of a community and that it is helpful to share feelings and experiences with others, for example, birthdays or illness or accidents to members of the family or school community. Prayers, some written and read by pupils in assemblies and at lunchtime, give pupils a time to reflect on their lives and, through the creative arts, pupils have the opportunity to express personal feelings safely and productively. Friday assemblies are celebratory occasions in which pupils' achievements and good behaviour are publicly acclaimed. In this way, pupils learn that they are personally valued and that others deserve respect for who they are and what they achieve. Religious education also makes a significant contribution by giving pupils

the opportunity to understand that there are different religions and other peoples' beliefs and values are of equal worth to their own.

34. Pupils' moral development continues to be well promoted by the very good role models of kind considerate behaviour demonstrated by all adults in the school. Staff know pupils very well and encourage polite and caring attitudes. The school has a very clear behaviour policy and procedures and a positive, supportive ethos that enables all pupils to gain a good understanding of what is right and wrong. Staff are consistent when dealing with any incident and work well together to ensure that key messages are understood. Through PSHE and citizenship lessons, pupils are taught sensitively about a range of moral issues and how their actions affect others. They are also encouraged to think about others less fortunate than themselves. For example they raise impressive sums of money and fill gift boxes for the Romanian Christmas Appeal.
35. The school places a great emphasis on developing pupils' social skills in. It provides a wide range of activities for pupils to teach them how to mix with confidence, work as part of a team and show initiative and personal responsibility. Across the curriculum, staff provide numerous opportunities for pupils to work together, to wait their turn and to share equipment and materials. There is an insistence on common courtesies, which ensures that pupils are polite and respectful, for example at mealtimes or when meeting visitors.
36. Provision for pupils' cultural development is now very good. Opportunities are provided, through a wide range of literature, religious education, art, history, visits and visitors to the school that enable pupils to appreciate their own culture and the diversity and richness of other cultures. In French lessons, for example, they study culture and traditions as well as the language. In art they are made aware of and work in the style of famous artists from around the world. In food technology, they make and taste meals from different cultures. The close links with and exchange visits to schools in Holland, Germany and France offer pupils an insight into European culture and values. European teaching assistants, who are provided for the school through European Union funding, further enhance this insight. There is currently an assistant from Romania working in the school. Visiting music groups, puppet theatres and dance companies, many with multi-cultural backgrounds, add significantly to developing pupils' awareness and understanding of the diversity and range of other cultures.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

37. The school provides an environment in which pupils feel happy and secure. Staff know the pupils very well and the high-quality care and support they give are important factors in the good progress achieved by all pupils, including those with additional special needs. There is good liaison with other agencies. The speech and language therapist, for example, works very effectively with the staff to make additional provision for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders and other communication difficulties.
38. The majority of staff have a first aid qualification and this is regularly updated. Medicines are administered properly and overseen in the main by the school secretary who ensures records are kept up to date and complete. The school nurse is also available on a regular basis for all pupils and has use of a medical room at one end of the school. All staff have been trained in Strategies for Crisis Intervention and Prevention (SCIP) and the school also ensures that this training is updated at regular intervals. These good features ensure safe practices for staff and pupils.

39. At the time of the previous inspection the child protection policy had not been recently reviewed and this is still the case. It remains out of date and does not, for example, currently refer to correct circulars nor give the very latest guidance. While the headteacher is knowledgeable and experienced in dealing with matters of child protection, it is still a weakness that no other member of staff has been trained and he himself has not had retraining for several years. Outside professional support for any pupils who may need any extra advice is, however, sought effectively. The school is aware of its relatively new role in specifically ensuring that the needs of Looked After Children are fully met and in this the headteacher has undertaken training by the local authority.
40. There is a very comprehensive health and safety policy, which informs good practice both in the school and on trips away from the site. Thorough risk assessments are carried out on potentially hazardous activities in subjects such as physical education and science and no significant health and safety concerns were noted during the inspection week.
41. Procedures for promoting good behaviour are very effective. Pupils' achievements are recognised by various certificates, which they are pleased and proud to receive. Sanctions, which are rarely needed, are graduated and used sensitively by staff. The school punishment book reveals a small number of incidents in which unacceptable behaviour has been recorded. Sanctions such as the loss of breaktimes are noted and each report has been signed by the pupil as well as by the member of staff making the report. Two pupils who were 'on report' during the inspection week were very pleased to show the positive grades which they had received for their good behaviour in each lesson. The very good relationships which exist between pupils and the absence of any evidence during the inspection week of examples of harassment or oppressive behaviour clearly support the view expressed by parents that the school's 'zero tolerance' policy on bullying is working very effectively. The very good programme of personal, social and health education is also a positive factor in this and in the school's active promotion of pupils' awareness of their personal safety and health.
42. Procedures for monitoring, recording and improving attendance are satisfactory. The school seeks to promote good attendance through agreed and shared policies. Full attendance is rewarded termly and annually. As a result, for example, nearly a third of pupils achieved 100% attendance over the last autumn term. Parents are constantly reminded to inform the school why pupils are absent. The very wide catchment area and transport difficulties do mean that if a pupil misses the bus in the morning it can be a real problem getting to school later that same day. Procedures for recording attendance meet statutory requirements and the school is rigorous in applying the rules for differentiating between authorised and unauthorised absence. Last summer's very poor unauthorised absences of 40% in Year 11 had a big impact on overall school figures for attendance. Despite efforts from the school, the education welfare service and in some cases the police, there was very limited success in maintaining even satisfactory attendance for approximately seven pupils for that term. Attendance levels do fluctuate from year to year and it is encouraging to see improvements in the previous term from what it is hoped will be an isolated low point. However, a reduction in hours within the administrative office coupled with the current staffing situation mean that, inevitably, the monitoring of attendance overall has not received the attention that it should
43. The school's systems for the monitoring and assessment of pupils' academic progress and personal development were judged to be unsatisfactory in the previous inspection and the report included a long list of improvements necessary in this area. The school

has responded well to these criticisms and improvement has been good over the intervening period, although much remains to be done to establish consistently good practice.

44. Many strengths are now emerging in this area of the school's work. Baseline assessment provides good information on pupils' attainment in the core subjects of English and mathematics. A new system for the recording of each pupil's level of performance in these subjects against clear criteria, colour-coded for each year group, provides the opportunity for a clear picture of pupils' progress to be accurately compiled as the system beds in. The regular administration of tests adds to this picture and the results are increasingly being presented in clear, graphical form to highlight trends within classes and year-groups. Assessment of progress in the non-core subjects, which was judged to be poor at the time of the last inspection, is now well-established and effective. Annual review procedures are clearly linked to statements and individual education plans. Pupils' self-assessment forms make a valuable contribution to their involvement in the review process. Monitoring of other areas of pupils' development is effective. Their behaviour and social skills, for example, are monitored in some detail at lunchtimes and appropriate targets set for improvement.
45. However, despite these many improvements, some inconsistencies are still evident. Although most individual education plans contain detailed, measurable and relevant targets to raise pupils' standards, some consist of very vague objectives or fail to differentiate between different pupils. In those latter instances, no clear and detailed picture of pupil progress against previous targets can be seen when they are reviewed. Annual reports to parents often lack sufficient information on the progress made by pupils, concentrating instead on the areas of the subject which they have covered and the attitudes and effort which they have shown. Some reports include National Curriculum levels; others rely on statements such as '(Pupils') written work can be very good'.
46. The school is aware of the need to continue to build on the good progress made in this area in order to improve the overall quality of its practice. The current school development plan includes the need to carry out an audit of targets set in individual education plans. This has not yet been done, because of the current staffing difficulties. A range of good quality assessment information is, however, now being produced, which provides a solid platform for further development. The use of this information, both for individual pupil planning and for the raising of standards across the school, although sometimes inconsistent, is developing well.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

47. A key issue from the previous inspection report was to 'improve parents' involvement in their children's learning'. Some strengths were identified at the time. For example, parents were satisfied with many aspects of the school, there were good quality newsletters, school brochure and an excellent booklet advising how parents and carers could help children learn at home. A very small minority of parents offered good support with fund raising efforts. The current overall situation is, however, very similar and the development of partnership with parents and carers is still judged to be a key issue because, despite parents' generally positive views of the school, many remain insufficiently involved in either the life of the school or their child's own education. The school is, though, fully aware of this continuing challenge in such a sparsely populated area and continues to develop strategies to engage parents. However, success remains very limited.

48. Parents and carers express generally positive views of the school, particularly in relation to the good attitudes and values that are promoted, the standards of behaviour and progress their children make, good teaching, and in the leadership and management of the school. Many appreciated the fact that new pupils and their families are carefully and sensitively inducted into the school and that staff work hard to ensure that pupils move on to the next stage of their education with confidence. All who expressed an opinion in the questionnaire, which was sent to parents and carers before the inspection, say they would feel comfortable about approaching the school if they wanted to. A small minority are still unsure about the part homework should play and a few parents did not feel that the school was always so successful at working closely with them. Four of the five written responses to the Registered Inspector were overwhelmingly supportive of the school. A pre-inspection meeting, which was attended by ten parents and carers, was also very positive and showed good levels of support for what the school achieves. Overall, therefore, parent's views of the school are good.
49. Information in both the school prospectus and annual report to parents from the governing body includes all statutory requirements and gives a good picture of school life. Written reports to parents have been further developed since the previous inspection, but still show some inconsistency across the school in reporting how pupils have progressed over the year. Information to parents and carers tends to give a clearer view on pupils' progress in personal social and health education than it does on progress in, for example, English and mathematics. The headteacher provides well-written and regular newsletters to all parents and carers, which are valued. Information in the booklet entitled 'Helping your child at home', has been imaginatively compiled by staff and is excellent. The headteacher makes many home visits to keep those parents who cannot attend school fully informed. Overall, the information which the school sends out to parents is good.
50. Encouraging the successful involvement of all parents and carers continues to be a very real challenge for the school. A minority of parents are very supportive of their children's learning at home and, for the very small minority that wish it, communication between home and the class teacher is regular and productive in, for example, home school diaries. There are examples of very effective communication about what is expected of pupils in terms of homework. There is, though, no tradition of any formal or informal association or support group such as a Parent Teacher Association or Friends of the School, which might further encourage links and partnerships with parents and carers. Many live a long distance from the school and find it hard to attend meetings. The school keeps a record of parents' and carers' attendance at annual reviews and, despite considerable flexibility on the part of the school, less than a third of parents regularly attend these important meetings. This is an unusually low number. The telephone is regularly used to try and encourage involvement of parents, but with little success.
51. A home school agreement is sent to all new parents and carers and nearly 90% of parents of those pupils currently in the school have signed it. The Healthy Schools initiative, which has just begun, is aiming to seek parents' views and involve them more in the life of the school. Two parents and two pupils are on the steering committee. Overall, links with parents and carers are satisfactory, although there is scope to improve the quality of information parents receive in school reports and communication generally. Parents' involvement with the school, which at present has some weaknesses, is also satisfactory overall, when considering the many challenges the school faces.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

52. The headteacher was not in school during the inspection, as the result of a serious accidental injury. His responsibilities were, therefore, covered by the deputy headteacher, who still had to fulfil her own teaching commitments. It is a clear indication of the strength of the management structures and arrangements that the headteacher has put in place, the deputy headteacher's leadership skills and the high quality of whole staff teamwork, that the school still ran smoothly and effectively, despite these difficulties.
53. The last inspection judged that leadership and management of the school by the headteacher, governors and key staff was unsatisfactory and presented a serious weakness. This is clearly no longer the case. There have been significant improvements in many aspects of the school's work, detailed elsewhere in this report, as the direct result of a number of initiatives and developments in the way the school's managers and governors work together. These improvements have been facilitated by productive support from the standards branch of the local education authority.
54. The headteacher provides good leadership and is strongly committed to continuous improvement. He and his colleagues have a clear vision of the sort of school they want and have continued to be successful in sustaining a supportive and encouraging environment, in which pupils can learn successfully and develop the personal and social skills necessary to lead successful lives as young adults. The notable improvements in pupils' achievements are testament to this.
55. Many of the improvements in provision have come about because effective systems have been established to audit and monitor the curriculum and quality of teaching across the school. This has led, through evaluating the information gathered in this way, to properly prioritised development work on learning programmes and appropriate support for staff to improve their practice, where necessary. An important part of this work has come about through the creation of more structured school improvement planning processes, which incorporate input from curriculum co-ordinators. Their subject development plans relate to a longer-term vision for the school, expressed as part of the development plan, and taking account of all the constraints and opportunities that can be identified. In this way, development work has become a more shared process.
56. The governing body has continued to meet its statutory duties effectively and has become more involved in the day-to-day work of the school, though a structured programme of visits and input to its meetings from teachers, in their role as curriculum co-ordinators. This has enabled individual governors to develop a greater understanding of the issues that are brought to them through regular reports from the headteacher and other documentation. There remains, however, a need for the governing body, as both a group and individuals, to become more active in planning for the school's future. This would happen through greater involvement in the existing improvement planning processes and taking greater account of the information that comes to them from monitoring activities, in order more effectively to evaluate the impact of some of their own decisions. The school's special educational needs policy is inadequate, because it does not contain the information set out in the Education (Special Educational Needs) (Information) Regulations 1999 as they apply to maintained special schools. This results in there being no clear statement of the school's approaches to meeting the wide range of additional needs present in the school.
57. A major constraint on planning is the relatively low budget that the school has to manage, when taking account of the complexity of need of its pupils. This results in the

school being unable to afford to employ sufficient teachers to cover the full range of subjects effectively. It also means that, for a school of its size, it has a relatively small management team of two, the headteacher and his deputy, and they consequently have unrealistic workloads, which could be shared if there were another senior member of staff. Difficulties with the budget have also resulted in the recent reduction of administrative staff input. Although the school still runs smoothly, with effective systems in place to ensure efficient day to day operations, there are signs that longer-term activities, such as effective monitoring of curriculum provision, the budget and attendance, could suffer. At the same time, it is important to recognise that all spending decisions continue to be very carefully considered, in the light of their likely impact on pupils' standards of achievement and personal development and every effort is made to apply the principles of best value.

58. The considerable teacher staffing difficulties the school has experienced over the past year further exacerbates this situation. Until the beginning of the current term there were two unfilled vacancies for the important curriculum responsibilities of English and ICT. Like many other schools, it has tried a range of approaches to recruit new, good quality teachers, without much success. The very recent appointment of an experienced and very able ICT co-ordinator is a promising breakthrough. There remain, however, two teachers on long term sick leave. This has had an impact on the provision for the oldest group of pupils. The school has made appropriate arrangements by appointing a very experienced teacher assistant as an unqualified teacher, supported by the headteacher, who has taken on significant teaching duties himself. This is, however, recognised as a less than ideal short-term solution. Similarly, there is no teaching currently for design and technology because the specialist teacher is absent. There is, however, an appropriate level of classroom support staff and this very able group of professionals makes a considerable contribution to the high quality of education that pupils experience, despite these various difficulties. Another negative effect of the staffing situation is that the recent good developments in monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning by managers and co-ordinators cannot be sustained at their initial level - and this could slow the rate of improvement.
59. Careful management of the budget over time has resulted in many valuable improvements to both the accommodation and other resources. The redundant residential part of the school is undergoing a planned programme of improvements that is resulting in the creation of an attractive, good quality learning environment for older pupils. Part of this area of the school is also used for residential educational opportunities for both the school's own pupils and other groups from England and Europe. These latter groups generate a small, but very useful income, which is appropriately reinvested. A structured programme of improvements to learning resources, in particular recent purchases for the library, continues to have a positive impact on pupils' learning. ICT is generally well used for both teaching and as an effective administrative tool. This situation can only improve as the new co-ordinator offers appropriate professional development to her colleagues and influences its more effective application across the school.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

60. In order to build on the progress since the last inspection and further to improve educational standards and the quality of education provided, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

- (1) Continue ongoing negotiations with the local education authority with a view to improving the funding formula for the school so that:
 - the assigned budget more closely matches national averages for schools with a complex population of needs (*referred to in paragraph 57*);
 - the school is able to afford an appropriate staffing structure (*referred to in paragraphs 57 & 58*).
- (2) Explore further approaches to recruiting and retaining teachers so that:
 - staffing of the school more closely matches national recommendations, both in the number of teachers and their curriculum expertise (*referred to in paragraph 57*);
 - there is consistent quantity and quality of provision across the school (*referred to in paragraphs 13, 25, 57, 58, 71 & 77*);
 - improved staffing facilitates the school managers in carrying out their own responsibilities more effectively (*referred to in paragraph 57*).
- (3) Continue to develop different ways of encouraging parents to be more actively involved in their children's education and the life of the school (*referred to in paragraphs 47, 50 & 51*).
- (4) Continue with the process of curriculum development in order to:
 - introduce planned music provision for pupils aged 11-14 (*referred to in paragraphs 25 & 117*);
 - increase the time given to the core subjects for pupils aged 14-16, most particularly for mathematics (*referred to in paragraphs 68, 71, 77 & 83*);
 - explore further accreditation opportunities (*referred to in paragraphs 77, 83, 89 & 124*).
- (5) Review and update the policy for child protection with a view to ensuring that:
 - it takes full account of all relevant circulars and up-to-date guidance;
 - all staff receive appropriate training. (*both referred to in paragraph 39*).
- (6) Improve attendance to at least the national minimum targets (*referred to in paragraphs 12 & 42*).

The school should also consider including the following minor issues in the action plan:

- (i) Identify existing best practice in the use of assessment and ensure that it is applied consistently across the school (*referred to in paragraph 45*);
- (ii) Develop a more effective approach to delegating and sharing management and administrative responsibilities (*referred to in paragraph 57*);
- (iii) Continue with developing the strategic planning and evaluative roles of the governing body (*referred to in paragraph 56*);
- (iv) Review, and if necessary, improve the level of administrative support (*referred to in paragraph 42 & 57*);
- (v) Produce an appropriate special educational needs policy (*referred to in paragraph 56*).

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

| | |
|--|----|
| Number of lessons observed | 58 |
| Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils | 25 |

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

| Excellent | Very good | Good | Satisfactory | Unsatisfactory | Poor | Very Poor |
|-----------|-----------|------|--------------|----------------|------|-----------|
| 2 | 17 | 60 | 19 | 2 | - | - |

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 | 83 |
| Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals | 28 |

| 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 | 8 |
| Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving | 2 |

Attendance

| Authorised absence | | Unauthorised absence | |
|--------------------|-----|----------------------|-----|
| | % | | % |
| School data | 8.2 | School data | 6.2 |

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

Pupils were entered for statutory testing, but because of the learning difficulties that they experience they do not meet the nationally expected standards. It is, therefore, not considered appropriate to publish these figures in this report. Teacher assessment was, however, carried out with twelve pupils and the results are shown below:

| | W | L1 | L2 | L3 |
|-------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| English | 5% | 50% | 45% | 0% |
| Mathematics | 0% | 35% | 35% | 30% |
| Science | 15% | 40% | 45% | 0% |

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Pupils were entered for a range of accredited courses and the results were as follows:

ASDAN Youth Award

Eleven pupils achieved Bronze Award
Five pupils achieved Bronze/Silver Challenge Award

OCR Certificate of Achievement in Mathematics

Two pupils achieved Entry Level 1
Nine pupils achieved Entry Level 2
Two pupils achieved Entry Level 3

NDTEF/ULEAC Certificate of Competence in Work Experience

Two pupils achieved a Pass Certificate
Five pupils achieved a Distinction Certificate

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 | 83 |
| 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 | 3 | 0 |
| Other minority ethnic groups | 0 | 0 |

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7-Y11

| | |
|--|------|
| Total number of qualified teachers (FTE) | 8.5 |
| Number of pupils per qualified teacher | 9.8 |
| Average class size | 12.1 |

Education support staff: Y7-Y11

| | |
|---|-----|
| Total number of education support staff | 10 |
| Total aggregate hours worked per week | 325 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

| | |
|----------------|-----------|
| Financial year | 2000-2001 |
|----------------|-----------|

| | |
|--|---------|
| | |
| Total income | 598,484 |
| Total expenditure | 598,804 |
| Expenditure per pupil | 6,721 |
| Balance brought forward from previous year | 0 |
| Balance carried forward to next year | -320 |

Recruitment of teachers

| | |
|--|-----|
| Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years | 2.4 |
| Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years | 2 |

| | |
|--|---|
| Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE) | 2 |
| Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE) | 2 |
| Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE) | 0 |

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----|
| Number of questionnaires sent out | 83 |
| Number of questionnaires returned | 27 |

Percentage of responses in each category

| | Strongly agree | Tend to agree | Tend to disagree | Strongly disagree | Don't know |
|--|----------------|---------------|------------------|-------------------|------------|
| My child likes school. | 62 | 30 | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| My child is making good progress in school. | 44 | 44 | 4 | 0 | 8 |
| Behaviour in the school is good. | 44 | 44 | 4 | 0 | 8 |
| My child gets the right amount of work to do at home. | 19 | 54 | 15 | 12 | 0 |
| The teaching is good. | 62 | 30 | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on. | 48 | 36 | 8 | 8 | 0 |
| I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem. | 63 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best. | 67 | 30 | 4 | 0 | 0 |
| The school works closely with parents. | 48 | 33 | 15 | 0 | 4 |
| The school is well led and managed. | 63 | 37 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| The school is helping my child become mature and responsible. | 70 | 22 | 4 | 0 | 4 |
| The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons. | 62 | 22 | 4 | 4 | 8 |

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

ENGLISH

61. Achievements in English are good. Standards have improved since the last inspection, when pupils' progress in reading and writing was described as satisfactory or just satisfactory. The good achievements recognised then in speaking and listening skills have been maintained. By the age of fourteen, pupils achieve well in both reading and writing. At the age of sixteen, achievements in reading are satisfactory and in writing they are good.
62. These improvements have come about because of better teaching in the subject. The National Literacy Strategy has been used to focus more effectively on detailed objectives in both reading and writing and teachers' planning has improved as a result. The range of reading and writing experienced by pupils has been extended. There has been good development in particular of pupils' ability to read for information. The introduction of external accreditation at sixteen has provided a clearer sense of direction for pupils' work in the subject, particularly for the higher-attainers. Reading for the older pupils, however, still lacks sufficient opportunities for them to explore a greater variety of literature. Reading for pleasure is not effectively promoted. The stock of fiction books, however, has recently been much improved and the school library, which was closed at the time of the inspection while it was being reorganised, will do much to address this weakness if better use is made of it in the future. A scheme of bronze and silver certificates to encourage pupils' reading of a greater number and variety of books has recently been introduced and higher-attaining pupils have made an enthusiastic start on it.
63. Pupils in Year 7 come to the school with very low levels of attainment and little confidence in their own basic skills. A strength of teaching here and, indeed, throughout the school, is the very effective promotion of speaking and listening skills. Teachers listen carefully to pupils who rapidly learn to listen themselves, to take turns in speaking and to respond appropriately and with increasing confidence to questions and to others' comments. As a result, the quality of oral work in class is good. Pupils in one Year 7 class, for example, contributed well to a discussion based on a 'story bag', showed real interest in the exercise and went on to complete a written task linked to the story. The reliance on the school's reading scheme noted in the last inspection has been reduced and teaching, both in this year group and others, has added interest and challenge to reading and writing tasks by the use of imaginative activities outside the scheme. Year 8 pupils, for example, were observed in a lesson in which they were asked to write questions to fit a list of statements about various famous personalities and to work out who the person was. They very much enjoyed this activity and at the same time made good progress in their ability to frame and write down grammatically correct sentences.
64. Other lessons concentrate on the reading scheme and on word-level work which requires much repetition and reinforcement of basic skills. Pupils respond well to this aspect of the subject and are keen to make progress. They practise writing their name and address, for example, work steadily on handwriting exercises and check and re-check spelling lists to improve their success rate. One Year 9 class worked very well in a lesson about prefixes. Very good teaching maintained a lively pace and used

- questions very effectively to challenge pupils to use a variety of common prefixes to create new words.
65. By the end of Year 9, pupils' written work shows that they have made good progress in writing, particularly in their ability to write in sentences. Lower-attainers show clear improvements in the quality of their handwriting, spelling and use of punctuation and higher-attainers are using their developing skills well, particularly in other subjects of the curriculum such as history and geography, to produce well-organised pieces of longer writing. The quantity of writing completed in English by Year 9 pupils, however, particularly by the lower-attainers, is very limited when compared with their efforts in previous years. Achievements in reading, as measured by pupils' progress through the reading scheme and in the standardised tests used by the school, are good.
 66. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 continue to show good development of their speaking and listening skills, with greater maturity and variety in their vocabulary apparent when they talk to visitors to the school, for example. Their writing, most of which is done within the various modules required for accreditation at sixteen, shows an increasing range of style and purpose. Poetry, letters, narrative writing, news reports and work on advertisements and the media all feature in their folders and there is an increasing use of word-processing to extend and improve the presentation of their work. When asked about books which they have read, however, these pupils are unable to talk at any length about plot or character, or about favourite authors or books which they have enjoyed and the range of literature which they have sampled in the form of whole books rather than as extracts in their course modules is clearly very limited. In one lesson observed, Year 10 pupils were beginning to show real interest in a play, extracts from which were included in their course book. They talked about one of the main characters, showed interest in the language used and listened very well to the dialogue taken from the play. They were diverted from the text at this point, however, by a very difficult research task in order to look at the historical background to the play and their good initial response to the text itself was not developed. The teaching of English to Years 10 and 11 by non-specialists lacks a planned approach to the development of a greater appreciation of and more mature response to texts. As a result, while these pupils make good progress in reading for information, their reading for pleasure and for a deeper understanding of fiction and other genres is less developed than it could be, particularly for the higher attainers.
 67. Throughout their time in school, imaginative and engaging drama activities consolidate pupils' learning across the subject. This gives them particular support and encouragement in developing their speaking and listening skills and introduces them, through involvement in a European drama festival, to the challenges and satisfaction of public performance. Video materials of these performances show that they produce imaginative pieces and perform to a good standard.
 68. The school's staffing difficulties have meant that the co-ordination of English has not been consistently or effectively managed. As indicated above, improvements have been achieved, particularly during the time of a previous co-ordinator when very good work was done on the adaptation and use of the National Literacy Strategy. There is currently, however, insufficient support and guidance available, particularly for non-specialist teachers of the subject in Years 10 and 11, and the monitoring of curriculum, teaching and standards is inconsistent.

MATHEMATICS

69. Achievements in mathematics are good for pupils aged up to fourteen and satisfactory for pupils aged up to 16. This represents good improvement since the previous report, when it was judged that pupils underachieved in mathematics.
70. Pupils up to the age of 14 demonstrate good progress in their use of number and in their work with shape. These skills are used well in the development of pupils' investigative skills. An example of this is an investigation carried out by Year 9 pupils into the probability of selecting cubes of the same colour. This required skill in addition, subtraction and multiplication as well as more complex activities such as the production of tally charts to record results and the drawing of graphs to illustrate them. That pupils are able to undertake such work is a demonstration of the quality of the practical number work undertaken in Years 8 and 9. Pupils learn a variety of calculation skills and the ability to apply them to a range of situations such as measuring and calculating the area and perimeter of irregularly shaped objects. All of this work represents good progress since the previous inspection, when it was judged that pupils were only given a narrow range of work. This issue has now been successfully addressed.
71. Pupils up to the age of 16 make good progress in lessons, particularly in their money calculations. Similarly, progress in practical applications of mathematical skills in areas such as the calculation of co-ordinates in maps, are well developed. However, the current staffing difficulties restrict pupils' progress over the year, as does the amount of time devoted to the subject, resulting in pupils' long term progress being only satisfactory. This particularly hampers higher attaining pupils, who are undertaking a foundation grade GCSE.
72. Throughout the school, lower attaining pupils make good progress. This is a consequence of well-planned teaching and the quality of support provided by the classroom assistants. It is noteworthy that their progress enables pupils to move away from the need to use counters, plastic money and other apparatus and undertake calculations mentally.
73. Review of pupils' work and observation of lessons shows teaching to be good overall. Where teaching is good, lessons are characterised by careful planning and good use of group work. The groups are well structured by ability and benefit from the good quality of support provided by the classroom assistants. Examples of good teaching were seen throughout the school. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, the difficult concept of the rotation of shapes was handled imaginatively by having the pupils themselves rotate around the classroom. Similarly, in a Year 10 lesson, dealing with the calculation of money totals and change, the teacher used questioning very effectively. By asking questions such as 'If we wanted to make £1.60 what is the highest denomination we can use', pupils were challenged to consider the various ways in which the sum could be calculated, thus making discoveries of their own.
74. Teachers have received training in the National Numeracy Strategy and this has been an important factor in the raising of the quality of teaching since the previous inspection. Lessons are well planned, although there are occasions when insufficient time is left at the end of lessons for pupils to be questioned about what they have learnt. The work to be covered is clearly identified both in the lesson planning and to the pupils at the beginning of the lesson. Appropriate emphasis is placed on pupils using the correct mathematical terms. The introduction of these methods has successfully addressed the shortcomings of age-inappropriate work and not explaining the aims of the lesson.

75. The previous report judged that the use of computers in mathematics was unsatisfactory. This remains the case. However, the mathematics co-ordinator has identified this as a priority for development.
76. A significant improvement has been the way in which mathematics is used right across the curriculum. Identified as a weakness in the previous report, much work has been undertaken to ensure that opportunities are now provided in most other subjects to apply mathematical learning. In geography, for example, knowledge of scale and shape are used on maps illustrating how London has grown in size. Similarly, in science, pupils are able to time and measure experiments, recording their results accurately using decimal notation.
77. There has been good improvement in the management of the subject since the previous inspection, when it was judged to be unsatisfactory. A system of assessment has been introduced and teaching is now monitored. Training for teachers has been provided and resources, previously judged unsatisfactory, are now good. A specific improvement has been the provision of relevant text books. The target set by the governors' curriculum committee for 30% of the current Year 9 pupils to gain a foundation grade GCSE pass is achievable if improvements are effected to staffing and the allocation of time devoted to the subject in Year 11.
78. Against a background of severe staffing difficulties, the subject co-ordinator has worked hard to rectify areas of weakness identified in the previous report. Whilst some have yet to be fully addressed, it is appropriate to state that good progress has been made with this subject since the previous report.

SCIENCE

79. Pupils achieve well and make good progress across the school from a low base of prior learning, because the quality of teaching is consistently good and occasionally very good. A scrutiny of pupils' work and records confirms that they are making good progress over time and that they take a pride in the recording and presentation of their work.
80. Improvements in science since the last inspection, when it was judged to be unsatisfactory, have been good, largely due to the appointment of a specialist teacher. There have been significant improvements in the quality of teaching and learning, as the result of much more thorough planning and assessment and in the provision of better resources. The subject now also makes a very good contribution to developing pupils' communication, literacy and numeracy skills, while opportunities for practical work promote high standards of safety and responsible and mature behaviour. Year 7 pupils, for example, investigate how materials change, when they mix salt with water. They understand that salt dissolves in water but still remains there.
81. Pupils enter the room with a sense of expectation. They perceive science as fun. They behave sensibly because of the teacher's high expectations and insistence on safe working. They wear goggles and stand up when shaking their test tubes. The teacher raises their curiosity and challenges them to think and predict, for example when asking 'what has happened?' and 'where has the salt gone?' Good, robust resources motivate pupils and make them feel like real scientists. There is an appropriate emphasis on developing a scientific vocabulary with words like 'prediction', 'conclusion' and 'evaluation'. Pupils with more complex needs are well supported in their practical work by teacher assistants and, as a result, take a full and active part in lessons. Detailed planning for lessons and calm and secure management of activities and behaviour are

effective in enabling pupils to develop a full range of enquiry and practical skills. Relevant worksheets help pupils to record and reinforce their scientific knowledge and understanding of often quite challenging concepts. Whilst teacher assistants are an invaluable support to both the teacher and pupils, there are occasions when they are not sufficiently proactive or involved in learning. This is probably because their involvement has not been sufficiently thought through at the planning stage.

82. Pupils from Year 8 onwards are covering the same unit of work on forces and motion, but it has been appropriately adapted through the use of more sophisticated materials and equipment. This enables older and higher attaining pupils to tackle the work at a more advanced and challenging level. During the inspection, pupils were investigating how quickly model helicopters, which they had made themselves, drop and what variables influence their rate of drop. The teacher's good preparation and organisation ensured that learning was continuous and proceeded at a good, engaging pace. Well focused questioning, for example, 'how can we make sure this is a fair test?', encouraged pupils to think scientifically and discuss their ideas. This approach was so well developed in one lesson that the pupils came up with both the idea and the words to describe a fair test themselves. Timely interventions maintained pupils' focus on the task in hand. There were noticeable improvements during lessons in Year 10 and 11 pupils' ability to use scissors and paper clips to make their models, in their use of apparatus to measure height and time flights and in their understanding of what was actually happening. Older pupils worked particularly well in pairs and small groups, taking turns appropriately, organising themselves and negotiating the tasks. Relationships were excellent and this enhanced the learning ethos. Pupils found out how difficult it was to measure time accurately to a hundredth of a second using a digital stop clock, and that results varied according to the timer's speed of reaction and attention to the task. They therefore came to understand why it is necessary to repeat the tests lots of times to achieve reliable results. The teacher's ability to encourage productive discussion of the results was impressive. In this way, numeracy skills, knowledge and understanding about place value and averages were all reinforced in a meaningful way. It was planned that pupils would have the opportunity in subsequent lessons to use a spreadsheet or database to record and analyse their results. The teacher successfully demonstrated how this would happen on a laptop computer.
83. Science is well managed by a specialist teacher with good subject knowledge. Planning for the year and the term's work is good and a whole school science curriculum is being developed incrementally, incorporating the purchase of appropriate resources. Accommodation is in a classroom that has been adapted as specialist room. Whilst there remains the need for a proper sink and more appropriate storage facilities, it provides the right sort of environment for studying the subject. Resources are satisfactory and rapidly improving as a school priority. Now that the subject has been firmly established, pupils' work and achievements could be externally accredited, including the opportunity to take GCSE exams. This would have implications for the allocation of time to the subject.

ART AND DESIGN

84. There have been considerable improvements in pupils' achievements in art and design since the last inspection, because a specialist now teaches the subject to Years 8, 9 and 10 and there is a much more co-ordinated approach to planning the learning opportunities that pupils experience. Pupils' achievements are generally very good and many of them have made significant progress this year, since these arrangements were put in place. The subject is now a strength of the school.

85. Pupils in Year 7 make good progress in developing an understanding of line, form and colour and use their skills to produce good quality work across a range of activities. Some recent work that they did, exploring the effects of colour on feelings and emotions, was impressive in its impact and successfully demonstrated the potential of the subject to develop pupils' sensitivities.
86. Pupils aged between 13 and 15 are following an ambitious, wide-ranging programme of study that reflects their teacher's wide ranging interests. This is, in turn, encouraging all pupils, no matter what their ability, to explore the work of a wide spectrum of artists' work and produce some very impressive pieces. In so doing, they are making very good, and in some cases, excellent progress in understanding what art and design is about and developing a range of appropriate skills, using varied materials and techniques.
87. In the last term they designed and made CD covers based on natural forms, and video packages for films on artists of their choice. This has involved significant research to choose natural images and artists, using very good reference materials and developing their ideas in their own sketch books, which are fast becoming a natural form of exploration for many pupils. The finished pieces have involved the application of ICT and digital photography techniques. They are sophisticated objects in their own right and the pupils are able to explain why they have chosen artists like Jim Dine and Roy Lichtenstein, together with the processes, with pride and understanding. Similar techniques were employed to produce Christmas stamp designs, only using collage techniques to develop the original images. The finished stamps and the respectfully arranged displays were, again, of an impressively high standard. In some cases, the best work was produced by pupils who find much of their other school work challenging and difficult. Older pupils have also been studying surrealism and pointilism, producing some superb individual and group work in the style of these schools. During the inspection, some thirteen-year-olds were studying the work of Lowry and developing their figure drawing skills, using white chalk on black paper. They were helped to overcome their natural inhibitions by the empathetic support and encouragement of both the teacher and her very able assistant, who work in a close and very productive partnership. Pupils then went on to translate their drawings into string pictures, which displayed extraordinary sensitivity and skill in communicating the figures' personalities and demeanour. Pupils in Year 11 do not benefit from this teaching, but they do have appropriate access to art and design opportunities within their work-related curriculum.
88. The decision to give responsibility for art and design to the current co-ordinator and to assign a specialist room has had a significant, positive impact on both the status of the subject and the quality of teaching and learning. Many pupils have clearly had their interest excited by the very high quality teaching that they experience and a number have discovered a new medium through which they can successfully express themselves. This, in turn, has often raised their self-esteem and affected the way they work in other subjects. Pupils are positive about the subject and often very pleased with their own work. The detailed assessment and records that the teacher keeps demonstrate this very clearly.
89. The co-ordinator has already audited the subject and rewritten the policy document, which clearly expresses her ambitions for the further development of the subject. Pupils who are identified as having particular skills and abilities should now have access to GCSE accreditation through the partnerships with other schools that are currently being developed. This would, however, have an impact on an already difficult to manage timetable. It is, however, clear, from the work that pupils are currently producing, and their enthusiasm for the subject, expressed directly in conversation and

through their membership of the after school art club, that many could go on to have the quality of their work recognised in this way.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

90. No design and technology lessons were seen during the inspection, because the specialist teacher was absent on long-term sick leave. It was, however, possible to look at planning, pupils' records and samples of their work. The co-ordinator has done a lot of good development work since the last inspection, when standards in this subject were judged to be just satisfactory. There is now a well thought out programme for pupils across the school, which aims to develop their designing, making and evaluating capabilities and for them to learn how to work with a range of tools and materials on a range of engaging activities. It is clear that, on his return, the teacher will be in a good position to at least sustain previous standards, building on pupils' earlier work and improve their achievements.
91. Pupils across the school also follow a good quality home management (food) course, taught by an able teaching assistant, who, working collaboratively with the headteacher, has further developed the subject's curriculum since the last inspection, when the standards were judged to be generally good. This quality has been sustained. All pupils follow an increasingly sophisticated programme of study that has been specially written to meet their particular needs. There is an imaginative perspective on pupils' experience of food, starting with school and themed meals, ranging through residential and overseas visits and individual class projects in other subjects to timetabled cookery lessons. It introduces them in Year 7 to the school's well-equipped homecraft room, the principles and practice of safe working and healthy eating and sets a productive agenda for future years' study by starting on simple cooking activities. As they move through the school they learn about a wider range of techniques and food types, until they are able to plan for and cook a nutritious meal for themselves with minimal supervision. In years 10 and 11 they also study budgeting and other home management skills.
92. Pupils enjoy these lessons and make good progress in developing the necessary skills, because the quality of teaching is good overall. There are occasionally difficulties when some older pupils are not fully engaged by the activities and the teaching techniques, but, for the most part they are enthusiastic and achieve well. There is effective assessment of their achievements and good quality records of their achievements across the school. The subject makes a valuable contribution to pupils' personal and social development, as well as giving them important self-care skills for the future.

GEOGRAPHY

93. Pupils' achievements in geography are good and they make good progress over time. They learn well because of consistently good teaching. Lessons are well planned, have clear objectives and contain activities that are interesting and well matched to the pupils' range of abilities and learning styles. The good teaching and learning identified in the previous inspection has been sustained.
94. Pupils in Year 7 are using correct geographical terms more consistently and are developing an appreciation of the value of maps as sources of information. They identify man made features such as towns, villages, roads and railways and name natural features such as rivers, mountains, forests and fields. Other secondary sources such as photographs and pictures are used with more accuracy and pupils communicate their findings in variety of ways. They are carefully introduced to simple

maps that contain rainfall and temperature information about the British Isles. They develop this understanding further into an ability to recognise and name standard weather symbols on maps and can produce and read simple rainfall and temperature graphs.

95. Teachers effectively use pupils' confidence and skills in map reading in other areas and, in particular, provided them with an opportunity to apply this key skill when carrying out a study of the location and changes in the pattern of settlements over time. During this well planned and interesting activity pupils worked with enjoyment and concentration. They listed the disadvantages and advantages of the locations of a range of settlements. The group containing higher attainers rightly concluding that it was very difficult to find an ideal site. The quality of the discussion that led to this conclusion was very much the product of the support assistant's sensible prompting and questioning. Early work on maps is further extended, as pupils change models into plans with a consequent development of their ability to read large scale maps. This skill, in turn, was very effectively used when studying the growth of a village between 1600 to 1995, with lower attaining pupils particularly enjoying using overlays to carry out a building density count.
96. Pupils in Year 8 continue to make good progress. Teachers make sure that the development of new skills and knowledge is carefully linked to previous work. For example, they build on the pupils' knowledge of weather to introduce them to the world's rainforests. Pupils' study of the Amazon basin demands the use of correct terminology as they consider the role of the canopy, creepers and buttresses. Recognising that indiscriminate cutting of this valuable resource takes place provides valuable opportunities for discussions about world conservation. Teachers are also effective in extending pupils' understanding of how to study population density and distribution. Pupils carry out density counts in different parts of the school and study distribution on a map of a 'tourist beach. They enjoyed both activities because of their relevance and demonstrated clearly that they had achieved the lesson's objectives. The teacher's choice of interesting activities and the lesson's dynamic pace meant that pupils worked with enjoyment and effort for the whole of the lesson.
97. During Year 9, pupils continue to make progress as they study earlier work in greater detail. Their knowledge of natural land features is systematically extended to the study of simple plate tectonics, volcanoes and earthquakes. They use terms such as core, mantle and crust when describing the composition of the earth and can correctly label volcanoes using cone, lava, crater and vents. Local studies equally benefit from previous learning as teachers encourage pupils to use mapping skills to identify the composition of villages, towns and cities in greater detail. Well-planned visits to a local farm and beach are carefully interwoven into the series of activities that help pupils understand settlement development and land use. During Year 9, as in previous years, teachers stress the need for good written work. Lower attaining pupils are now more confident when responding to tasks with simple sentences as opposed to single words. The majority of pupils write longer sentences and higher attainers write paragraphs that have good form. In addition, teachers' consistent and effective use of maps in previous years has resulted in pupils now using local and world maps as tools to support their learning in other areas of geography and in other subjects such as history and the orienteering unit of physical education.
98. The co-ordinator for geography has only been recently appointed to the post. She has effectively analysed what is a good scheme of work and has clear views about how it can be further improved. She has correctly identified the need to rationalise the content of some of the units and has begun to identify the implications of such changes in

terms of the resources required. Ongoing assessment in lessons is good, but the co-ordinator recognises the need to link the rationalisation of the scheme of work to the development of a whole school assessment process that will clearly identify progress over time and help with curriculum planning.

HISTORY

99. Pupils' achievements in history are good. They make good and sometimes very good progress in lessons, because the quality of teaching is now consistently good – a satisfactory improvement since the previous inspection. Teachers plan well, provide pupils with challenging tasks and organise lessons in such a way as to make sure that all have the opportunity to learn. Because pupils enjoy history lessons, they work with effort and concentration and show real pleasure in their achievements. Teachers' constant praise and confirmation of standards achieved also contribute to the pupils' pleasure and feelings of success.
100. During Year 7, pupils improve in their understanding of events taking place in sequence and they have a clearer understanding of the past and present. In addition they begin to understand that changes take place over time. Their work on the Romans provides opportunities for them to understand the importance of asking why things happened, as they discuss and create lists of reasons for the Roman invasion. Their studies of life in Roman times not only extends their knowledge of this period but also provides them with opportunities to develop the ability to compare the past with the present. Teachers provide good opportunities for higher attainers to use research materials, and good planning, including the use of very relevant slides and questions, ensures that all pupils listen attentively. Shared planning ensures that all support staff provide the carefully targeted help that individuals in their groups need if the lesson's objectives are to be achieved.
101. During Year 8, pupils successfully build on previous knowledge. Their understanding of the passing of time and sequences of events is improving and they can make more sophisticated comparisons between life in the past and life today. The teacher's use of work sheets planned to match the needs of pupils at different levels, helps pupils to improve their ability to interpret information presented in different ways. As a result of carefully organised visits, they come to understand the difference between primary and secondary sources of evidence. Pupils now record their work in a wider variety of ways, with the newspaper format used by higher attaining pupils to record what happened to the wives of Henry VIII being of a very high standard. More detailed work undertaken about Saxon settlements carried out during Year 8 provides opportunities for pupils to use their imaginations including showing empathy with people from the past. They describe the reality of crossing the North Sea in an open boat and use their previous understanding of the reasons for the Roman invasion of Britain to identify why the Saxons invaded. The teacher made very good use of the pupils' knowledge of French as she linked Angleterre to Angles and England with some of the lower attaining pupils showing real wonder at the connection.
102. In Year 9, teachers continue to stress the need for pupils to place events into a time sequence, extend their ability to interpret different sources and, in particular make greater demands of the pupils' investigative skills. A very well organised lesson about the distribution of Saxon settlements illustrated this very well. By creatively incorporating map reading skills, analysis of place names and elements of the farming year, the teacher was able to engage all pupils in the class appropriately at their own ability level. In addition, a very high order of listening and interpretative skills was demonstrated by pupils who listened to the tape about the early life of the Venerable Bede. They responded very well to questions posed by the well-briefed support assistant and were particularly proud of their recall of the formula for making ink. As a

result of the teacher's ongoing assessment during this lesson and her identification of the high standards achieved, she shared with the class that during the next history lesson they would justifiably spend more than the planned time sharing their findings and knowledge with their peers.

103. History is well managed. A good programme structure provides teachers with the required support and guidance for their own lesson planning with the very detailed and well-organised list of suggested resources for use with the various units making a particularly good contribution to the quality of teaching in the subject. The co-ordinator does not have sufficient formal time to monitor and evaluate the subject's performance but regular informal discussions with the small teaching team makes up in part for this deficit. Resourcing for history is satisfactory overall. Sufficient time is allocated for the subject in Years 7 and 8, but here is a need to consider the allocation of more time for history in Year 9.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

104. Overall, pupils achieve well and make good progress in lessons when learning how to use computers and related equipment. This is a combined result of the high expectations and expertise of the very recently appointed specialist co-ordinator and mainly good teaching across the school by other teachers and teaching assistants. This represents good progress since the last inspection, when no clear judgement was offered on pupils' progress because there were insufficient records and overall planning for the subject was inadequate. However, currently, pupils' progress over time remains only satisfactory, because the subject has suffered from the long-term illness and absence of the previous co-ordinator and the consequent lack of whole school planning, assessment and training. The new appointment promises fast and effective improvements in all these areas.
105. Pupils in Year 7 become familiar with hardware, operating procedures and basic keyboard skills by working on individual assignments, following the 'Lytebytes' scheme. Pupils in Year 8 consolidate their keyboard skills using 'Word', with a focus on punctuation. These lessons are well planned and organised, so that maximum use is made of time and learning opportunities. The teacher and teaching assistants are busy throughout, supporting, questioning, confirming and maintaining the pace of the lessons. Pupils have very positive attitudes to the subject as a result of staff enthusiasm and expertise and this enhances their learning. They settle quickly to the tasks, attend carefully to instructions and work quietly and often independently. Logging on with their own password gives them added confidence and a sense of self-worth. They behave well and treat the expensive, good quality equipment with great respect. By the time they are 14, pupils use ICT well to organise and classify information and present their findings. They enter, save and retrieve their work efficiently and successfully use sequences of instructions to control devices and achieve required aims.
106. The characteristics of very good teaching are typified in a Year 9 lesson, when pupils working on brand new laptops and using the First Logo programme, are required to control the direction of a screen turtle, using prescribed commands. The lesson is clearly introduced by the teacher, using an overhead projector and referring back to earlier learning in previous lessons. She gives precise instructions and explores the likely pitfalls, so that pupils know what is expected of them. This helps them to settle straight into the activity, using entry logos and drop down menus confidently to get into the programme. The teacher and teacher assistant then work very effectively together to provide subtle support so that all pupils progress well. The teacher's enthusiasm for the subject is infectious and results in a relaxed and good-natured atmosphere. She

deals assertively and successfully with exploratory challenges to their new teacher from two pupils, so that the learning of others is not disrupted. She provides an appropriate extension activity, using an electronic roamer robot, for those pupils finishing early. Her adaptability is tested when the pupils discover that the room carpet is impeding the machine's turning ability and she very quickly and effectively modifies the activity. Her confidence and very good subject knowledge enable her, without loss of pace, to guide higher attaining pupils through increasingly complex programmes, so that they can complete a challenging web with missing elements. Finally, an excellent plenary at the lesson's end confirms the whole group's progress and achievements and celebrates their effort, co-operation and behaviour.

107. As the result of this sort of teaching, by the time pupils leave school, they are sufficiently confident and competent in word processing to produce their own Records of Achievement portfolios, enhancing their quality with well chosen imported graphics. They can use databases, spreadsheets and desktop publishing independently or with minimal support and successfully consult a careers programme to help them to make informed decisions about their life after school. They write letters and send them to friends in Europe, using email, and become more competent in using different technological devices, such as digital cameras and colour printers. However, although they are starting to use the internet for research, they have not had sufficient prior experience in library skills to, as yet, fully benefit from this opportunity. Pupils' work is currently accredited through an ICAA Certificate of Competence.
108. The subject meets the requirements of the National Curriculum orders. Resources are good and ICT is used well to support and enhance pupils' learning in English, art and science, but not so well in other subjects. The new co-ordinator is already very clear about the areas of activity that require her attention for improvement. These include review and development of the scheme of work and assessment and recording procedures, an audit of all resources, increased use of ICT across the curriculum and further staff training to improve individuals' confidence and skills. The subject makes a good contribution to promoting pupils' independence and decision-making skills, in line with the school's stated aims.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

109. French is taught to Years 7, 8 and 9 only. The subject has been appropriately disapplied for pupils in Years 10 and 11.
110. Achievements in French are good. Pupils not only make good progress in their speaking and listening skills in the language but they also learn a great deal about France and the French way of life. The school does outstanding work in maintaining close links with partner schools in France. Writing to and meeting pen friends in these schools provides a very rewarding experience for pupils. Numerous photographs and pupils' own writing about their visit to France testify to the enjoyment and understanding which the experience gives them. Several prestigious awards, most recently the Franco-British School Partnership Prize in 2001, have been made to the school to recognise the quality of its work in this field.
111. Pupils in Year 7 quickly acquire the ability to understand and respond to simple questions in French. They can give their names and say where they live and use a growing vocabulary of numbers, colours and classroom objects in short phrases and sentences. Teaching achieves a lively pace and actively involves pupils of all levels of

attainment in challenging question and answer work. As a result, pupils' confidence in using French develops well. There are lots of opportunities for them to practise, chant and sing new words and phrases and their pronunciation benefits accordingly. The lesson observed lasted for an hour and twenty minutes and the concentration of some pupils understandably began to flag before the end of it but, in general, pupils' response to the teacher's high expectations showed very good levels of commitment and co-operation.

112. It was not possible to observe a lesson for Year 9 pupils but Year 8 pupils showed in their lesson that their confidence in speaking and their ability to use short sentences in French have developed well. They were keen to volunteer to lead the class in an activity requiring pupils to follow a series of commands and the pronunciation of the higher-attainers has become much clearer and less hesitant. Teaching makes limited use of the target language for instructions and questions and the ability of pupils to understand it when it is used for these purposes is less well developed than their ability to speak. Teaching, however, is effective in the way it prompts pupils, particularly the higher-attainers, to use context and other clues to guess the meaning of new words.
113. Reading and written work is used well to reinforce learning both of language and of other aspects of the subject, such as the geography of France.
114. The subject's schemes of work, whilst still incomplete because of time constraints and staffing difficulties, are much improved. There are good planning and related assessment arrangements in place for three of the course's units. Detailed plans for the others, which will extend the scope and coverage of the subject and provide adequate opportunities for tracking the progress of pupils, particularly of the higher-attainers, in general language-learning skills, are being developed.
115. The subject co-ordinator has built up a very good collection of learning resources, particularly of authentic French materials, and these, together with some excellent display in the classroom, do much to stimulate pupils' interest in the subject.
116. There has been good development in the subject since the previous inspection, which judged standards to be satisfactory. As a result, pupils' achievements, particularly in speaking and in their awareness and understanding of the French way of life, are now good.

MUSIC

117. Music does not form a part of the curriculum provision of the school. Staffing difficulties and the lack of training for staff means that the music that does occur is offered on an ad-hoc basis and does not follow a structured programme. Music does, however, form a part of the life of the school, with opportunities for singing and some provision for playing instruments. Similarly, recorded music is often played in the school and gives pupils the opportunity to appreciate a range of classical and other pieces.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

118. Pupils' achievements in physical education are good. They make good progress in lessons because the quality of teaching is consistently good throughout the school. As identified in the previous inspection, lessons continue to be well planned; teachers share lesson objectives with the pupils and additionally make sure that the activities undertaken not only reflect the subject's needs but also the varied abilities of the pupils. Assessment of how well pupils are learning during lessons is used to modify teaching

in the short-term and the records kept of progress over time help teachers to plan further work.

119. Between the ages of 11 and 14, teachers effectively focus on developing pupils' co-ordination in general and in particular provide opportunities for pupils to use their co-ordination skills in a range of activities including games, gymnastics, swimming, running and horse riding. All lessons start with appropriate warm up activities, during which pupils listen well to the teachers' clear instructions. The clarity with which teachers, both qualified and unqualified, instruct pupils and the manner whereby they constantly check that all pupils have understood is a positive feature of all teaching in physical education. Pupils understand the need for warming up and practise stretching, twisting and bending with serious enthusiasm. Pupils also listen well to the teachers' pre-lesson sharing of objectives and lesson organisation with the result that they change quickly and respond with effort in lessons that have good pace and clear structure.
120. In a lesson promoting the development of both football and rugby skills, pupils demonstrated that they knew the need to trap, hold and look before kicking a football, as they also knew how to hold a rugby ball properly. They also recognised the need to keep their arms straight while looking directly at the receiver. In this and other activities pupils work very well in pairs and when playing as a team. The teachers' and support staff's use of pupils as models effectively consolidates their understanding of what is good practice, with staff making sure that less skilful pupils are also given the opportunity to show how well they are doing. Teachers make sure that the end of lesson de-brief includes pupils in recalling what they have learned and also in identifying how they can improve. The one pupil's sincere reference to learning 'not to foul' was received with gentle humour by his peers. Work in the hall provides opportunities for pupils to develop their gymnastic skills as they balance on different parts of their bodies, perform a range of movement on benches with confidence and jump in a variety of ways while still retaining control of their bodies. In addition, they work well in pairs, and their ability to focus on tasks set without direct supervision provides another example of the very good behaviour that is present in all physical education lessons. The improvement in muscle control, co-ordination and body awareness that stems from such activities not only contributes to improved performance in games but also helps them in their aim of gaining British Gymnastic Society Awards.
121. Swimming lessons for Years 7 and 8 take place in the local swimming centre. Shared planning and the efficient deployment of staff results in lessons that have a clear structure, and grouping which allows staff to target the pupils' individual needs in an effective manner. A clear sense of purpose pervaded the lesson observed, with pupils responding with enthusiasm to instructions and guidance, including reference to health and safety. Non-swimmers moved with confidence; they ducked under water in a variety of controlled ways and some were more effective in using their arms to help them move through the water. Beginner swimmers practised leg kicks with the use of floats and knew what they needed to do to improve their strokes. Confident swimmers concentrated upon developing style using different strokes and increasing their stamina. The staff's constant use of praise and encouragement contributed significantly to the effort and enthusiasm displayed by the pupils.
122. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 attend the local sports and leisure centre for their physical education. They enjoy having lessons in this centre because it confirms the school's view about their developing maturity and provides opportunities for them to work with a very good range of equipment. It is very evident that teachers have succeeded in

teaching the pupils the conventions that go with being in such a public setting. Whilst in the centre, pupils have well organised opportunities to apply previously acquired skills in a wide range of activities; including football, netball, cricket and Unihoc. In addition, and because of their very good behaviour and positive attitudes, they are allowed to work in the excellently equipped Fitness Centre. A carefully planned programme of activities includes regular access to this centre by all pupils.

123. During skill acquisition activities, pupils continue to show that they can work independently or in pairs, and when playing games, they develop a good understanding of rules and strategies. Teaching and support staff continue to use model performances to motivate individuals and to support whole class development. Additionally, careful placements in teams of those that are not so skilful minimises their lack of skills and provides them with opportunities to be members of a winning side. The placement of girls with ASD in the two goals during the Unihoc game resulted in both making excellent saves. They were delighted, because they knew they had done well and their teams showed delight because they were pleased for them. Careful planning and responding to individual needs is also a strong feature of work in the Fitness Centre. The effort and achievements demonstrated by the group in the centre were directly related to the high quality of teachers' planning, collaborative working and careful monitoring of pupils' performance. Pupils knew how well they had performed in the past, could check this by looking at their personal records and understood clearly what their target performance was for the lesson in question.
124. Physical education is well managed and planning is good. The co-ordinator has a clear vision about the subject's role within the curriculum and has succeeded in sharing this vision with pupils and support staff. Pupils were proud of their participation in The Millennium Youth Games. They are also justifiably proud of their other achievements as they work for swimming awards, including those awarded by the Amateur Swimming Association and show equal pleasure when they receive externally graded awards for horse riding and stable management and in-house awards for work in the Fitness Centre. However, if the proposal to have pupils work within the British Gymnastics Proficiency Awards Scheme comes to fruition, there will be a need to increase the time available for gymnastics. Resources for the subject continue to be satisfactory overall and good for outdoor activities. The co-ordinator recognises the need to replace certain items of old stock and to purchase new equipment in the light of the proposals for gymnastics. She has also identified the need for more equipment that can be used in the hall and outdoors. Changing facilities continue to be unsatisfactory.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

125. Up to the age of 14, pupils make good progress in religious education but beyond that age, up to sixteen, progress is only satisfactory. This difference is a consequence of the small amount of time allocated to the subject when taught to older pupils.
126. By the age of 14, pupils are aware of the importance of major festivals in world religions and understand the spiritual significance of festivals such as Christmas and Diwali. Through a range of visits to churches and other places of worship pupils also understand the significance of religious symbols such as the cross to Christians and the Koran to Muslims as well as the implications of the different robes of the clergy. By the age of 16 pupils have considered the moral and religious implications of a range of issues such as marriage and relationships. Much of this work takes place through discussion and is closely linked to the ASDAN examination work undertaken by older pupils.

127. The quality of teaching is good. The lessons seen built carefully upon pupils' previous experiences and knowledge. In a lesson for Year 9 pupils, for example, the discussion of their visit to a local church was well structured and gave pupils the opportunity to demonstrate what they had seen. Similarly in a lesson for Year 8 pupils a discussion on the soul as defined in the Hindu faith showed pupils had a good understanding of complex issues. When asked, for example, what Hindus believed happened after death a pupil replied 'they believe you die and are born again'. However, whilst the quality of discussion was good and was effectively supported by colourful wall displays, some of the written tasks given to pupils were unimaginative and too much time was devoted to colouring in exercises.
128. The management of the subject has been hampered by significant periods of staff absence. Satisfactory progress has been made in establishing the subject, but there are some areas that still require further development. Teaching staff would benefit from the provision of further training. Similarly, although resources have been improved, insufficient use is made of computers, and there is a need further to enhance the use of artefacts to support the good programme of visits. There is also a need to develop a system of assessment, which will give a more accurate picture of what pupils know.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION

129. The high standards seen in this subject at the last inspection have been maintained and further improved. The imaginative and well argued, updated policies and schemes of work for both PSHE and citizenship express the school's appropriate prioritisation of these aspects of pupils' learning right across the curriculum. This, in turn, encourages all staff to use every opportunity to focus pupils' thoughts on how they function in school and the wider society and how they can best cope with the challenges they meet. As a result, pupils make very good progress in developing their personal and social skills. Their achievements in learning about wider issues relating to the environment, questions of morality, health, sex and drugs awareness are consistently good. They are helped considerably in this success by the high quality, empathetic teaching of the whole staff, with teachers and support staff always working in successful partnership. The fact that there is a good combination of well planned, discrete lessons for the subject, as well as carefully thought out opportunities throughout the school day, and beyond, in a wide range of community and residential activities, is an important contributory factor.
130. PSHE lessons are well planned to cover an ambitious syllabus across the year and benefit from teachers' enthusiasm and sensitivity. Typical of this was the brisk and very well targeted introduction to a lesson about the 'Use of Spare Time', which resulted in pupils responding well to challenging questions about why?, what? and when? They successfully compared present day leisure activities with those of 100 years ago and made valuable links with their learning in other subjects. A wide range of good resources is well used to focus pupils' thoughts. For example, the teacher's use of a variety of real medicine bottles made it possible for pupils to distinguish between prescription and non-prescription medicine in a lesson about drugs. This lesson also demonstrated the skilled way in which teachers often use opportunities that arise out of discussion to link with other issues. Showing a hypodermic syringe reminded pupils that one of their peers and a teacher both needed to use one as part of the treatment for their diabetes. This then led naturally on to a discussion about the dangers of drug abuse. The Key Decisions programme that older pupils follow as part of their ASDAN

studies provides many good opportunities for them to discuss, think about and practise a wide range of important skills that they need to develop as young adults.

131. There is a recognition by the school that these standards could be further enhanced by carrying out the planned evaluation of the impact of the programme on the first cohort of pupils to follow it through completely. There is also a recognised need to establish consistently high standards in writing more specific targets for pupils' IEPs.
132. Elsewhere, throughout this report, there are indicators of the many reasons why the school is as successful as it is in helping pupils to thrive and mature, so that they leave as confident young people, well prepared for their future lives.