

INSPECTION REPORT

BEACON HILL SCHOOL

Ipswich

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124908

Headteacher: David Stewart

Reporting inspector: Rosemary Eaton
15173

Dates of inspection: 9th – 13th October 2000

Inspection number: 223605

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	5 to 16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Stone Lodge Lane West Ipswich Suffolk
Postcode:	IP2 9HW
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr John Goldstein
Date of previous inspection:	26 th May 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Rosemary Eaton (15173)	Registered inspector	English; art; design and technology; religious education.	Standards; teaching; spiritual, moral, social and cultural development; leadership and management.
Roberta Mothersdale (13462)	Lay inspector		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development; community links; welfare; partnership with parents.
John Cornwall (15333)	Team inspector	Information and communication technology; physical education; special educational needs.	Assessment.
Jenny Hall (14691)	Team inspector	Science; personal, social and health education; equal opportunities.	Curriculum.
Mike Kell (13101)	Team inspector	Geography; history; music.	Staffing, accommodation and learning resources.
Alan Tattersall (20466)	Team inspector	Mathematics; modern foreign language; English as an additional language.	Efficiency.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Beacon Hill is a special school for pupils aged five to 16 with moderate learning difficulties. Currently, 146 pupils attend, all with statements of special educational need. There are only four pupils under the age of seven. In addition to those with moderate learning difficulties, ten pupils have severe learning difficulties and 29 are autistic. Three pupils are from minority ethnic groups and two have English as an additional language. Pupils are mainly from South Suffolk, around Ipswich, but some travel from the West and North of the county.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Beacon Hill is a very good school. Pupils make very good progress. Their attitudes and personal development are very good. The quality of teaching is very good and the school is extremely well led and managed. It provides very good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils make very good progress in most subjects, including English and mathematics.
- Teachers are very knowledgeable about the subjects they teach. Support assistants make strong contributions to pupils' progress.
- Relationships between pupils and with staff, with parents, other schools and the community at large, are all very good.
- The headteacher and deputy headteacher set very high standards for all staff. There is a sense of purpose and excitement about the school.
- The curriculum is highly effective and stimulating and prepares pupils very well for their future lives.
- The school plans for the future and manages its finances extremely well, for the benefit of the pupils.

What could be improved

- There is no subject leader for information and communication technology.
- Teachers do not always set out what they want each pupil to achieve during each unit of work. This makes it difficult to measure the rate of their progress.

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 previously inspected in May 1996. Since then, it has made very good progress. Pupils now make significantly better progress, particularly in English and mathematics, although not in science at Key Stage 2. At the age of 16, they achieve success in a wider range of accreditation including, for some, GCSE art. The quality of teaching has improved considerably. Pupils' attendance was previously satisfactory and is now very good.

The school has energetically tackled all the key issues arising from the previous inspection, with varied, but overall very good, rates of success. Particularly important has been the production of an extremely good development plan. This involves all staff, shows clearly what work is to be done, and makes sure that progress is maintained. The leadership team has been extended and reorganised, and this has led to improvements in the curriculum and pupils' progress – because senior staff share responsibility for these. Where there is still work to do – for example, in improving the organisation of information and communication technology – the school is well aware and has plans in place to deal with the situation. The

school was effective in 1996. It is now very effective, with many significant strengths and very well set to continue improving.

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	
speaking and listening			A	
reading			A	
writing			A	
mathematics			A	
personal, social and health education			A	
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*			A	

Key	
very good	A
good	B
satisfactory	C
unsatisfactory	D
poor	E

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

The statutory targets for pupils to achieve in the end of key stage tests are not appropriate for the pupils at Beacon Hill. Last year's targets for GCSE results were met. Pupils achieve very well in relation to their individual targets in most subjects. The school is currently developing ways of measuring the progress of groups of pupils.

Pupils make very good progress and achieve very well in nearly all subjects, including English and mathematics. In information and communication technology, progress is satisfactory. In science, pupils make satisfactory progress in Key Stages 1 and 2 and good progress in Key Stages 3 and 4. In history, progress is good in Key Stages 1 and 2 and satisfactory in Key Stage 3.

By the time they leave school at the age of 16, most aspects of pupils' work are externally accredited. They are successful in the Youth Award Scheme, Certificate of Achievement courses and GCSE art examinations.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils enjoy school and take advantage of the many opportunities open to them.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Older pupils behave very well indeed during visits – for example, to colleges.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils learn to take responsibility for themselves and to care for others.
Attendance	Very good. Pupils are seldom away unless they are ill.

Pupils learn to work together productively; in lessons, during events such as musical or dance performances, and when playing team games.

They develop the skills they need in order to be independent – for example, to travel on public transport.

Older pupils willingly accept responsibility. For instance, some can work in school without supervision and they are successful in work experience placements and the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

During the inspection, teaching was very good or excellent in 60 per cent of lessons. 98 per cent were satisfactory or better and only two per cent were unsatisfactory.

Teaching is very good in English, mathematics and personal, social and health education. In science, teaching is satisfactory in Key Stages 1 and 2 and good in Key Stages 3 and 4. The skills of communication, including literacy, and numeracy are taught very well. Very occasionally, teachers have difficulty arranging suitable work for a small minority of pupils with particularly complex needs.

Teachers have a very good knowledge of the subjects they teach. They are able to present difficult information in interesting ways, so pupils try hard to learn. Teachers make very effective use of the time available in lessons, so that pupils make very good progress.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Very good. The curriculum is highly effective and stimulating, so pupils enjoy learning.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school makes very good arrangements to meet the pupils' needs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Through timetabled lessons and assemblies, visits and events, the school provides very effectively for all aspects of pupils' development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares very well for all pupils. Staff know them all very well and make sure that they are provided with the support they need to enable them to benefit from their time in school.

The school works very well in partnership with parents.

Pupils are prepared very well for their future lives, through the very effective leavers' programme.

The curriculum provides sensible amounts of time for English and mathematics. In Key Stages 1 and 2, not enough time is allowed for science.

Planning for most subjects is very good, but more work is needed in information and communication technology.

Personal, social and health education is very good, as is careers and vocational education, including opportunities for work experience.

The school provides an excellent range of top quality activities outside lessons. Links with the community and other schools are very strong and extend the opportunities open to pupils.

Child protection procedures are very good and are known and understood by all staff.

The pupil welfare policy is very effective in encouraging most pupils to behave well. For a small number of pupils, more individual planning is needed. Teachers carefully record what pupils know, understand and can do, but are not always able to measure how quickly they are making progress.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher and deputy headteacher provide exceptionally good leadership. All key staff fulfil their responsibilities very effectively.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Very good. Many governors are actively involved in keeping themselves informed about the school and providing practical support.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. The quality of teaching is carefully checked. The school is currently developing accurate ways of measuring the effect of teaching on pupils' progress.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes excellent use of its resources to care for pupils and help them to make progress.

The school is well staffed. The accommodation and learning resources are very good.

All staff share the leadership team's commitment to raising standards. They are hard-working and enthusiastic.

The school's priorities are set out very clearly in the school development plan and firm but carefully considered action is taken to achieve its targets.

The school checks its spending extremely thoroughly. It makes very good efforts to apply the principles of best value.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children make good progress. • They are well taught. • The school has high expectations for children to achieve. • Parents feel welcome in the school. • It is well led and managed. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some parents are not clear about how much homework is reasonable for their children. They would like the older pupils to have homework diaries. • A number of parents feel that their children receive insufficient speech therapy. • A few think that there are not enough activities provided outside lessons.

The inspectors agree with the parents' very positive views about the school. The amount and type of homework is generally suitable, but does vary between teachers and subjects. The school is currently considering its policy for providing homework, including how it keeps parents informed. There have been interruptions in the provision of speech therapy and the school is in discussion with the health authority. The range and quality of activities outside lessons are excellent.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Overall, pupils make very good progress and achieve very well. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection, when progress was judged to be broadly satisfactory. Particular improvements have been made in English and mathematics in Key Stage 3. The improvements in standards echo the ways in which the quality of teaching and the curriculum have developed. In particular, the implementation of the National Strategies for Literacy and Numeracy has had a strong impact on the way English and mathematics are planned and taught, and hence on pupils' progress.
2. There are some variations in standards. In particular, progress and achievement in information and communication technology are satisfactory, rather than good, because teachers' work is not drawn together to ensure that pupils learn in the same carefully planned steps that exist in other subjects. At present, none of the teachers have this responsibility. Not enough time is allowed for science in Key Stages 1 and 2. As a result, pupils progress at a slower rate than in Key Stages 3 and 4, where progress is good. In history, progress is good in Key Stages 1 and 2, but simply satisfactory in Key Stages 3, because the teaching is less effective.
3. Since the last inspection, the external accreditation of the work of Key Stage 4 pupils has increased. Although the Youth Award Scheme and Duke of Edinburgh Award are still very important features, pupils are now successful in the Certificate of Achievement for English, science, resistant materials technology and food technology. In each of these, a proportion of pupils gain distinction. Pupils with particular ability have opportunities to enter the GCSE examination in art. In 1999, 17.3 per cent of the Year 11 pupils were successful, which was in line with the results of other schools for pupils with moderate learning difficulties. In 2000, the percentage rose to 21 per cent. One pupil achieved so well that he is currently studying for the A-level examination.
4. During Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils make very good progress and achieve very well in English, mathematics, art, design and technology, music, physical education, personal, social and health education and religious education. Their progress and achievement are good in history and at least good in geography – although no geography lessons were seen during the inspection. Progress is satisfactory in science and information and communication technology.
5. In Key Stage 3, achievement and progress are very good in English, mathematics, art, design and technology, geography, French, music, physical education, personal, social and health education and religious education. Standards are good in science and satisfactory in history and information and communication technology. The pattern is similar in Key Stage 4, except that pupils do not study history and geography.
6. A very small number of the pupils with additional and complex learning difficulties make good, rather than very good, progress overall. This is because, occasionally, teachers do not ensure that these pupils' needs are fully met – by enabling them to join in the same activity as the rest of the class or providing suitable alternative tasks. Additionally, an equally small minority of pupils require more detailed personal development targets, to allow their challenging behaviour to be managed and modified, so that they can benefit fully from the educational opportunities provided. The majority of pupils with

additional and complex special educational needs make very good progress in their personal development. For example, when they arrive at the school, pupils with autism often have great difficulty in establishing and maintaining contact with others and developing relationships. In Key Stage 2, they are beginning to be able to join in class activities for increasing lengths of time and, to varying degrees, form relationships with other pupils. By the time they reach Key Stages 3 and 4, many of these pupils are able to mix socially with others and have developed ways of contributing to their own learning and joining in with classroom and school activities.

7. Pupils' progress across the curriculum is enhanced by the very good progress they make in English and mathematics. For example, they are able to weigh and measure accurately in design and technology and can write down their findings in science. Their well-developed skills of speaking and listening enable pupils to take part in discussions and to ask and answer questions. Similarly, their very positive attitudes to learning ensure that they make the most of their time in school.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Pupils' attitudes to learning are very good and make a significant contribution to their progress. They are willing to take advantage of the many opportunities open to them at the school. For example, pupils of all ages volunteer to take part in assemblies. They are enthusiastic – keen to be involved in the many sporting opportunities open to them. For example, pupils' success in the Junior Sports Leader Award is an indication of the enthusiasm and commitment pupils bring to their learning. They enjoy taking part in performances and collaborating with others – in creative arts lessons, for instance. In the space of an afternoon during the inspection, thirty pupils had collaborated on a simple lyric, composed a haunting tune, designed posters for the event, suggested contemporary costumes for slaves and jazz singers, and created a dance. Pupils concentrate hard on their work. For example, in an art lesson, which involved creating and decorating shapes in the style of Klee and Matisse, pupils were very interested to look for examples of the artists' work in books, and to use similar colours and effects. They especially enjoy practical tasks linked to their work. For example, the making up – and subsequent eating – of Angel Delight, enlivened the activity of following a recipe, during a literacy lesson. Pupils work very well together. During a physical education lesson, pupils working in pairs, one blindfolded and the other acting as 'eyes', had to explore their environment using only touch to communicate with each other. The high level of trust between pupils enabled them to make excellent progress in learning to support others and share information.
9. Overall, pupils' behaviour is good. They are very sensible when working in specialist rooms – for example, the laboratory – and use apparatus such as microscopes and glassware responsibly. Behaviour in assembly and the dining room is very good and makes a very positive contribution to pupils' progress – for instance, their spiritual and social development. There has been an increase in the incidence of exclusions in the school since the previous inspection. However, no pupil was excluded from school at the time of the inspection, and the behaviour of a number of pupils who have been excluded for fixed periods has subsequently improved. During the last year there were 17 fixed period exclusions, involving six pupils. Records of behavioural incidents show that pupils are generally responding well to the school's expectations and that as they get older, they become more responsible for their actions. A few pupils have occasional outbursts of challenging behaviour, but staff usually manage such incidents well, so that pupils can soon return to their work and others are not disrupted. For example, one younger pupil who was upset at the loss of a favourite item, was able to eat her lunch with the headteacher until she could return to her class without disturbing other pupils. On another occasion, a pupil who had thrown a pencil during the lesson, knew she had

to pick it up and eventually was able to do so with good grace. During the course of the inspection, pupils behaved impeccably during visits to colleges and training centres, contributing positively to the success of the events. Younger pupils' good behaviour during a riding lesson ensured that they were safe and made good progress.

10. Pupils' personal development and their relationships with other pupils and with staff are very good. They learn to be responsible for themselves and others. As one parent said 'The children look out for each other.' Many older pupils are interested in following careers which involve caring – the careers adviser is constantly seeking appropriate work experience placements in animal and child care. Pupils recognise the need to continue their education and go on to further training opportunities when they leave school. Throughout their final year in school, older pupils gradually acquire the independence skills they need to enable them to travel to college on public transport. Pupils who take part in the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme must demonstrate commitment in the areas of expedition, service, skills and recreation. Their records – for example, of caring for elderly residents in a community home, working with younger children in the school or taking responsibility for demonstrating skills to other pupils in physical education lessons – vividly illustrate the extent of their personal development. Student leaders, chosen by the staff, introduce their school to visitors, help to maintain good relationships within the school and set excellent examples to others. They enjoy their role very much and are proud to be selected.
11. Pupils' attendance is very good and is above average for a school of this type. The percentage of unauthorised absences has reduced since the previous inspection. Very few pupils are persistently poor attenders or arrive late. Pupils enjoy coming to school and illness is the main reason for them being away. Parents are delighted with the good image that the school has in the community and feel that their children are proud to attend Beacon Hill.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

12. The quality of teaching is very good. During the inspection, teaching was excellent in 14 per cent of lessons and very good in 46 per cent. In 32 per cent, teaching was good. It was satisfactory in six per cent and unsatisfactory in only two per cent. This represents a considerable improvement since the previous inspection, when 25 per cent of teaching was very good or excellent and 11 per cent was less than satisfactory. Arising from this, three associated key issues for action were identified in the report, and all have been tackled successfully. Most teachers have some commitment to teaching English, and are now very well equipped to cope with this. The way in which the school has implemented the National Literacy Strategy has been very helpful in this respect. There has been an increase in the extent to which teachers specialise in particular subjects. Where they teach outside these areas – for example, in Key Stages 1 and 2 and in mathematics throughout the school – the school ensures that sufficient guidance and support are available, to enable them to be very effective. Because teachers are so well informed about English and mathematics, they are able to take full advantage of opportunities to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills during lessons across the curriculum. This contributes significantly to the very good progress pupils make, because they are able to practise their skills in a range of situations in many lessons. The training of staff in the use of information and communication technology continues to be a priority – much has already taken place and more is planned. Most teachers are well able to make use of information and communication technology in their lessons, although their work is not yet coordinated sufficiently.

13. Teachers' knowledge of the subjects they teach is generally very good. This means that they have a thorough awareness of the requirements of the National Curriculum and are able to teach the necessary skills and knowledge. Additionally, teachers appreciate the special educational needs of the pupils, and most are very skilled at finding ways of presenting difficult topics so that all pupils are able to make progress. This often requires the work to be carefully structured over a number of weeks, so pupils gradually increase their knowledge and understanding. For example, in religious education, Year 10 pupils' appreciation of a person's personality – as opposed to their physical characteristics – was gradually developed through a series of lessons. During the inspection, they considered items from a 'box of tricks' – fruit, family celebrations, a torn book, cigarettes – and discussed their impact on people's health and emotions. They made very good progress towards an understanding of the factors that influence how we develop 'inside and outside'. Teachers give very clear demonstrations, so that, for example, pupils are quite clear about what they have to do and the standards they should try to reach. During a creative arts lesson, Key Stage 4 pupils were given very careful instructions that enabled them to photograph each other, dressed in 1930's costumes. Additionally, the teacher highlighted particular features of the garments for pupils to observe – because these would be the most significant in helping them to achieve high standards in the designing task that followed.
14. Pupils are confident to tackle activities that might appear difficult, because their relationships with their teachers are so good. Teachers and support staff go to great lengths to help pupils feel good about themselves, and this encourages them to try hard and live up to the school's high expectations. For example, during French lessons, the teacher creates an atmosphere in which pupils are keen to be involved and to practise their accent, and hence they make very good progress. When pupils first arrive at the school, the calm approach and willingness to develop whatever communication the pupil has begins the process of bringing them into the community of the school and classroom. Pupils trust their teachers, so they are willing to take part in discussions about personal issues, such as their feelings. Teachers are honest with pupils – they answer their questions and make sure that they appreciate the consequences of their actions. This is particularly significant in the way that teachers implement the pupil welfare system – the green and red cards that are used to signal when a pupil's behaviour is unacceptable. In one lesson, a Year 7 pupil had received two 'official warnings' and was told clearly that one more would lead to him having to leave the lesson. This did in fact happen, to the concern of his classmates. The teacher took time to explain exactly why she had taken action – it made her sad, but the lesson was being spoiled for everyone else, and this was not fair. The pupils could appreciate this, and settled back to work. For some pupils with very challenging behaviour, resulting from their special educational needs, the school's policy is not appropriate and there is insufficient detail in their personal development targets or in individual programmes linked to their particular needs.
15. Teachers generally use the time available in lessons very effectively, to ensure that pupils make as much progress as possible. For example, during riding lessons, supported by the Riding for the Disabled Association, the teacher plans very carefully to ensure that these youngest pupils are working throughout the session. They develop the skills they need for daily life, by practising getting dressed. They use waiting time profitably, by reading, and they observe and talk about their surroundings during the short journey – identifying fields that have been ploughed. Throughout the school, teachers usually make sure that activities are changed regularly in the course of lessons, so pupils maintain their concentration. They are skilled at adjusting the pace of learning or the ways in which pupils are grouped – for example, whole class discussions followed by activities undertaken by pairs or individuals. Very occasionally, teachers' ability to manage the class is unsatisfactory – they do not ensure that all pupils are kept

occupied or involved. In these isolated instances, pupils do not make as much progress as they should. Teachers use their knowledge of pupils' needs and achievements very effectively in order to provide suitable tasks and resources. For example, in a religious education lesson, the teacher matched the work very closely to the Year 9 pupils' understanding and literacy skills. The most able were expected to write their own answers to the question 'Who makes the rules for me?' Some, who could read but had difficulties with writing, circled the relevant answers, whilst others chose from symbols which represented different people. This planning and organisation enabled all pupils to make good progress in their awareness of authority figures and to work independently, despite their learning needs. Pupils enjoy taking responsibility for their own progress and such opportunities help to prepare them very well for their future lives. Sometimes, less able pupils would benefit from additional resources to help them to get on with their work – for example, to allow pupils with little speech to communicate their ideas. Additionally, some teachers do not always set out clearly how they intend to modify lessons in order to meet the needs of pupils with autism.

16. Support assistants make strong contributions to pupils' progress. Teachers usually make sure that they are well informed about their role in lessons – often to support less able pupils. For example, in an art lesson, a support assistant worked with two pupils who were collaborating to produce a pattern of overlapping shapes. In addition to helping them make decisions – such as which colours to use – she enabled them to improve their ability to work together, by suggesting how they might divide the task, to avoid getting in each other's way. On another occasion, an assistant accompanied a pupil to the library, in order to help her choose a book. She took the trouble to show the pupil where the tickets for her class were stored, so that she could be independent next time. Sometimes, pressure of time means that teachers do not give instructions to support staff until the lesson is taking place. This means that there is some loss of time and the teacher's attention is diverted from the pupils. Usually, however, the partnership between teachers and support assistants appears seamless.

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

17. The school provides a highly effective and stimulating curriculum, promoting a real joy of learning and very high levels of enthusiasm in lessons. Although taught time is shorter than national recommendations in Key Stages 2, 3 and especially in Key Stage 4, an exceptionally stimulating and comprehensive range of extra-curricular and curricular enrichment activities provides excellent compensation for any shortfall in lesson time. Pupils receive, overall, very good opportunities for all aspects of their development. The curriculum has developed very well since the previous inspection. In Key Stage 4, accredited courses include the Certificate of Educational Achievement in English, science, design and technology, and food technology. The Youth Award Scheme, Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, Junior Sports Leader Award and Record of Achievement are also established. Pupils gain certificates for their personal and social competence. High attainers progress to GCSE work, in art. A broad leavers' programme prepares pupils very well for independence. By the time they leave school, pupils have had the potential to develop communication and independence skills, to study an increasing number of externally accredited courses, and to take full advantage of the many opportunities provided to take responsibility for their own actions and learning. In short, the curriculum is very successful in helping pupils to become mature and independent young adults.
18. Statutory requirements for the National Curriculum are met, and teachers are adapting their subject policies and schemes of work to bring them in line with National Curriculum

2000. Subject planning is very effective in providing opportunities for higher, average and lower attainers all to be appropriately challenged so all can achieve success. Throughout the school the teaching of the basic skills of literacy and numeracy is very effective; and provision for English and mathematics overall is very good. Generous amounts of time are sensibly allocated to help pupils improve their basic communication skills, to very good effect.

19. In Key Stage 2, the time allocation for science, currently sharing 'topic' time with history and geography, is well below the average for similar schools. It is well short of what is needed to promote the same high standard of achievement in science that is already achieved in the other two core subjects of English and mathematics. Except in the Key Stage 4 Youth Award Scheme, curricular planning for information and communications technology is not yet fully embedded in the planning for other subjects. Full use is not yet made of the extensive computer facilities in school. Displays in the school corridors and public areas celebrate pupils' achievements, provide evidence of excellent links with the community and enrich the curriculum. There is a noticeable lack of science display in corridors compared with other subjects.
20. Provision across school for personal, social and health education, including sex education and drugs awareness, is very good, both in timetabled lessons and during the many visits and events that enrich and extend the personal and social curriculum. An excellent range of top quality subject, creative, sporting and residential activities add to the very high quality of personal and social education throughout the school, culminating in very good achievements in personal, social and health education by the time pupils leave in Year 11. Key Stage 4 pupils derive great benefit from their access to local college courses; and great care is taken in preparing pupils for education and training post-16. A wide-ranging curriculum for the Youth Award Scheme adds very good breadth and relevance to the Key Stage 4 curriculum.
21. Local employers are very supportive of the pupils in Key Stage 4 on their work experience placements. Evaluations by employers indicate that pupils respond and progress in the work environment very well. Links to the careers service are very well established and the statutory requirement for careers education and guidance from age 14 is in place. A vast range of organisations in the community and further afield provide huge support for pupils' learning. Of particular note are the many who supported the establishment of the computer network; and the extensive help of many organisations (galvanised into action by the parents) and the practical support in school of the captain and crew of HMS Grafton. Together, they brought pupils' designs, for a quiet garden of reflection, through to fruition. Pupils are well supported by external professionals to help them with their physical difficulties. Recent difficulties experienced in the provision for speech and language therapy are being resolved. Opportunities for pupils to learn with pupils in mainstream schools are minimal and this is an area for development.
22. The school's partnership with other schools and colleges in the area is very good. The transition programme for older pupils into further education is supported by the close links to the college and high school provision in the area. Close links to an agricultural college and a training centre provision in the town enable the school to access a wide range of expertise when considering the options for older pupils. There are very valuable relationships with local secondary schools with specialisms in design and technology, languages and physical education, supporting pupils' progress in these subjects. The school offers placements for high school pupils, who work in classes. It enjoys a high profile in the local community of schools. The local Education Business Partnership has enabled the school to share with other schools the expertise it has acquired through the staff's industrial placements.

23. The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development continues to be one of the school's strengths. Spiritual development is supported extremely effectively by the carefully planned programme of assemblies. This provides opportunities for pupils to extend their religious knowledge – by re-enacting Bible stories or learning about Yom Kippur – and to think hard about how they and others live their lives. All the assemblies that took place during the inspection were very good; many were innovative – one was outstanding. Led by the deputy headteacher, pupils became engrossed in a story about teamwork, involving the theme of Harvest. When, at a critical point, the 'voice of God' boomed out, pupils were truly inspired with awe and left in no doubt about the central message, that God encourages people to work together for good.
24. Religious education is taught very well throughout the school. Pupils learn factual information about major world religions and have frequent opportunities to explore how having a faith affects day-to-day life. This reinforces the very strong moral climate within the school. Opportunities to be involved in activities such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme or to be Student Leaders, responsible for setting good examples to others, enable pupils to make contributions to the community and to put others before themselves. They are given every encouragement to care for others and all staff provide excellent role models, by showing their concern for each pupil. Teachers are not afraid to deal explicitly with moral issues. During an English lesson, pupils discussed war and reflected on the impact of conflict on the people involved. As a result, some pupils thought hard about their initial excitement at the idea of battle and became noticeably more sombre as the lesson progressed and their consciousness was raised.
25. The school's links with the community and other schools and colleges are put to very good use in promoting pupils' social development. They have numerous opportunities to mix with others, learning how to communicate with people in a variety of different situations. This has a very significant impact on pupils' self-confidence and they are prepared particularly well for their lives beyond school. For example, after a visit to familiarise them with college life, pupils were able to share their impressions and reflect on how they felt. They discovered that others also found the pace of college life to be very fast and were shocked by the number of stairs they encountered. Because their concerns are out in the open, teachers are then able to help pupils deal with them. In lessons throughout the school, pupils are required to work with others, sharing tasks and resources. They are encouraged to talk about their work, explaining what they have done and how. As a result, pupils are confident to express their opinions or to ask for help, enabling them to cope better in demanding situations, such as work experience placements or residential visits.
26. The school provides a very good range of opportunities for pupils' cultural development. During lessons and extra-curricular activities, teachers go to great lengths to enrich pupils' lives. For example, during a design and technology lesson, pupils were amazed at the entry of two of their friends dressed in clown costumes, to provide a stimulus for their work. Pupils go on a very wide range of visits to support the work they do in lessons. Visitors with particular expertise are invited to work with pupils – notably a variety of musicians. In addition to very good French lessons, older pupils have opportunities to travel abroad – to Belgium and Holland, for instance – helping them to appreciate the culture of another country.
27. The school has equality of opportunity at the heart of the curriculum, and the headteacher especially is very effective in promoting this goal. The needs of the full age range of pupils are met. In the main, activities appropriately challenge most of the pupils, and there is no discrimination on the grounds of gender and ethnicity. Schemes of work importantly include study of equality of opportunity, prejudice and stereotyping. A well-developed programme of individual support is in place for those pupils for whom

English is an additional language. Pupils of all abilities and learning needs are fully included in the school's overall curriculum. The school plans diligently to enable success for pupils who may have difficulty in accessing the curriculum. Where the provision is very good – for the high proportion of pupils who have additional complex communication difficulties – they make very good, demonstrable progress. On rare occasions, a small number of pupils in each key stage are neither fully included in the class activity nor are provided with alternative activities. Individual planning for these pupils needs to be more detailed.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

28. The school's procedures for ensuring the health and safety, and well being of its pupils are very good, and are constantly under review. Termly fire drills and regular checks of all types of equipment are routinely completed. The school has not yet completed risk assessments for the school site, but it does have very detailed health and safety procedures for all curriculum areas. For example, teachers insist that pupils wear full face masks (instead of just goggles) when working on some design and technology tasks, and ensure hygienic procedures when pupils are tasting food. Health and safety issues in the school are promptly identified and reported by the school's health and safety representative and the caretaker. The school is rightly concerned about the congestion outside the school especially when transport is trying to leave at the end of the school day. Inconsiderate parking by vehicles, unconnected with the school, across the school's exit, creates a hazardous situation. The school has acted to inform the police and traffic wardens, but the situation remains unresolved. Qualified first aiders in the school are responsible for dealing with minor accidents to pupils. Pupils who require medication have individual care plans drawn up by the school nurses and emergency packs of medication are taken when they go out on school activities. The school enables regular access for pupils in need of occupational therapy, physiotherapy, educational psychology or music therapy. There have been interruptions in the provision of speech therapy. The Local Health Partnership has carried out a review of the provision and the school is now in negotiation with the health authority.
29. The school's procedures for the monitoring and promoting of attendance are very good. Registers are checked regularly for any patterns of absence and weekly meetings with the educational social worker provide opportunities to discuss any concerns. The school is very active in encouraging those pupils who do have a poor attendance record to come in to lessons. For example, they will try to ensure that the pupil has a friend at school, that their medical needs are being met, or that the education welfare worker visits their home, to enlist their parents' cooperation. The school supports home visits by the school nurse or the voluntary link teacher to help pupils to attend regularly. When pupils are out on work experience, effective procedures are in place for informing the school that they are at their placement.
30. Overall, the school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour, and eliminating oppressive behaviour are very good. They are firmly rooted in the school's pupil welfare policy, which promotes clear expectations of pupils and encourages teachers to pursue rewards rather than sanctions. This very positive approach to behavioural management is frequently individual to pupils, but still requires some refinement for those pupils with very special learning and behavioural difficulties. The school carefully tracks and records all incidents, and uses this information to identify the reason why a pupil may, for example, suddenly become agitated. The system of green and red cards to indicate the severity and behavioural incidents and the action taken is understood by most pupils and used to good effect. However, some pupils have difficulty understanding the consequences of their actions and require individual

strategies to reinforce the school's values and promote their personal development. The school encourages pupils to monitor their own and their friends' behaviour. Student Leaders willingly accept a supervisory role in this area, even though they recognise it can be difficult to admonish a friend who is not meeting the school's expectations. The pupil welfare policy enables the school to maintain an oversight of all aspects of pupils' personal development and provides information for annual reviews, individual education plans, and careers advice.

31. Assessment procedures are good and have improved since the previous inspection. Annual review reports are well written, with useful information about pupils' learning and behaviour. There are clear links between annual reviews and the targets in pupils' individual education plans. Those for literacy and numeracy are precise, so that pupils' progress can be measured accurately. The targets for personal development are usually clear but are sometimes less detailed. This means that they are not as helpful to teachers when planning programmes of work to meet each pupil's needs. The subject leaders for personal, social and health education has already, and rightly, identified the need to bring the quality of life-skills targets up to the high standard of those in place for literacy and numeracy.
32. In all subjects, teachers carefully assess what pupils know, understand and can do. In subjects other than English and mathematics, teachers do not routinely set out what they want each pupil to achieve during each unit of work. This means that it is difficult to measure how quickly they are making progress and to use this knowledge when setting the next targets. For example, if a pupil exceeded her target, the next one set could be more challenging. Additionally, the information about progress could be used to evaluate the teaching methods used or the curriculum offered.
33. The schools' procedures for promoting child protection are very good and all staff are aware of their own responsibilities and to whom they should address concerns. Additionally the school benefits from the mandatory training in child protection issues of the school nurses. The school continues to raise pupils' awareness of their own self esteem through its personal, social and health education programme and encourages pupils to be confident in knowing they can speak to staff in the school if they have any worries. Parents are very pleased that their children are taught to respect themselves and feel that this will help to keep them safe.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

34. Parents' views of the school are very good. The school has worked hard to include parents and carers in consultations about their children and how the school operates. It is a high priority of the school and its senior leadership team. This has resulted in an open and frank atmosphere, in which parents feel that problems can be sorted out and any worries about their children will be dealt with. Parents feel that the teachers are genuinely interested in their children and that they are all treated as individuals. For example, one parent wrote in answer to a questionnaire on what they liked about the school that, by the time their child left school, 'they will have the confidence and ability to tackle the adult world.' Parents feel that their children are in a happy, secure and positive environment and that whatever their child's abilities, the school makes them feel good about themselves.
35. The school is successful in providing a variety of opportunities for parents to meet and express their opinions. Termly consultation evenings bring together therapists, the careers service, school nurse and the dental hygienist, so that parents can discuss their child's educational progress, and medical and social development. To make it easier

for parents to tackle any problems they have, and to share thoughts and ideas about their children, the school hosts a weekly confidential service called 'Choices', run by the local education authority's Parent Partnership service. Additionally, a monthly drop-in coffee afternoon offers parents the opportunity to meet and exchange information, seek support from the voluntary parent link teacher and hear speakers on specialist topics. The school recognises the difficulties that many parents have in getting into school, especially during conventional working hours. For this reason, parents value opportunities to share transport to school and to attend parenting skills courses, organised by the Parent Partnership service, during the evening. Parents and staff work together closely to run the active parent-teacher association. Social occasions and support, such as the provision of refreshments during consultation evenings, represent other aspects of the sustained efforts that the school makes to cultivate a strong partnership with parents. The vigorous efforts that parents make to raise funds and resources for the school are stunningly illustrated in the Grafton Garden project. Parents sourced and coordinated the donations of all the materials for the garden.

36. The quality of information provided for parents is very good. Newsletters let them know what topics are to be studied by their children, so that they have the opportunity to help their child's work at home – for example, by collecting interesting books. To further support this, some parents would like a homework diary for older children and the school is looking at this issue and that of a homework policy. The school recognises that the information it provides can be difficult for some parents to read. It has developed a series of symbols that indicate, for example, that a letter is urgent and that the school can be contacted for more information. The school has made a very good job of presenting the school prospectus and annual governors' report to parents in a stimulating and attractive format. All the information that a parent needs to know about the school, is there in a very readable form. The school is currently processing the responses to questionnaires concerning home/school contracts. Although the contract is overdue, the detailed consultation process is producing a document that will have relevance to the needs of parents, pupils and staff.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

37. The headteacher leads the school extremely well, in partnership with the deputy headteacher. Since the previous inspection, the leadership and management structure has been completely revised and significantly strengthened. This has been achieved by establishing a leadership team with whole school responsibilities, rather than being confined to particular age groups. Because this also extends to the roles of subject leaders, it means that each aspect of the school's provision can be checked to ensure that the curriculum and pupils' learning are carefully structured and that systems and policies are applied consistently. This is a significant factor in the improvements in the quality of education and pupils' progress since the previous inspection. Senior managers carry out particular tasks that are well defined and explicitly linked to the school's clearly expressed aims and values. As a result, these principles can be easily identified in the school's daily life and its plans.
38. Additionally, each of the key staff has oversight of a cluster of subjects and the teachers who lead them. This is an excellent system, demonstrating very effective delegation of responsibilities combined with the provision of support to help staff develop their leadership and management skills. Through regular reviews with the cluster leaders, the deputy headteacher maintains a strategic view of each subject – pupils' achievements, the quality of teaching and curricular developments. At each level, action is agreed and then evaluated, and so subjects are moving forward. There is no leader for information and communication technology (although sensible interim arrangements have been

made.) The contrast between the pace of development in this subject, compared with the majority of others, illustrates the effectiveness of the leadership structure. The school does not have a single coordinator for pupils with additional special educational needs. The management of the provision comes under the general management of the head teacher delegated to the deputy head and two team leaders. The deputy head and team leaders are extremely conscientious in their approach to individual planning, are keen to develop the provision and provide good leadership in this respect. However, for a very small number of pupils with particular social communication or behavioural difficulties, staff are sometimes without planned curricular strategies or a personal development programme.

39. Appointed since the previous inspection, the headteacher has been at the heart of the developments that have taken place in recent years. He has excellent communication skills and his enthusiasm has been passed on to the staff team. The 'positive ethos' and commitment to 'an effective learning environment', noted in the previous report, have been reinforced, because systems are now in place to ensure that plans are put into practice. With the deputy headteacher, the headteacher sets very high standards for staff to achieve. For example, both are very good teachers. The school development plan is extremely well constructed. Whole school priorities are broken down into manageable targets, and the steps needed to achieve them are clearly described and costed. Supporting these strategic plans – for example, to further develop the curriculum – are teachers' own plans, for their subject or other responsibilities. These are similarly tightly focused and demonstrate that all staff are involved in moving the school forward and that the scope of developments extends to all areas of the school's work.
40. Very well led by its Chair, the governing body shares the sense of purpose and excitement that the school emits. Many of the governors are actively involved in keeping themselves informed about school life and developments and providing practical support. The governors' committees are critical elements in this – for example, during the inspection, the members of the curriculum committee discussed how more meaningful targets might be set for the school to achieve. They increased their awareness of the issues involved and the potential of a planned data base of pupils' achievements to help the school explore and explain trends in pupils' progress and hence its own performance. This will support its very good efforts to apply the principles of 'best value'.
41. Financial planning is excellent. The school has a very clear view of the need to judge the effectiveness of spending decisions by judging their effect on maintaining and raising standards in teaching and learning. This means, for instance, that subject leaders must justify their spending on resources and staff training in terms of the benefits to pupils. Planning for expenditure on school improvement is significantly better than at the previous inspection, since priorities for development are closely linked to spending. The school makes every effort to spend money wisely. There are good measures to use heating and lighting prudently to reduce costs. Contracts for services, such as clearing leaves, are scrutinised to ensure the best service for the lowest cost.
42. There are extremely good financial controls to ensure the reliability and accuracy of financial transactions. The budget is subject to regular and effective monitoring by the headteacher and the governing body. They monitor the school accounts to ensure that the money available is sufficient to maintain funding for priorities that promote high standards of teaching and learning. Office staff manage the financial and administrative life of the school efficiently and unobtrusively. This enables teachers to concentrate on promoting pupils' learning and personal development. The school makes good and

improving use of new technology to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of administration and record keeping.

43. The teaching and learning support staff are well-qualified, and the school uses them imaginatively to meet the needs of pupils. There is a good balance of primary and secondary staff and teachers are appropriately qualified in the subjects they teach. There are good mixtures of very experienced and more recently qualified teachers and new and experienced learning support assistants. The management team is a good blend of staff with long experience of the school and those more recently appointed. Support assistants are generally very well deployed and the close working relationship between them and teaching staff is a feature of the school. However, the changing population of the school means that support assistants feel that they require additional training in working with pupils with autism.
44. Teaching staff have clearly defined roles and responsibilities and these are known and understood by all. Defining the key tasks for learning support assistants is still at a preliminary stage. There is a very good commitment to professional development for all members of staff, and all teachers are required to produce three-year personal development plans, helping to identify their training needs. The school has produced a well-structured programme for overseeing the performance management of teachers. It has rightly identified the need to produce a formal policy for the induction of new staff, even though the newly qualified teacher feels that her induction was good.
45. Learning resources are at least good in all subject areas – in most cases they are very good. However, whilst there are good science resources, the timetable arrangements for Key Stage 4 means that demand for resources is high and there are sometimes shortages. In addition, although there is very good information and communication technology equipment, the lack of a subject co-ordinator means that there is no one to supervise and monitor its efficient use.
46. The school has extensive and attractive well-kept grounds with hard and grassed play areas. As well as a range of fixed outdoor play equipment there are quiet areas for pupils to use. Senior pupils do not have on-site access to outdoor facilities such as a grassed football pitch, although during lessons they use the resources of a neighbouring school.
47. Overall the school accommodation is very good with spacious corridors, good acoustics, and high quality specialist accommodation. Accommodation – such as the science laboratory, design and technology rooms for resistant materials and food technology, new sports hall and well-equipped art room – enables an appropriate curriculum to be delivered to secondary pupils. As none of these rooms are used as general teaching rooms they are always available for specialist teaching. There is also sufficient accommodation for small rooms to be set aside for specific purposes – such as literacy support and therapies, and for specialist accommodation like the music room to be made available for the music therapist when he visits each week. The building is kept in a very good state of repair and is beautifully clean.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

In order to further raise standards, the headteacher, staff and governors should:

1. Provide a subject leader for information and communication technology. This role should include:
 - a. ensuring that pupils learn the necessary skills and knowledge in information and communication technology in carefully structured steps, building on what they already know, understand and can do,
 - b. coordinating the work of teachers in other subjects, so that they take account of what pupils need to learn next in information and communication technology. (Paras: 19, 38 and 86)
2. Improve the quality and usefulness of the information teachers collect about pupils' progress, by setting targets for each pupil to achieve during each unit of work. This will enable teachers to measure the rate of pupils' progress and to check the effectiveness of their teaching and the curriculum. (Paras: 32 and 66)

In addition, the following issue should also be considered for inclusion in the action plan:

- Increase the time for science in Key Stages 1 and 2, in order to provide teachers with more opportunities to bring the standards achieved in line with those of the other core subjects of English and mathematics. (Paras: 19 and 62)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	103
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	64

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
14	46	32	6	2	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	146
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	39

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	2

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	5
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.6

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.3

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	1
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	1
Chinese	
White	143
Any other minority ethnic group	1

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage		
Black – African heritage		
Black – other		
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	17	
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y1 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	17.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	8.5:1
Average class size	10.4

Education support staff: Y1 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	20
Total aggregate hours worked per week	457

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	845666
Total expenditure	847626
Expenditure per pupil	5767
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	-1960

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	146
Number of questionnaires returned	61

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	82	14	2	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	64	33	0	0	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	61	30	5	0	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	43	40	10	2	5
The teaching is good.	79	17	0	2	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	66	26	5	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	79	20	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	75	21	2	0	2
The school works closely with parents.	64	27	7	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	77	23	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	67	26	5	0	2
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	52	34	7	2	5

Other issues raised by parents

Some parents feel that the provision of speech therapy is insufficient.

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

ENGLISH

48. Pupils make very good progress and achieve very well in all aspects of English. This is owing to the very good quality of teaching and the emphasis on English in the curriculum. Pupils make much better progress now than at the time of the previous inspection, especially in Key Stage 3. The work of Key Stage 4 pupils is now accredited through the Certificate of Achievement as well as the Youth Award Scheme. Last year, approximately 75 per cent of pupils were successful in the Certificate of Achievement, with over 25 per cent gaining distinction. The improvement in standards is in line with the attention that has been paid to developing teachers' skills and knowledge. The very good quality of teaching is particularly impressive because so many teachers are involved. The consistently high standards are a product of the very good guidance and support provided by the two subject leaders and the way in which the National Literacy Strategy has been modified very effectively to meet the needs of all pupils. Because teachers are so well informed about how pupils learn literacy skills, they are able to apply this knowledge to their teaching in other subjects and so provide additional opportunities for pupils to make progress.
49. During Key Stage 1 and the early years of Key Stage 2, many pupils are still developing the skills they need in order to learn. They become more able to listen carefully and communicate their ideas because teachers and support staff help them to follow classroom routines and encourage them to interact with others. For some pupils with autism, this is a very great challenge and they are sometimes reluctant to cooperate. However, they do make progress, although at a slower rate than pupils with less complex needs. Lessons in many subjects often start with question and answer sessions, providing pupils with opportunities to practise making themselves understood. They gradually gain confidence – for example, through repeating the days of the week or learning words to describe the texture of a raw carrot. In one very good lesson, the teacher had planned a variety of activities to develop pupils' reading and writing skills. They were allowed time to complete their tasks, but the lesson moved quickly and so they did not have time to get restless. Expectations were high – when one of the most able pupils suggested writing 'I went to town' as his contribution to a class newspaper, the teacher asked 'Could we make it more interesting?' This encouraged the pupil to extend his idea, adding 'I went upstairs on the bus.' This pupil, and others in the class, can copy from an adult's writing, whilst less able pupils trace over letters. In the same lesson, the higher attaining pupils were very motivated by a reading scheme. They became increasingly accurate at matching the names of characters to illustrations and listened attentively to a story. When it was read a second time, they joined in and suggested what happened next, showing their understanding of the simple plot. All pupils enjoy and benefit from the regular sessions during which teachers and support assistants share books with small groups of children. This is a very sensible way of adapting part of the National Literacy Strategy, as pupils have greater opportunities to make responses to the story or to observe the shapes of words or how sentences are punctuated.
50. Older pupils in Key Stage 2 continue to make very good progress. Teachers place a firm emphasis on the development of handwriting skills, using a well-structured approach. As a result, some pupils are beginning to use a joined script by the end of the key stage. The majority of pupils are able to tackle writing independently – for example, when recording their news. They can do this because the necessary skills have been

taught carefully – such as when to use capital letters and how to write down the sounds made by letters or groups of letters. Pupils' well-developed ability to listen attentively helps them here – they can identify the sounds at the ends of words, as well as their initial sounds. The class teachers have a detailed knowledge of each pupil's achievements, and make very good use of this to reinforce their learning during lessons in other subjects. For example, a series of art lessons in Year 6 were based on a book by Quentin Blake. Pupils were encouraged to refer to the book during lessons, and took great pleasure in re-telling the story in their own words. Similarly, in science lessons, key words are displayed and higher attaining pupils make very good progress in their ability to use technical vocabulary – for example, correctly describing materials as 'transparent'. In turn, many pupils are confident and eager to be involved in discussions, because they are learning to communicate effectively. This helps them to make progress in other subjects, as when talking about the roles of different people, during a religious education lesson.

51. In Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils continue to learn basic skills, during literacy lessons, and are also taught wider aspects of English, often by specialist teachers. Literacy lessons are part of a carefully structured programme, which systematically develops pupils' skills in reading and writing. For example, during one series of lessons, Year 10 pupils learned how to record direct speech. Through an excellent practical activity, they made very good progress as they moved from using speech bubbles to speech marks. Pupils learn to enjoy a wide range of literature – for example, in Year 7, some read a local story about 'The Wild Man of Orford'. Teachers are knowledgeable and extend pupils' awareness, as when a teacher referred to 'The Tempest' and 'Robinson Crusoe' during an excellent drama lesson, based on a shipwreck. There is a very good balance between pupils' learning to read for enjoyment and for information – they are carefully taught the skills they need for their lives outside and beyond school. For instance, during the inspection, pupils in Year 9 were taught how to quickly locate words in dictionaries, by allocating letters to particular sections and then applying their knowledge of spelling. Because the teaching was so skilful, pupils thoroughly enjoyed the lesson, to the extent of asking for more difficult challenges. Pupils of all abilities were able to make very good progress, because a range of dictionaries was provided, to suit their individual needs. In Key Stage 4, pupils developed these skills further, as Year 10 pupils learned to obtain information from food packets. Again, the teacher catered very well for all pupils – those who had difficulty reading were supported by the use of symbols and by being helped to sound out the words that they needed, so they could then work independently.
52. Pupils continue to make very good progress in writing – again, skills are taught and then pupils are provided with opportunities to apply them, in enjoyable and useful ways. For example, higher attaining pupils in Year 8 were very well motivated when developing a play, based on a space adventure they had read. They acted out their ideas, extending and improving them, and began to record the script, using the computer, developing their ability to write imaginatively and for a specific purpose. A particular feature of pupils' writing is the way in which they are able to communicate their ideas through poetry. Pupils in Key Stage 4 have enjoyed considerable success in competitions and have had their work published. During the inspection, an excellent lesson demonstrated how effectively the teacher helps pupils to appreciate the power of poetry – using examples of war poetry by Wilfred Owen and by young people. In a lesson with many strengths, the use of a slide projector and audio tapes was particularly effective, as pupils watched images of warfare, heard the noise of battle and listened to the words of the poems.
53. In addition to English lessons, teachers take great care to provide pupils with a range of opportunities for developing their communication skills. Creative arts and music lessons

help them to gain confidence in their ability to perform in front of an audience. Visits and visitors provide valuable practise in speaking to people that pupils don't know well – for example, during a visit to a college, during which Key Stage 4 pupils interviewed students and purchased their lunch in the refectory.

54. The school provides very well for pupils who have particular difficulties with literacy. This is especially significant in Key Stage 3, because pupils often join the school at this point, having experienced failure in their previous experiences. A very well thought out system of intensive support has been established, which links well to pupils' lessons with their class and enhances their progress in English.
55. The subject is very well led and managed, with very good arrangements to ensure a smooth transition from the primary to the secondary phase.

MATHEMATICS

56. Throughout the school, pupils achieve very well and make very good and often excellent progress. The school has successfully introduced the National Numeracy Strategy. This has had a significant impact on improving pupils' progress in the subject since the previous inspection. The quality of teaching of mathematics is very good, with a significant proportion of teaching being excellent. Teachers are committed to helping pupils to develop their numeracy skills and they seize opportunities to promote mathematics throughout the day – for instance, allowing pupils to count in French the number present during registration. They give much thought to deepening pupils' understanding – for example, by discussing the mathematical properties of a triangle, during a music lesson.
57. Pupils at Key Stages 1 and 2 achieve very well. They enjoy their work and quickly settle to their tasks with enthusiasm. This is because the assignments they receive are interesting and clearly explained, and the support they are given is carefully matched to their needs. Younger pupils watch carefully and show great pleasure when hanging numbers to twenty, in order, on a washing line. They say which number comes before and after a given number. The teacher provided just the right degree of challenge, so higher attaining pupils counted back from 20 and stopped at ten, whilst others counted from two, stopping at six. Pupils enjoy practical investigations, such as finding how many different three-dimensional models they can form with four interlocking small cubes. Teachers give clear instructions and resources are readily available, so that pupils can move on independently to investigate the way that they can make an increasing number of models with more cubes. By the age of eleven, pupils have developed confidence in handling money, through taking turns to be the shopkeeper or customer in the class shop. Teachers plan effectively with classroom assistants to provide support, ensuring that they understand the purpose of the lesson and involving them in assessing how well pupils achieve. In one lesson, the staff provided plenty of opportunities for Year 5 pupils to understand the relationship between coins. They skilfully asked questions, until a pupil was able to spontaneously select a two pence and one pence coin to give the shopkeeper three pence.
58. At Key Stage 3, pupils make very good progress – for example, in their understanding of measurement and time. Planning is most effective when the teacher divides the class into groups according to attainment, directing support and providing work suited to their needs. This means that pupils are confident in the task they are to perform and proceed with a degree of independence. Teachers continue to assess pupils' progress, providing more challenging work when required – for instance, for pupils to apply their knowledge by interpreting transport timetables. There are two classes for pupils in each year of the

key stage and they receive some lessons together. Although this is a very large group of pupils, they are so interested in the work that they behave extremely well, sharing a classroom for the introduction to the lesson. In one lesson, concentration was intense as Year 9 pupils recalled previous mathematics 'words of the week'. They were keen to show that they remembered terms such as 'vertical', 'diagonal' and 'symmetry'. Through careful revision by the teacher, pupils were able to state the skills they need to work independently and co-operatively, such as 'being focused' and 'listening skills'. They proceeded to work in pairs without supervision; successfully describing a picture made of two-dimensional shapes for their partner to draw.

59. Pupils at Key Stage 4 make very good and often excellent progress. They make excellent progress in oral numeracy lessons, rapidly adding and taking numbers away from one hundred. Pupils relish the work and derive much pleasure from their success. The teacher ensures that pupils receive questions that are challenging but realistic. This means that they continue to extend their knowledge of additions and subtractions. They answer questions with more confidence, finding the tasks exceptionally motivating. Relationships between pupils are excellent, and they spontaneously applaud each other's success. Teachers make very good use of assessment to arrange pupils in classes and groups according to their achievement. This helps the teacher to direct appropriate support and to make sure that work matches pupils' needs. Pupils are very keen to complete mathematics assignments for external accreditation. They made extremely good progress by taking part in surveys for homework, investigating numbers associated with food items in the supermarket. The teacher prepares the pupils skilfully to enable them to find their own solutions, by using the techniques they acquired through undertaking their first survey, in order to complete later ones. There are effective arrangements to promote personal development and numeracy skills when pupils from a local high school come into school to share ideas about solving mathematical problems.
60. The subject leaders provide excellent management of mathematics provision. Their outstandingly high expectations for subject development have ensured that there has been very good progress in the provision for numeracy since the previous inspection. There are very good plans to introduce new measures for monitoring pupils' progress in mathematics to enable the school to set targets for improvement. Some teachers plan effectively for pupils to use computers during numeracy lessons, but this is not consistent across the school.

SCIENCE

61. By the time that they leave school, pupils have made good progress and their achievements in science are good. Achievements by the age of sixteen have improved significantly since the last inspection, and continue to improve. Most pupils reach merit standard in the Certificate of Educational Achievement in science and in 2000, over ten per cent gained distinction. The standard reached in science examinations in the summer of 2000 was higher than in 1999. Good and significant progress is made in science from Year 8 because pupils have access to consistently good quality specialist teaching in laboratory facilities.
62. Achievements in science knowledge, understanding and skill during the primary years are generally satisfactory. The quality and depth of pupils' learning, however, are undermined by the small amount of time scheduled for science. Very little science was observed up to Year 4. The youngest pupils, through practical tasks, receive satisfactory support to develop an awareness of push and pull forces. No science was scheduled for Years 3 and 4 during the inspection because the current focus of topic

time, planned to cover science, history and geography, is history. In Key Stage 2, the time allocation for science falls well below the average of similar schools. The standard reached in national assessments at the end of Key Stage 2 is below that which is found in similar schools nationally, reflecting the inadequate time allocation for science in Key Stage 2. Pupils are developing more knowledge of life processes and physical process than of materials and their properties. There is not enough time for pupils to develop the full range of investigative skills.

63. The overall quality of science teaching in the primary years is satisfactory but with good features. For example, in Year 5, pupils are learning to use their various senses to recognise the similarities and differences in a range of materials, because the teaching is very positive and encouraging and is based on good planning. Pupils are well grouped according to their learning needs and the teacher's secure management skills keep pupils productively occupied. Provision for pupils with additional complex communication difficulties is not consistent in the primary years, nor indeed is it in the secondary phase. There is some good practice in Year 5, and evidence of good progress. There are occasions, however, when the needs and expectations of the oldest pupils in Key Stage 2 with autism are not included in lesson planning.
64. Pupils in Year 7 generally make satisfactory progress, but their gains in science knowledge, understanding and skill are not as good as those of the older pupils, because the science teaching, although mainly satisfactory, is less effective than that seen with older pupils. Year 7 pupils do have access to teaching that is based on a secure understanding of the subject, in a laboratory and with sufficient time for science. However, the match of activities to their learning needs, the management of pupils and the methods used during whole class teaching are less effective than in the classes of older pupils. The strong focus on imparting scientific ideas and knowledge in lessons is too difficult for some pupils to cope with, and is at the expense of checking what pupils are learning.
65. In Years 8 to 11, pupils learn across the breadth and depth of the National Curriculum science programmes of study, with good results, because sufficient science time is scheduled each week. Occasionally the amount of content planned for lessons is too much, leaving less time at the end of lessons for checking how well pupils have learned. In Years 10 and 11, two teachers work with the whole year group. This is effective in meeting the wide range of pupils' needs. Pupils enjoy lessons, are keen to learn, and work sensibly and safely in groups for practical work. The larger size of the Key Stage 4 science classes does, however, put strain on the availability of resources for practical work. Pupils are prepared well for science examinations in Key Stage 4, because teachers' knowledge and understanding of the examination syllabus and assessment requirements are good, and their assessments of science investigative work are thorough. By the end of Key Stage 4, however, pupils continue to find the skills of analysis and evaluation more demanding than the skills of predicting, carrying out experiments and recording the results of their science investigations; but this is no different from the situation found in many mainstream schools.
66. Pupils in all years are not making enough use of computers in science, because information and communication technology is not yet embedded in the scheme of work. Annual review reports to parents contain very informative details of achievements in science. Teachers cannot check pupils' progress accurately, because they do not set out their expectations for each pupil at the start of each planned unit of work. Many good improvements have taken place in science since the last inspection, most notably in the quality of the curriculum and accreditation opportunities in Key Stages 3 and 4. Provision for science in Key Stage 2 is not as good as reported at the last inspection and this is an area for development.

ART

67. Pupils make very good progress and achieve very well. This is because the quality of teaching is very good. As a result, about 25 per cent of the Year 11 pupils are successful in the GCSE examination, reaching standards in line with those of mainstream pupils. In turn, this has a very positive effect on standards in other key stages. Both pupils and teachers benefit from the excellent displays of art work which enhance the school environment – their expectations are raised. Pupils now make better progress and achieve higher standards than at the time of the previous inspection.
68. During Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils develop a range of skills, such as drawing, painting and printing, and they learn to use a variety of tools and materials. A particular strength is the way in which pupils' skills of observation are developed. For example, in one lesson, Year 3 pupils were decorating the papier mache animals they had made. The teacher encouraged them to look carefully at pictures of animals, in order to help them choose appropriate colours of paint and materials for collage. This enabled pupils to achieve very well – an illustration of a Muscovy duck inspired one pupil to create an exciting brown, black and white bird, with a red and yellow head. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are able to mix colours accurately and apply paint very effectively. They have learned how to produce a wide variety of effects – using dry paint on wet paper, or painting over patterns made with wax, for instance. Teachers are enthusiastic and plan interesting activities which motivate pupils to try hard. For example, Year 6 pupils have created a large display, illustrating the story of 'Patrick', by Quentin Blake. Whilst producing items to add to the picture, they chose suitable materials for each task – a fine paintbrush when changing the cows' spots to stars – putting their knowledge into practice. Pupils are developing their appreciation for art. They enjoyed the book's illustrations, and when one pupil drew a magnificent horse and cart, another said spontaneously 'That's marvellous!' These older pupils' lessons are in the art room; they work in a similar way to the Key Stage 3 pupils, representing an improvement since the previous inspection.
69. During Key Stage 3, pupils follow a very well planned and structured programme of work, which allows them to build systematically on what they have already learned. The curriculum is very rich, providing pupils with opportunities to respond to and create many forms of art. The art room is a very stimulating working environment and is used to full advantage – pupils take part in group activities and work on large scale projects, such as the construction of giant fruit and vegetables from papier mache. Pupils are encouraged to be independent. They are shown how to perform skills – such as the use of slip to add features to clay thumb pot animals – and then expected to work productively. Support staff play an important role in helping less able pupils to make equally good progress – for example, by asking 'What are you going to do next?' Pupils record their ideas and experiments in extremely well kept sketchbooks. These demonstrate clearly how pupils' work has developed – for example, images from African art used as the starting point for high quality masks, made from clay or papier mache.
70. Maintaining their sketchbooks helps to prepare pupils for GCSE coursework, undertaken by the more able pupils in Key Stage 4. By the end of the key stage, these pupils have reached very high standards, so that one of last year's candidates has now embarked on a course in A-level art. The teacher's specialist skills and knowledge enable her to give pupils very good technical advice – for example, when they are drawing a still life arrangement of fruit and vegetables. Additionally, pupils' work is criticised very constructively, so that they are left feeling encouraged but aware of what they need to do in order to improve. Pupils' confidence, knowledge and expertise are

evident in the originality of their work. They are able to follow up their own interests (such as body decoration or things military), refer to examples of art from many periods and cultures, and develop and realise their own ideas. Lessons are conducted within an excellent working atmosphere, prompted by the very good relationships between the teacher and pupils, and by her very high expectations. The GCSE course is the culmination of the very good provision for the subject, throughout the school.

71. The subject is very well led and managed. It makes a very strong contribution to pupils' cultural development, by raising their awareness and encouraging their appreciation of art and artists.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

72. Pupils make very good progress and achieve very well. This is in line with the very good teaching, especially in the later years of Key Stage 2 and in Key Stages 3 and 4. Progress and achievement are particularly impressive in pupils' making skills and their knowledge of tools and materials, because the curriculum is weighted towards these areas. They develop designing skills at a slower rate. In particular, pupils have only limited opportunities to plan how they will go about their work, because the teacher often decides the final outcome, especially in resistant materials projects.
73. During Key Stage 1 and the early years of Key Stage 2, pupils are taught by their class teachers. They make good progress in their ability to handle tools and materials, by taking part in a wide range of practical activities. For example, pupils use recycled packages to make model buildings, choosing suitable boxes and joining them with glue. They learn about food and the processes used in its preparation and cooking. During one lesson, pupils (including a number with autism) contributed to the preparation of cheese scones. They made good progress as they enjoyed taking turns to grate cheese and mix margarine with flour. Teachers generally cater very well for the wide-ranging needs of the pupils. Occasionally, they are unable to involve the small number of pupils with particularly challenging behaviour, who make less progress when they refuse to take part in activities – for example, to wear an apron or to handle particular materials.
74. Older Key Stage 2 pupils are taught by a specialist teacher. The curriculum is planned very well to enable pupils to learn a wide range of skills and to use food and resistant materials such as card and wood. Although they work in specialist rooms, the teacher selects resources very carefully, to suit the needs of these young pupils. For example, when making a pop-up toy, incorporating a cam, pupils fix their clip-art images to card using coloured glue (which dries clear). This means that they can more easily tell when they have applied enough. A jig is used when pupils saw dowel, holding the wood firmly in place so that they can saw accurately and achieve very well. As in all lessons in the subject, pupils are required to be as independent as possible – they are taught the names of tools and shown where they are stored, so that next time they can collect their own. Pupils in Key Stage 2 now make better progress than at the time of the previous inspection.
75. During Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils have lessons in resistant materials and in food and textiles technology. One of the many strengths of the teaching is the emphasis placed on safe working practices. For example, in the workshop, pupils are taught about the potential dangers associated with each piece of equipment – for example, the pillar drill – and reminded of the precautions they must take when using it. This supports pupils' ability to take responsibility for themselves. They use equipment such as the vacuum former or glue gun with assurance, knowing what action to take in the event of an accident. Pupils make very good progress in their knowledge of the industrial

applications of the subject. For example, in food technology, Year 10 pupils produced pizzas and small cakes, using food mixers and working as part of a production line. In the discussion that followed, the teacher's very good questioning enabled pupils to recall a visit they had made to a factory kitchen and restaurant. They were able to apply their observations to their own working practices – for example, the need for separate serving spoons for each dish on a salad bar.

76. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils have acquired a very wide range of skills and reach very high standards in their practical work. Last year was the first time that the school entered pupils for the Certificate of Achievement, in food and in resistant materials. The results were very encouraging, including a number of distinctions, and compared very well with those of similar schools. Pupils respond to the teachers' very high expectations. When designing trays to be used outdoors for food, more able Year 10 pupils considered the task very carefully, so that one suggested making handles that hooked onto garden furniture. A support assistant encouraged less able pupils to think about what they were doing – 'Otherwise it would be my idea and work.' The teacher helped pupils to appreciate the problems associated with the task, by providing tiny models of plates for pupils to use when constructing prototype trays. In a food technology lesson, pupils behaved impeccably when tasting foods that might be eaten by Hindus. They were receptive to new ideas and flavours and developed their ability to express objective opinions about the dishes they had prepared.
77. The subject is very well organised, with clear plans for developing it further. There are very valuable links with a mainstream school. These enable pupils to experience computer aided design and manufacture, developing their capability and enhancing the quality of some of their plastics projects – such as a fridge magnet with a decorative metal insert.

GEOGRAPHY

78. Overall, pupils make very good progress and achieve very well, particularly in Key Stage 3. Older pupils do not study the subject.
79. During the inspection, no geography lessons took place in Key Stages 1 and 2. However, pupils' files showed that they study a range of topics through well-planned activities and so their progress is at least good. Their mapping skills are encouraged through laying and following trails in and around school and the local area, providing opportunities for them to investigate the physical nature of the immediate environment. Walks in the area enable pupils to see buildings and roadside features and to begin to develop the appropriate vocabulary. They are also able to note the characteristics of the different seasons so that at the end of the key stage, some pupils are able to identify the season from clues, such as the clothes people are wearing. Pupils also increase their understanding of areas beyond their immediate locality. For example, the study of water and rivers is supported by videos of waterfalls and the wildlife around an estuary and enriched by a visit to Newborne Springs and Felixstowe. By the age of eleven, pupils know terms associated with the weather, with some being able to measure temperature. They understand how their environment may change – for example, as a result of pollution.
80. Pupils in Key Stage 3 make very good progress because the majority of teaching is very good, and sometimes excellent, although some aspects of unsatisfactory teaching were seen when a teacher did not manage the classroom effectively. Pupils in classes where teaching is of high quality extend their enquiry skills and their understanding of geographical concepts. A lesson examining rural life in India provided a good example

of excellent teaching, enabling Year 9 pupils to develop real insight into the characteristics and hazards associated with village life. The teacher used very large props to build the village environment on the floor in the middle of the classroom. Groups of pupils were asked in turn to place a number of wooden blocks on the floor to indicate where they thought the houses might be located, and each of the three groups had different ideas. The teacher's skilful use of questions and explanations encouraged pupils to explain why they had chosen the pattern they had used and to quiz others about their decisions. He then provided additional information and following each piece the pupils were asked to reconsider the location of the houses. This required them to discuss the information amongst themselves before agreeing a plan. One group was seen having a vote before making a final decision. The teacher's use of very good strategies and activities required and encouraged pupils to make predictions, to amend their views in response to new information, identify priorities and to negotiate with others. Equally high quality teaching encouraged similar analytical skills in the Year 8 group, who were considering the effects on the environment of a large urban development taking place in the town.

81. The co-ordinator has only had responsibility for the subject since September but has already made progress in developing the subject throughout the school. He recognises the need to update the subject policy and to improve the use of new technology as a learning tool.

HISTORY

82. Good teaching in the primary department ensures that pupils achieve well and make good progress, which is an improvement since the previous inspection. Teaching is less good in Key Stage 3, although pupils still make satisfactory progress. Older pupils do not study history. Many and varied visits to places of historical interest are a strong feature of the history curriculum and they are very important in bringing the subject alive.
83. Teaching in Key Stages 1 and 2 is characterised by very good planning and use of resources, supported by the very good use of questions. All of these qualities could be seen in lessons that focused on the idea of 'old' and 'new' by looking at a range of toys. Careful planning ensured that there was a very good range of activities and challenges that were matched to pupils' individual learning needs. Pupils had been encouraged to bring toys from home and the teacher introduced some old toys. Carefully targeted questioning encouraged pupils to think about the past. They were urged to consider who might have played with the toys (with prompts like 'mum' and 'grandpa'), why they had these types of toys (with attention drawn to their materials) and asked to suggest ways to find out more about old toys. Further work on the meaning of 'old' and 'new' resulted in pupils putting toys on a time line. Some pupils were able to draw their own line and to write the correct word (for example, 'mum', 'nana') whilst others received a great deal of support as the learning support assistant wrote the words on pieces of paper and stuck them on to the time line. Younger pupils find the concept of time very difficult. Therefore much of the early history curriculum is devoted to developing a sense of chronology through activities such as this and by examining photographs of themselves and their immediate family. Through these activities they begin to develop a simple vocabulary of time, such as 'before' and 'after'. The older pupils extend this vocabulary with phrases such as 'a long time ago' as they discover about people who lived in the past. This work is very well supported by visits to places such as Sudbury as part of a study of the local artist Gainsborough. At the end of the key stage some pupils have an understanding of time that enables them to place on a time line all the kings and queens since Queen Victoria.

84. As they move through Key Stage 3, pupils learn new vocabulary such as 'chronological order'. Some demonstrate their understanding of this phrase as they arrange pictures of animals in the correct order in which they were domesticated. They also increase their knowledge of a number of different periods of British history and once again these studies are all very well supported by visits. For example, their work on medieval history was greatly enhanced by a drama workshop at Norwich Cathedral. This allowed pupils to role-play the life of a monk, which included dressing up and acting out the daily routine of a monk. A cultural exchange with a special school in Belgium provided Year 9 pupils with an excellent opportunity to study the history of Bruges, and the residential experience in a youth hostel contributed greatly to their social development. By the age of fourteen, some pupils know about the historical background to events, such as the difficulties faced by conquerors as they prepared to invade an island such as Britain. Pupils also develop the skills of historical enquiry and interpretation through lessons like those in which they investigated and compared local census returns from 1841 and 1891. This activity was very appropriate, as it allowed pupils to examine first hand evidence of people's occupations. Unfortunately, some unsatisfactory aspects of classroom management and organisation meant that not all pupils were able to get maximum benefit from the learning opportunities presented by the activity.
85. The subject is managed satisfactorily in terms of planning, although the subject policy needs to be updated. Resources have been improved, including the variety of textbooks that pupils are able to read and use, but there is an urgent need for all resources to be better organised and catalogued. Attention should also be paid to providing opportunities for pupils to use new technology as part of their historical investigations.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

86. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress. Most of their learning takes place as part of their work in other subjects. They achieve satisfactory, sometimes good, standards. Where teachers are focusing on the use of information and communication technology, the teaching is satisfactory and occasionally good or very good. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally satisfactory with some teachers having more in-depth understanding of the subject curriculum. However, lessons often do not focus on specific skills in this subject and the teaching of such skills can be incidental. Occasionally, computers are used inappropriately as a reward or to occupy pupils who are unable to remain focused on the lesson. Where this is planned into teaching, it can be very effective. However, there is insufficient planning of the use of information and communication technology or evaluation of the results to make this effective teaching. Overall, therefore, teaching is satisfactory with examples of good and very good practice balanced by a lack of consistency and effective focus on subject skills and understanding.
87. In science, Key Stage 2 pupils begin to understand the similarities and differences in materials, by using an interactive program which helps them to become more accurate in their use of a mouse. They learn to work together, collaborating on their topic about the weather, making recordings and together producing a very good classroom display. By the end of Key Stage 3, some pupils have learnt to retrieve information from a CD ROM encyclopaedia, and use clip-art images to support their designing and the presentation of their work in design and technology. They understand that computers can be used in the designing and making of key fobs, through very good links with a secondary school. Some pupils are able to use computers to represent musical sounds. Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 communicate and share information in the form

of displays in the classrooms. They present writing for parents and other pupils and some are able to discuss the purpose for which this information is to be used. Pupils learn to value the use of electronic keyboards alongside other instruments in creative arts workshops. Key Stage 4 pupils who experience difficulties with their literacy skills achieve a higher standard of presentation by using word processing skills. The Youth Award scheme provides good opportunities for pupils to develop a range of skills, through an intensive programme. Throughout the school, where information and communication technology is used, pupils take great interest in their work and leisure activities and enjoy developing their skills.

88. The only timetabled lessons of information and communication technology are for pupils in Key Stage 3, and teachers' assessments of individual pupil's skills are very basic. The school is very well equipped with computers following a sustained period of investment in hardware and some software. There are also many other resources, such as electronic keyboards, a scanner and laser printer in the library for pupils' use and some very useful software throughout the school covering a range of topics. The school has two days per week of technical support that is very well managed on a time-share basis with other schools. This enables emergency support for technical problems to be available to teachers on a continuing and an emergency basis. There is a generally positive attitude to the use of information and communications technology throughout the school.
89. There is a good subject policy in place and a clear commitment to develop the subject further. However, the lack of a subject leader is having a significant impact on the quality of pupils' learning and their progress.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

90. Pupils achieve very well in French and make very good progress in lessons. The quality of teaching is very good and this is a significant factor in promoting high standards in the subject.
91. Pupils make very good progress during Key Stage 3. They learn the names of colours, through interesting and enjoyable lessons, often taking part in word games. This enables them to combine words when they have to describe a picture card, such as a brown dog, understanding that the word order is different to that used in English. Although the emphasis is appropriately on oral work, pupils develop skills in reading. The teacher consistently provides good opportunities, through a variety of methods – such as using the overhead projector to write words as she says them and providing labels for pupils to select when they choose to say a word. Pupils receive good practice in listening to the language through a wide range of tapes and video presentations, and they respond well to everyday questions about their name, and how they are feeling. As they move through the school, pupils steadily develop a higher level of concentration and application. They responded particularly well, when they acted in a scenario about being in a French baker's shop, purchasing bread and speaking with a good accent. When their performance is recorded on video, they try very hard and provide an impressive record of their achievement. Pupils develop good speaking and listening skills through the teacher's persistent use of French during lessons and her encouragement for them to follow. By the end of the key stage, they achieve very well, building on their knowledge of food, learning about healthy eating and identifying foods by their French names. The teacher plans very effectively to deepen understanding and arranges, for instance, for the class to make crudites in food technology. This provides

further opportunities for pupils to practice phrases, by replying 'J'aime' or 'Je n'aime pas' when asked a question about different food items.

92. Pupils continue to improve and they achieve very well by the end of Key Stage 4. They are at ease with each other and feel able to attempt a wider range of conversational French. This is important, because they endeavour to pronounce words that they have not met before. They use reading skills effectively to try to determine the pronunciation of words such as French first names. Pupils write letters to pen friends and find the task challenging. They are very interested when they receive replies. For instance, they pick out words that are common to each other's letters, such as 'cher'. The teacher uses good techniques, such as asking pupils to underline masculine and feminine words with a coloured pen and this stimulates interest and discussion about differences in language. They study some similarities and differences between France and their own country – for instance, French road signs – as they follow an appropriate accreditation in European awareness. A feature of all lessons is the way that the teacher asks each pupil questions at an appropriate level for their attainment. This means that all have the opportunity to participate and make the same very good progress.
93. The subject leader plans very effectively to ensure that pupils learn about life in France. This enables them to develop good knowledge about another country, to promote their cultural development.

MUSIC

94. Music has done very well to maintain the very high standards identified during the last inspection and it continues to be a significant strength of the school. Pupils of all ages achieve very well and make very good progress because of very good teaching.
95. In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils study music through a number of themes, such as 'Machines' and 'The Seaside'. Through these, they begin to explore sounds in the environment, the qualities and range of sounds and how sounds can be produced in a variety of ways. Stimulating activities that are very well suited to the pupils' needs provide many opportunities for them to improve their knowledge of musical beat and rhythm. These carefully chosen activities also begin to give pupils an understanding of the significance of signs and symbols as a means of giving instructions, as was shown in a lesson with a large group of younger children. Pupils were shown a number of cards with pictures of people doing different movements, and they practised these. They then each chose a card and performed the action shown in front of the other pupils. During the next stage, two and then three cards were put in a sequence and the pupils were required to make the movements in the same order. Finally, some pupils played untuned instruments and were able to start and stop as required when a support assistant held up the appropriate card showing the word and symbol. Good teaching meant that all pupils were fully involved and included as they became more aware of how sounds and movement can be described and recorded using signs. By the age of eleven, some pupils are beginning to respond well to symbols as they increase their understanding of characteristics such as loud and quiet. In addition, they have been introduced to the idea of how music can create dramatic effects, such as to indicate space travel.
96. During Key Stage 3, pupils increase their understanding that symbols can be used to represent sounds, but they also improve their skills in performing, composing, and reviewing their work. Pupils were able to demonstrate all of these developing skills in a lesson designed to show that rhythms make musical pieces more interesting. Very good teaching techniques encouraged them to produce a clapped beat and then to

amend it by adding silences and substituting other sounds in order to produce a rhythm. By the age of fourteen, the most able pupils are able to maintain a steady beat on a drum while others are playing different beats. By this time, they have also experienced listening to a variety of musical pieces, ranging from Beethoven to jazz and film music.

97. In Key Stage 4, the separate activities of music, dance, drama are combined skilfully with art and design to produce a large creative arts workshop – for example, around the theme of ‘Jazz’. The workshop is very well managed to ensure that pupils have a broad and balanced experience and work in all areas as they prepare for the school’s Christmas production. Pupils make very good progress in many areas during this activity. They express themselves in movement and music, experiment with ideas, create and amend designs for costumes and stage backdrops, and learn to co-operate and make agreed decisions. In addition, they develop an appreciation of cultural and historical aspects of the arts.
98. There is excellent leadership and management of music. Therefore, in addition to music lessons, the subject offers a great deal more to its pupils. It does this during lunchtime activities like brass tuition and a singing club and through links with the wider community via joint ventures and public performances. Excellent musical links with the community provide many opportunities for social and cultural development. Members of a choir and an orchestra have visited the school, and a project, funded by the Education Business Partnership, initiated a great deal of co-operative working. Pupils from the school, students from a local high school and three adults from a local company, were able to work with a professional musician specialising in African and South American music. The end result was a public performance that celebrated music from around the world. Pupils have also performed at the Aldeburgh Fringe Festival and the Aldeburgh Festival of Music and the Arts, and presented a piece called The River Orwell at the Celebration of School’s Music 2000 at Snape Maltings.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION

99. Pupils make very good progress in personal, social and health education, and in careers education and guidance and vocational education, by the time they leave school at sixteen. They have high levels of maturity and independence, and are capable of making choices, showing initiative and taking personal responsibility for their actions, especially in Key Stage 4. This is a result of the highly effective provision, and the pupils’ own very good response to all the opportunities provided by the staff. Curricular development and planning is very effective, and continues to improve, enabling pupils to build progressively on their earlier learning.
100. Highly efficient and thoughtful co-ordination of the subject, very good team-work and a high standard of teaching, especially in Key Stage 4 and in some Key Stage 2 and 3 classes, contribute to the overall success of personal, social, health, careers and vocational education. Excellent community links and a rich curricular enrichment programme complement work in lessons.
101. Good quality teaching in Key Stage 2 helps pupils to develop the skills of sharing, turn taking and expressing opinions. The youngest pupils learn to recognise happy and sad faces, using characters in stories as their starting point. Older pupils in Key Stage 2 begin to appreciate the importance of making friends, personal health and hygiene and healthy eating. New developments and resources are re-vitalising the personal, social and health education programme, so that teachers are moving away from the use of worksheets. During Key Stage 3, pupils develop the confidence and self-esteem to participate in role-play and discussions in front of their peers. In an excellent lesson,

Year 7 pupils developed their conversational skills. They learned to recognise when people are talking too slowly or too loud, or not looking at their audience. They became increasingly able to speak at length and to vary their tone. Discussions – for example, of feelings in Year 8, bullying and gender stereotyping in Year 9 and equality of opportunity in Year 10 – make valuable contributions to pupils' personal and social development.

102. Progress through a comprehensive leavers' programme in Key Stage 4, including a very well organised Youth Award Scheme, is very good. Pupils continue to develop their communication skills in school and on visits, to a local college, for example, becoming more adept at working with others. They consolidate and extend their number handling and problem solving skills. Pupils make good use of their computing skills for research and presentation – of their Youth Award Scheme portfolios, for example, and to access the careers information database.
103. Provision for careers education and guidance is very good. The quality and range of the Key Stage 4 work experience programme has improved since the last inspection; and is now well matched to pupils' stages of development. Employers' evaluations indicate very good progress by pupils on their placements. Careers education begins early, and Year 3 pupils understand the meaning of a 'job'. Pupils from Year 9 are very well supported by the careers service and helped to make realistic choices about their future.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

104. Pupils' achievement and progress are very good and sometimes excellent. This reflects not only the quality of teaching but also the exceptional variety and quality of the experiences provided. This represents a very great improvement since the previous inspection, when progress was satisfactory and teaching generally good.
105. The youngest pupils benefit from lessons that involve vigorous movement alternating with games and activities whilst they are seated. They are challenged and excited by the lessons, because the teacher has excellent degrees of knowledge and experience of this type of programme. They make very good progress in their awareness of their bodies and their ability to control how they move, to sit quietly, listen and follow instructions. Older pupils in Key Stage 2 build on this early work, making very good progress in gymnastics as they develop specific skills – such as how to take off and land when jumping. Because lessons are so carefully planned and structured, pupils learn to use skills they have developed previously – for example, balancing and rolling – in order to create sequences of different types of movement. By asking them to demonstrate what they can do and praising their efforts, the teacher encourages all pupils to try hard and gives them confidence in their own ability.
106. In addition to the rich curriculum during lessons, Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils benefit from an outstanding range of activities at lunchtime and after school, including local and national events. Lessons are exciting and innovative. During the inspection, pupils in Years 8 and 9 carried out activities whilst blindfolded – for example, leading a partner through an obstacle course in an exploration of the school grounds. They made excellent progress in learning to work together successfully to solve problems and in developing their physical skills. During lessons, pupils work at the peak of their ability, because they are so enthusiastic. They have great confidence, both in their teacher and in their own ability and are keen to try out new and challenging activities. This equips them very well for their future lives.

107. The oldest pupils work towards the Junior Sports Leader award. By the time they leave school, most have achieved an excellent standard of work and some are able to take leadership responsibility for others. At a basic level they can plan and teach a range of simple skills – such as warming up and cooling down activities. The teacher herself organises lessons extremely well, so that pupils not actively involved in a game of basketball are busy discussing their strategy and planning ahead. Pupils have represented Suffolk in swimming and football teams at the Millennium Youth Games. Locally, they compete in cross-country events, football tournaments and swimming galas. Some of their achievements are accredited by the British Amateur Gymnastics Association.
108. In all key stages, pupils with additional or complex needs are involved well and make equally good progress. This is because teachers encourage them and use their knowledge of pupils to place them very effectively in groups, so that they feel comfortable and are well supported. Support assistants make especially strong contributions to the welfare and progress of these pupils, in school and during activities in the community, such as swimming and horse riding. Occupational and physiotherapists play similarly important roles. For example, they carry out assessments of pupils' needs and are involved in planning suitable activities and providing support during lessons.
109. In May 2000, the school achieved the Sportsmark Gold award for its commitment to sport. The teaching has been recognised by the Football Association through the award of its Charter Standard for Schools. This required the school to demonstrate equal opportunities for boys and girls and effective links with community groups and other schools. The subject is extremely well managed.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

110. Pupils make very good progress and achieve very well. Since the previous inspection, pupils' progress has become more consistently very good, especially in Key Stage 2. Pupils are able to make such good progress because the quality of teaching is very good and the curriculum is planned very carefully.
111. During Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils become aware of aspects of Christianity and other faiths, such as Judaism and Islam. Through very skilful teaching, they begin to link the topics they learn about to their own lives, which helps them to understand better. For example, pupils in Year 5 considered the school community and the role of people such as the office staff. Photographs were used very effectively to help pupils focus their thoughts and concentrate on what they were trying to communicate. As a result, they became more aware of one aspect of community – that each person is important and has a part to play. Younger pupils explored the things that made them happy or sad, and developed their knowledge of each other and how their own behaviour might affect how other children feel. The teacher and support assistants maintained a very calm working atmosphere, despite occasional outbursts from some pupils with complex learning difficulties. Their very good teamwork ensured that other pupils remained hard at work and made very good progress. Lessons such as this make important contributions to pupils' personal development and the very good relationships within the school.
112. In Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils build effectively on this early work, increasing their knowledge of world religions and how people's lives are influenced by their faith. The work of the oldest pupils is accredited through the Youth Award Scheme. The specialist teacher has a very detailed knowledge of the subject and is able to communicate her

enthusiasm very effectively. For example, pupils in Year 8 listened carefully and some asked questions, because the story of how Jesus changed water into wine was told in a very interesting way, involving the whole class. Lessons are often challenging. The teacher structures pupils' learning very well, so that they are led gradually to think very hard about difficult issues. During the inspection, Year 9 pupils discussed which authority figures they should listen to and the consequences of ignoring authority figures. They also learned that friends can sometimes be called on to give good advice, and that individuals can make their own rules to live by. In subsequent lessons, pupils will go on to consider rules as part of religions and how belief in God affects how people choose to live and behave.

113. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils have acquired a basic knowledge of a number of religions – for example, some of the beliefs of the Sikh faith. They appreciate that symbols have significance in religion – that the bracelet worn by Sikhs symbolises the eternal nature of God. Pupils rise to the challenge posed by the abstract nature of some of the lesson content, because the teacher grips their attention. Lessons involve a variety of activities, such as role-play, question and answer sessions, opportunities for discussion, reading and writing, and these ensure that pupils remain interested and active. Support assistants make particularly good contributions to the progress made by less able pupils, by encouraging them to listen, think and speak.
114. The subject is very well led and managed. Since the previous inspection, planning, assessment and accreditation have all developed well. The extensive resources are very well organised and very strong community links have been established, providing excellent opportunities for pupils to visit places of worship and to meet followers of different faiths. The subject makes a strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.