

# INSPECTION REPORT

## **STRATHMORE SCHOOL**

Petersham

LEA area: Richmond

Unique reference number: 102954

Headteacher: Mr S Rosenberg

Reporting inspector: Mrs M Last

Dates of inspection: 10<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> October 2000

Inspection number: 223609

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:	3 to 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Meadlands Drive Petersham Surrey
Postcode:	TW10 7ED
Telephone number:	020 89480047
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs B Mistry
Date of previous inspection:	10 <sup>th</sup> March 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
17171	Mrs M Last	Registered inspector	Modern foreign languages Music Special educational needs English as an additional language	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school Teaching and learning
12775	Ms J Goodchild	Lay inspector		Pupils' welfare, health and safety Partnership with parents and carers
2512	Mr B Emery	Team inspector	Mathematics Design and technology Geography History	Leadership and management
14868	Mr J Hassell	Team inspector	English Physical education	The school's results and pupils' achievements Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
15606	Ms C Humphreys	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Art and design Equal opportunities	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
32055	Mr G Davies	Team inspector	Science Religious education Post-16	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Strathmore School is situated in the London Borough of Richmond-upon-Thames and caters for up to 50 pupils, most of who come from the local borough. There are twenty-nine boys and 14 girls on roll. All pupils have severe learning difficulties and some have additional impairments including autistic spectrum disorders, physical difficulties or challenging behaviour. Forty of the 43 pupils on roll have statements of special educational needs with the remaining three undergoing assessment. The school maintains provision for pupils from three to 19 years of age but at the time of inspection, the youngest pupils in the school were aged seven. (One pupil below this age was absent at the time of inspection.) Several pupils are at the early stages of language development and eight pupils have English as an additional language. On entry, all pupils' attainments are well below national expectations as a result of their learning difficulties. Six students over 16 are based in a newly built bungalow within the school grounds and follow a curriculum which prepares them for life after school. Pupils are taught in age-related classes with no more than seven in a class. Nine pupils are entitled to free school meals and all pupils come to school by local authority transport or taxis.

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

The school is becoming effective in its work and highly valued by parents and carers. Through good quality teaching, the school enables pupils to make good gains in learning and to meet targets set for them in their individual education plans. The leadership of the school is effective and promotes good relationships between staff and pupils but the senior management team has been less successful in improving the planning and monitoring of the curriculum. The school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

- Promotes very high standards of learning within lessons with much very good, and often excellent, teaching.
- Promotes a very secure and supportive learning environment which is valued by parents and in which pupils feel happy and able to learn.
- Ensures that pupils' needs are met through good attention to targets on individual education plans.
- Develops very good attitudes and levels of maturity in pupils as they move through the school.
- Provides a good curriculum for students over 16 which prepares them well for life after school through community and work-focused tasks.

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

- The provision for teaching pupils how to use computers as a tool for learning in all subjects.
- Strategies for meeting the needs of the very few pupils with difficult behaviour.
- Management systems for identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the school.
- The amount and use of time for personal, social and health education and arrangements for assessing pupils' progress within it.
- Curriculum planning and monitoring throughout the school.
- Provision for music.

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

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in 1997 and has appropriately addressed most of the key issues identified then. It has made very significant progress in monitoring the progress made by pupils towards targets in their individual education plans. The governors now play a fuller part in the life of the school and meet all of their statutory requirements. However, they are not yet fully involved in all aspects of monitoring the effectiveness of the school.

Some issues regarding the curriculum have not yet been fully addressed. The school has made satisfactory arrangements for teaching religious education, science at Key Stage 4 and French at Key Stage 3. The headteacher and senior management team monitor the quality of teaching and this has been instrumental in raising standards significantly since the last inspection. However, the school has not yet introduced rigorous systems to ensure that the curriculum offers a good balance of subjects for pupils in the medium- and long-term. The roles of the curriculum co-ordinators remain unsatisfactory as they are not yet systematically involved in monitoring the effectiveness of what is taught in their subjects. The lack of clarity about the time devoted to each subject (particularly to personal, social and health education) and the effectiveness of outline schemes of work are not all monitored across the school in order to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum.

## STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by age 11	by age 16	by age 19	Key	
speaking and listening	C	B	B	very good	A
Reading	C	B	B	good	B
Writing	C	B	B	satisfactory	C
Mathematics	B	B	B	unsatisfactory	D
personal, social and health education	B	B	B	poor	E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B	B		

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

Pupils achieve well in lessons and make at least satisfactory progress in lessons and over their time in school. Examination of pupils' files shows that the targets set for them in individual education plans reflect their needs as identified in statements and that they make good progress in meeting them. In English, pupils make good gains in learning and use their skills well in other lessons. In mathematics, pupils' learning is good and they can use their numeracy skills for shopping and cooking. In personal, social and health education PSHE lessons, pupils achieve high standards where there is a clear focus to their work. However, much time is devoted to aspects of PSHE which are not so structured and pupils' progress is then difficult to quantify.



## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils have positive attitudes to school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Generally very good with the exception of a very few pupils with challenging behaviour. The school is an orderly community.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves are very good. Personal development is good with opportunities for pupils to develop their social skills both within school and within the community.
Attendance	Very good. There are no unauthorised absences.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 5-11	aged 11-16	aged over 16
Lessons seen overall	Good	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.*

Teaching is a major strength of the school. During the inspection there was no unsatisfactory teaching and over three out of every ten lessons were good. A further three out of every ten were very good. Twelve lessons were outstanding, representing over two out of every ten; these lessons were in English (2), mathematics (2), PSHE (3), science, art, French, food technology and physical education. The very best teaching is characterised by the high expectation set by the teachers and by a determination that all pupils are challenged to do their very best through tasks that are specifically linked to their needs and targets. Pupils learn with determination and good humour; the wide range of pupils' needs are well met in general but, where teaching is no more than satisfactory, a very small minority of pupils are not fully challenged in every lesson. Teaching in literacy and numeracy is good and enables pupils to understand the purposes of text and, for higher attaining pupils, to develop basic reading skills. Pupils use their numeracy skills effectively during visits to the local shops.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is satisfactory overall. It provides a satisfactory range of subjects and learning opportunities but nevertheless, it does not fully comply with statutory requirements in music and information and communication technology.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	The school makes appropriate provision for the eight pupils with English as an additional language. They have access to relevant support, translation services and the school makes every effort to meet these pupils' needs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school provides good provision for the social and cultural development of its pupils and satisfactory provision for their spiritual and moral development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school provides a good caring and supportive environment where pupils feel happy and secure. Individual education plans are precise with pertinent targets but procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' future progress in some subjects are less effective.

The school is highly valued by parents and makes every effort to work in co-operation with them. Staff are rigorous in ensuring that the care and personal needs of the pupils are well met and handle them with dignity and care at all times. The curriculum covers all subjects of the National Curriculum and provides a good balance of subjects over each week but nevertheless, arrangements for music and information and communication technology are unsatisfactory.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Leadership and management are satisfactory but there is still the need to address some areas of curriculum development and the monitoring of curriculum content.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governing body efficiently fulfils its statutory duties although it has insufficient insight into the school's weaknesses and areas for development. This is unsatisfactory.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory. Some procedures are in place but these generally lack rigour and are not fully effective.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes good use of the resources available to it except for computers and musical instruments, which are not used effectively or consistently to help pupils learn. Good use is made of the community and its shops and other services.

The school is well equipped and uses most resources well. It makes good use of the limited accommodation and ensures that pupils benefit from its spending decisions. The headteacher and governing body enjoy a good relationship and work effectively together. Nevertheless, some areas of monitoring, particularly of the curriculum, have not been adequately addressed since the last inspection and the governing body has not been effective in ensuring that this should happen. Both senior managers and governors need to develop more rigorous strategies for identifying strengths and weaknesses of the school.

## **PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL**

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children like school.</li> <li>• The school expects children to work hard.</li> <li>• Parents feel comfortable about approaching the school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Homework.</li> <li>• Extra-curricular activities.</li> </ul>

The parents' views of the quality and effectiveness of what the school provides and achieves are very good. There was a good response to the parents' questionnaire circulated prior to the inspection. Parents feel that their children are safe and enjoy coming to school. They praised the school productions such as the Christmas play and also the sports day. They also felt that the school was open and accessible and listened to any concerns they might have. They felt that the annual review meetings were well planned and were happy with the outcomes. Parents particularly valued the quality of the escorts on school transport and the relationships between classroom assistants and their child. Concerns were expressed about the amount of homework children were given and also the range of extra-curricular activities that the school offered. The findings of the inspection were that the amount of homework given was appropriate for the children and that, due to the restrictions of school transport, the range of extra-curricular activities was satisfactory.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. Pupils' standards of achievement are below national expectations as a result of their learning difficulties. They all have, or are being assessed towards having, a statement of special educational need reflecting their severe learning difficulties. Several pupils have additional impairments. It is therefore inappropriate to judge the standards of the pupils for whom the school caters in relation to the National Curriculum or any other national benchmarks. The report does, however, report on the achievement of the pupils and on what they know, understand and can do. Judgements about achievement take account of information in their statements, annual reviews and individual education plans.
2. Overall, the achievement and progress of pupils at Strathmore School are very good. This is a considerable raising of standards since the last inspection. Pupils make good progress towards their educational targets at all key stages. Progress for those pupils with more complex special educational needs is also good albeit in small steps of learning. For a very small group of pupils who have extra learning difficulties because of their very challenging behaviour, progress is satisfactory. There is no measurable difference between the achievements and progress of boys and girls. The use of signing is fully established throughout the school now and this represents good progress since the last inspection as it enables pupils to communicate more effectively and make their views and wishes known.
3. Standards of achievement and progress are good in English. The introduction of the National Literacy Strategy has significantly raised the profile of books and reading. However, the school recognises that this emphasis needs to ensure that individual pupils' communication programmes are not reduced. As pupils make progress through the school, the number of signs and symbols they use and recognise increases. By the time they reach the Further Education Group, they have learned to listen and hold a conversation with visitors. A good number of older pupils now read competently and can, for instance, gain information from a television programme guide. Pupils' enjoyment of stories, rhymes and poetry is evident. For example, older pupils were captivated by words inspired by a burning candle and younger pupils carefully followed the story of the Brown Bear in their own reading books.
4. In mathematics, pupils' achievements and progress are good overall. They make good progress against targets set in their individual education plans (IEPs) and against targets in teachers' planning. Higher attaining pupils can use mathematics in simple practical tasks, for example counting the number of ducks on a pond. They can use simple mathematics reasoning in practical situations, for example knowing how many people are going swimming. Older pupils have some basic understanding of money and time. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties improve their skills in discriminating between the shape of objects such as squares and triangles. By the time they come to the end of their schooling, higher attaining pupils have learnt to apply their mathematical skills, for instance in using buses and shopping.
5. In science, pupils' achievements are very good. They enjoy the challenge of practical work and are fascinated in seeing, for example, how an electrical circuit works. They can convey their findings on the similarities or differences between pieces of fruit with confidence.

6. Pupils achieve well and make very good progress in religious education, French and in all aspects of the curriculum for those over 16. They make good progress in design and technology, geography, history and physical education. In physical education, for example, pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties blow bubbles and kick their legs in the hydrotherapy pool, while older pupils swim competently on their fronts and backs. In information and communication technology, pupils' achievement and progress are unsatisfactory, mainly because there are too few opportunities for them to develop their skills in using the computers. In art, pupils achieve well in lessons but their progress over time is unsatisfactory because they do not consistently build on the necessary technical skills.
7. The headteacher is currently analysing the percentage of individual pupil targets achieved over the last two years. This information is being prepared for governor scrutiny in order to identify the overall progress pupils are making as a whole-school population. The school is making good progress towards adopting the national assessment tool for pupils with severe learning difficulties known as the 'P' scales. This, together with the existing good practice on individual education plan target setting, should enable the school to identify more precisely levels of pupil attainment and pupil progress over time.

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

8. Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development are very good throughout the school. This builds on the already good attitudes noted at the last inspection and is a real strength of the school. These positive attitudes reflect the supporting and caring environment of the school and the good role models set by teaching and support staff. Parents support this view.
9. Behaviour in and around school is generally very good and makes a substantial contribution to pupils' achievement and progress. Pupils are attentive and engaged, especially when communication is supported by signs and symbols. In lessons, they try hard and they have very positive attitudes to learning. They concentrate, stay on task and work hard. There is generally a happy and relaxed atmosphere for teaching and learning in the school. Behaviour is at least satisfactory and is good or very good in over seven out of every ten lessons. Staff have high expectations of behaviour and convey these to pupils. Many classes have developed their own strategies to reward and reinforce good behaviour. For example, one class has a special behaviour reward board, another has behaviour sticker books. The headteacher regularly rewards pupils for their achievements using certificates and stickers. These are celebrated in assembly.
10. The management of a very small group of pupils whose learning is made more difficult by their very challenging behaviour is, however, well controlled, and the learning of other pupils is not compromised. Although there is evidence of their behaviour improving over time, such as the annotated photograph of a pupil who can now eat and behave well in different settings, these pupils do not all have clear behaviour programmes which are consistently applied by all staff. Although this weakness applies to only a very small group of pupils, the school acknowledges the need to formalise its approach in order to provide the pupils with the best possible chance of success in improving their behaviour. Behaviour at lunchtime, both during the mealtime and in the playground afterwards, is good. Pupils enjoy each other's company, play well together and particularly enjoy chatting with the headteacher.

11. Pupils show concern for each other and there are instances when they help each other without prompting. They are quick and ready to congratulate each other on their successes. For example, friends of a pupil who had just completed swimming an independent length for the first time, spontaneously applauded his efforts. The school is a very caring community which provides pupils with lots of opportunities for them to observe very good role models.
12. Relationships are good; there is obvious respect by adults for pupils. This is best exemplified by staff remaining calm and gentle in the face of difficult behaviour or when pupils are upset. Pupils of all ages greet each other, staff and visitors cheerfully and many make a point of remembering names. They are pleased when staff or visitors engage them in conversation. Throughout the school, they take turns, share, give and accept help and take responsibility on a job rota, for example, putting chairs away after assembly. Rarely does an individual dominate in class or in discussion and there is a great tolerance of other people's points of view and beliefs. Special efforts are made by the headteacher and the staff to teach about other religions and cultures and an understanding of those beliefs and traditions.
13. The school operates as a harmonious, happy community and there is absolutely no indication of any bullying, sexism or racism.

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

14. The quality of teaching is a strength of the school and is very good overall. During the inspection, no unsatisfactory lessons were seen and therefore teaching is at least satisfactory in all lessons. In nearly three out of every ten lessons it is good and in a further three out of every ten it is very good. In over two out of every ten lessons however, teaching is outstanding. The outstanding lessons were in English (2), mathematics (2), personal, social and health education (3), science, art, food technology, physical education and French. These very high standards of teaching are a major achievement. They represent a significant improvement since the last inspection when over one in every ten lessons was unsatisfactory. Teaching is good at Key Stage 2 and very good at all the other key stages including students over 16.
15. Outstanding teaching is characterised by good, detailed planning for every pupil in the class with tasks which challenge and interest them and ensure that they enjoy success. The most successful teachers continually stimulate pupils' thinking by asking them 'what' they have done or 'how' they did it. For higher attaining pupils, the teacher asks 'why' the pupil has chosen a particular way of doing something. For example, in a food technology lesson, the teacher adjusted her questions to the pupils' levels of understanding by giving lower attaining pupils the choice of two answers: 'Do you need the large bowl or the small bowl?' Later she asked a higher attaining pupil: 'Why did you choose that polish?' so that he was challenged to recall his actions and account for them.
16. As a result of this stimulating teaching, pupils make very good gains in learning. Targets in individual education plans are a focus of most lessons and pupils show that they can work hard and concentrate until the ends of lessons. In the very best teaching, no time is lost, one task quickly follows another and pupils are expected to try hard and do well throughout. The work of the classroom assistants is a strength in this regard; they are very well deployed and understand the pupils' needs very well. They work independently without needing to check with the teacher and are highly skilled in supporting pupils without providing too much help. The strong relationships staff have

with pupils and with each other is a major factor in the good quality teaching and learning as they provide good role models for language and social skills.

17. Another strength is the attention teachers pay to promoting pupils' skills in literacy and numeracy. The introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies is having a positive effect on pupils' skills and use of language. Staff ensure that these skills are used well in other subjects of the curriculum. For example, numeracy skills are regularly reinforced in food technology lessons by counting, weighing and sorting. One pupil with an autistic spectrum disorder was encouraged to count his cakes as they went into and came out of the oven and helped to see that they were all there. Other pupils in mathematics were encouraged to act as human scales and decide whether items were 'lighter than' or 'heavier than' each other. All staff are rigorous in using signs to support communication and literacy when relevant. All are skilled in signing and again, in the best lessons, clearly target their expectations to individual pupils according to their abilities. The use of symbols to aid pupils' understanding of written text is also a strength, although in some instances overused. However, teachers do not maximise pupils' opportunities for learning by making sufficient use of computers in their work on literacy and numeracy and this omission prevents pupils from seeing how computers can be used as a tool in all subjects.
18. The standards of teaching at Key Stage 2 are good. Very occasionally, the needs of a very few individual pupils are not fully met in lessons when activities are not specifically focused upon their needs. In these lessons, where teaching is no more than satisfactory, a very few pupils are not fully involved in lessons or are not given sufficiently challenging work. For example, in a speaking and listening lesson, one pupil was able to answer all the questions posed almost by rote. The questions were so easy for him that he was forming his answer before the teacher had finished asking the question. There is no other significant variation in the quality of teaching of any other particular groups of pupils.
19. Teaching in English is good overall with over half of lessons seen being good or very good. The introduction of the National Literacy Strategy has resulted in teachers developing their skills well in promoting pupils' learning in speaking, listening, reading and writing. As a result of well-planned teaching, pupils make at least satisfactory and most often good progress. They are keen to talk and those who have difficulty with speech are developing their use of signing effectively. This is a direct result of teachers actively modelling the signs for pupils by holding their hands and showing them how to move them, so that they are learning the vocabulary of sign as well as watching others. Many are confident communicators and are able to use these skills in the school and in the local community. Higher attaining pupils are making good gains in reading and teachers ensure that they take their reading books home regularly.
20. Some of the pupils with English as an additional language (EAL) pose a real challenge to the school, particularly those who have been at the school for several years and, despite the school's best efforts, are only able to make very small gains in learning. However, these gains represent satisfactory progress when measured against pupils' previous achievements. Some hear little English outside school but are beginning to make connections to familiar events. One Year 11 pupil learnt, during the inspection, to match one pupil's name with his photograph for the first time. Teachers try hard to include such pupils in their work and generally use classroom assistants well in this regard.
21. The quality of teaching in mathematics is good overall and two lessons observed were outstanding. The very best lessons in mathematics are characterised by highly skilled

teachers with very good subject knowledge who plan activities which first engage the pupils' interests and then ensure that they understand and can apply what they have learnt. For example, in one such lesson, the first learning outcome of the lesson was to understand 'more than' and 'less than'. The teacher stimulated the pupils' thinking by quick-fire mental mathematics during which the pupils showed high levels of interest and enthusiasm. They were very keen to answer and confident to try even if unsure. Later in the lesson, pupils used this knowledge to prepare a bingo card using a pre-arranged group of numbers, thus meeting another lesson objective 'to record numbers'.

22. Science teaching is very good because it is clearly linked to pupils' own lives and experiences using activities which interest them and which they can understand. For example, in a lesson about the properties of materials, pupils were able to experiment with cloths of different sorts and to discover for themselves the degree of absorbency in each. They then used this information to rank the cloths in order of effectiveness. The pupils' behaviour was excellent in this lesson as they became 'absorbed' in the activity. The staff were active in helping them to use skills of literacy, numeracy and speaking and listening to help formulate their results.
23. Teaching of personal, social and health education is very good when it is clearly focused on pupils' progress towards achieving targets on their individual education plans. Because these targets are well matched to pupils' needs, they make good progress and develop their skills of independence and self-help appropriately. Through the teacher's good use of a video followed by a well-structured discussion, students over 16 learnt a great deal about health and safety at work. They understood that food preparation at work is very strictly controlled and that protective clothing has to be worn. Staff are rigorous in training pupils to help other people. During the inspection, one pupil spontaneously gave his chair to an inspector and left his lunch on the table while he went to find another. There are frequent examples of pupils helping each other by passing equipment, picking things up from the floor or helping push others in wheelchairs; teachers are very effective in promoting these skills and they are at the forefront of their work. Nevertheless, there is a lack of focus in some personal, social and health education work, particularly where it does not link directly to the pupils' individual education plan targets. Teachers' use of plans which cover several weeks at a time (known by the school as 'standing' plans) do not always challenge the highest attaining pupils and, conversely, do not always support the lowest attaining pupils. This is because they are sometimes written with groups of pupils in mind and do not identify clearly what pupils should achieve. In such sessions, effective use is not made of time.
24. Teaching is very good in religious education and personal, social and health education. The one French lesson seen was outstanding. Teaching is good in English, mathematics, art, physical education and design and technology. Teaching is unsatisfactory in information and communication technology, mainly because the school provides too few opportunities for pupils to develop their skills and therefore use the computers and other technology as tools for learning. It was not possible to make a judgement about teaching in music as no lessons took place during the inspection. The work of the music therapist is a strength, however, and provides very good opportunities for pupils to express their feelings and emotions. This facility is available to pupils identified as in need of such support through a careful selection procedure implemented by the headteacher and music therapist.
25. Teachers make good use of resources with the exception of information and communication technology. During the inspection, there were few examples of computers being used to support learning and little evidence of computer skills being taught. Teachers have clearly been effective in developing some pupils' skills so that



some could use computers independently. For example, a higher attaining pupil in Key Stage 2 was able to start and run a program independently to write his 'news' with symbols. Nevertheless, there were very few instances of staff actually teaching pupils how to use the equipment. This omission is a weakness within teaching and limits the pupils' access to information and communication technology at all key stages.

26. Other resources are used well. Teachers use real money when working on shopping skills so that pupils appreciate the feel and weight of the coins. Teachers plan for most pupils in the school to use their basic skills in the local community. They plan visits to the local stores for shopping where pupils purchase bread to make sandwiches for food technology or more sophisticated ingredients to cook a class lunch. In a science lesson, pupils cut up and chop a variety of fruit to explore its texture and smell. In geography, pupils make models of dishes from different countries and deepen their understanding of where foods originate. Excellent and truly motivating use of resources was seen in a Key Stage 4 French lesson where the staff worked together brilliantly as a team of waitresses to show pupils 'le menu' and took their orders for 'le chocolat chaud', 'le cafe' or 'du the' with 'croissants' or 'pain au raisin'. Using very good accents themselves, they elicited an excellent response from the pupils who, after eating and drinking the products of their choice, were required to say in French whether they liked them or not. There is no doubt that the use of croissants and pain au raisin helped the motivation and learning of pupils in this lesson.
27. The school has very good resources for music which are kept in the music therapy room but not regularly used by staff. Teachers do not effectively incorporate music into their lessons and miss many opportunities to stimulate pupils' thinking or response by the use of relevant musical activities. For example, many opportunities were lost to consolidate counting skills, to understand or to read the words of songs through singing. This lack of presence of informal musical activity contributes to the judgement that arrangements for teaching music are unsatisfactory.
28. All teachers have at least satisfactory knowledge of the subjects they teach. Most often, their subject knowledge is good but on a few occasions, particularly within Key Stage 2, teachers are not so fully equipped with the skills to deal with the range of responses and learning difficulties in their classes. Whilst the teaching in these lessons remains satisfactory overall, the very few pupils with challenging behaviour might do more with better help. Most teachers show great skill in managing the behaviour of the pupils and ensure that they understand what is expected of them. As a result of high quality teaching, pupils show great interest in their lessons and concentrate well.

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

29. The school has not yet fully addressed all the weaknesses in its curriculum identified at the last inspection. It has, however, successfully introduced French for pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4, improved arrangements for science and made satisfactory arrangements for teaching religious education. It has not yet put effective systems in place for identifying the amount of time devoted to each subject, particularly to personal, social and health education. Furthermore, the senior management of the school has not yet established procedures for monitoring how effectively the curriculum is covered or taught. It is unable to identify strengths and weaknesses.
30. The school does not meet its requirements to teach information and communication technology at Key Stages 1 to 4 and has little time allocated to teaching music. In all other respects, it provides pupils with a satisfactory curriculum at Key Stages 1 to 4 and

a good curriculum for students over 16. The school provides a satisfactory range of subjects and opportunities for learning which are effective in meeting the needs of the wide range of pupils. However, in some isolated cases, the needs of a very few pupils are not consistently identified.

31. Students over 16 benefit from a work-orientated curriculum which successfully builds upon their former achievements, but is distinct from previous provision. This curriculum is supported by good opportunities to gain accreditation through an externally validated course – the ASDAN Youth Award Scheme. The students are able to study modules which are relevant to their lives, such as horticulture, and gain certificates for each unit they achieve. These, together with good quality Records of Achievement, provide a very good account of pupils' lives at school and are a strong feature of the curriculum.
32. All pupils now study National Curriculum subjects and religious education. The curriculum includes satisfactory arrangements for teaching the National Literacy and National Numeracy Strategies and these are proving useful in developing pupils' basic skills both in these specific areas and in their use in other subjects. Curriculum planning includes provision for the use of alternative communication, such as signing and the use of symbols, to support pupils with communication difficulties.
33. Overall, the school does not have sufficient cohesive procedures in place to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the curriculum, the actual content of what is taught and how effective it is in promoting pupils' learning.
34. The school has good procedures for meeting requirements regarding the annual reviews of the pupils' statements of special educational needs and the Code of Practice efficiently. It follows due procedures to modify pupils' statements of special educational needs where appropriate. Pupils' individual education plans include good quality targets which are closely related to the needs identified on their statements and staff carefully address these in lessons and assess pupils' progress towards them regularly.
35. The curriculum at all key stages places appropriate emphasis on personal, social and health education. However, a large amount of teaching time is devoted to the subject and planning is unsatisfactory because it does not consistently and clearly identify meaningful activities that purposefully engage all pupils and ensure their progress in specific skills or understanding.
36. The curriculum is enhanced by the contribution made by a range of therapists including speech and language, music and physiotherapy. Their skills and knowledge are used very well to plan with teachers and to maximise pupils' access to all activities in the curriculum. The school also has the services of a nurse who makes a valuable contribution to sex and drugs education.
37. The opportunity for pupils to study alongside their peers in mainstream school is a strong feature of the school's aims. However, little was seen during inspection because some placements were temporarily suspended due to lack of staff or facilities. Where these links are fully operational, they are beneficial in developing pupils' social skills. For students over 16, attendance at the local college provides a good insight into the life of a busy institution as well as preparing them for possible future placement. The school has suitable arrangements for careers education and guidance is provided for older pupils in preparation for their lives after school.
38. The school makes good use of the community in its curricular planning and pupils use local shops, leisure centres, libraries and the Thames Young Mariners' Centre to enrich

their learning. Holly Lodge, a learning resource centre, is also used, particularly for work in science, history and art. Communication with families is consistent, helpful and effective and appreciated by parents and carers.

39. A sufficient range of extra-curricular activities supports the curriculum. Visits are made to cultural sites and places of interest as part of the curriculum. There are opportunities for lower and middle secondary pupils to visit the High Ashurst Activity Centre. The visit for primary pupils to Legoland enabled them to appreciate another different environment.
40. The needs of the pupils are met by the very good, carefully focused, sometimes highly inspiring teaching, firmly based on the requirements of the National Curriculum and the locally agreed syllabus for religious education. Target setting is well monitored and there is a systematic process of review.
41. Pupils for whom English is an additional language are appropriately supported and the school has access to and makes good use of interpreters and translators for parents and pupils. The school operates an effective policy for equality of opportunity. All pupils benefit from lesson content, which is well structured. However, there is still a need to ensure that curriculum planning takes account of each and every pupil, especially those with challenging behaviour, so that their needs are consistently met and their progress monitored throughout the school to maximise their access to all lessons.
42. The school makes satisfactory provision for the spiritual development of its pupils and students both within lessons and through other opportunities within the school such as assemblies and the celebration of special occasions like birthdays, end of terms or pupils' achievements. In religious education lessons, pupils have an opportunity to reflect on parables and stories from the Bible that have an implication on their own lives. They also have opportunities to reflect during celebration of Christian festivals as well as other religious festivals.
43. Pupils and students gather together once a week for the whole-school assembly and one celebration assembly is held before the end of school on Friday. These assemblies celebrate and share, not only a religious experience and pupil achievement, but also focus on the importance of the school as a community. Pupils' achievements during the week are praised and celebrated. They are encouraged in these acts of collective worship to be calm and reflect, for instance, about their friends and families. There is a short grace before lunch daily. The requirements of collective worship are fully met.
44. Arrangements for developing pupils' moral awareness are satisfactory. Assemblies always have moral themes and these are explored and reinforced in many lessons. Staff take every opportunity to remind pupils of the consequences of any wrongdoing and the importance to take appropriate actions when they have done wrong. Pupils and students clearly know the difference between right and wrong and have a sense of fairness. When pupils do forget and sometimes treat others unkindly, they are often very remorseful afterwards and will often apologise without prompting from their teacher. Relationships are good and pupils and staff relate well to each other. Pupils are taught the value of relationships in personal, social and health education lessons. Post-16 students have discussion on various topics such as respect for others, and show strong emotions on the importance of helping each other. Formal personal and social education lessons allow pupils to discuss moral aspects related to personal relationships with sensitivity.
45. The school's provision for the pupils' social development is good and very closely linked to the exemplary relationships within the school community. Pupils respond well to the

positive atmosphere that allows them to develop in confidence and self-worth, becoming happy and assured young people. Pupils and students genuinely care for each other, showing very real concern if other pupils are unwell or feel sad, trying to make them feel better, perhaps with a gentle pat on the back or a quiet word. They delight in sharing the achievements of others. Older pupils look after younger pupils very well, treating them as if they were family. The school provides opportunities for pupils and students to interact with the local community, for example when shopping or through work experience at the further education department. A large number of pupils and students integrate in local schools and colleges and this gives them an opportunity to mix socially with their peers. This has had a significant impact with students and pupils realising that they can relate very well to people outside the school and their known environment. Students in the further education department are prepared very well for the next stage of their lives.

46. Opportunities to enhance the pupils' cultural development are good; they pervade the school curriculum. The school has contact with local schools through music and groups from the school have been invited to their concerts. Groups have also attended concerts in large concert halls in London. These occasions provide the pupils and students with a positive insight into different forms of music. Pupils in Key Stage 4 attend for activities at the Thames Young Mariners Centre, where they learn how to sail. The school has entered the Borough's local gardening competition and for two years in succession has won a prize for the best-kept garden. The school holds an annual prize day to present the Record of Achievements Awards when local dignitaries as well as parents are invited to attend. Other subjects and activities also make very effective contributions to pupils' cultural developments. These include the visit of theatre groups to the school and a full programme of trips and visits that take place to introduce and engage pupils in multicultural experiences. Places of worship such as churches, mosques and synagogues are visited to the pupils' and students' spiritual and cultural insight. Cultural diversity is valued, pupils dress in the costumes of other peoples, they learn about the different food eaten around the world and enjoy tasting them. An example of this was observed in a French lesson when pupils were taught French habits and the different food they eat, for example croissant for breakfast.

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

47. The procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare and child protection are good. The school provides a caring, supportive environment where there are very good relationships between pupils and adults and between pupils themselves. A high standard of care is shown by both teachers and classroom assistants that helps pupils settle quickly into the school environment. This establishes a secure foundation for pupils as they move through the school. The school is well supported in its work by a range of specialist services such as occupational therapy, physiotherapy and the speech and language development service. There are regular meetings of the multidisciplinary team to discuss the needs of pupils and the headteacher meets with the heads of the services termly to review the school's needs and ensures that maximum support is provided. A high degree of care is taken to ensure that the needs of new pupils joining the school are effectively met. Both teachers and classroom assistants know their pupils well. The school has an extensive and valuable integration programme with mainstream schools in place. This enables some pupils to benefit from working and playing alongside their mainstream peers and experience an environment different from their own school. Past successes of this programme have been two pupils gaining a GCSE in art. The continuity of this programme is sometimes affected by difficulties in ensuring that support staff are available to accompany pupils on these visits. Regular visits into the community ensure that pupils' awareness of the wider world is enhanced. A trip for

pupils to a German bakery as part of a design and technology lesson was a very valuable experience. Post-16 students have the opportunity to stay overnight in the school bungalow to reinforce their independence and last year went on a residential visit to the Isle of Wight.

48. The procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are satisfactory but vary across the curriculum. They are very good in religious education and further education, for example, but unsatisfactory in information and communication technology, art, music and personal, social and health education. In the Post-16 department, the procedures are focused on the students' future lives and, along with careers guidance and advice, provide very good information from which to plan the next stage of education. The information from these assessments is used to plan future Programmes of Study. Individual education plans derive their original information from pupils' statements of educational needs and make effective use of assessments to prepare future learning targets. Precise, pertinent targets in communication, numeracy and personal development are set for individual pupils and these are reviewed termly with parents actively involved.
49. The arrangements for child protection are good. The child protection officer is experienced in the procedures involved but has yet to receive training on the recent changes to the system. There are appropriate links with the external support agencies. Staff are aware of what their role is and are clear about the procedures to follow. The overall procedures for ensuring the health, safety and welfare of pupils are good. All classroom assistants have received first aid training and the school nurse is in charge of administering medication and contributes to sex and drugs education. Regular fire drills are held and the safety of pupils is of paramount concern.
50. The school's procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour and eliminating oppressive behaviour are good. There are clear expectations of good behaviour based on respect for others and pupils are encouraged to understand the impact of their actions on others. Bullying is not an issue in this school and any incidents that occur are dealt with immediately and firmly. The school does not have in place formalised behaviour management plans or strategies to ensure consistent management of the very small number of pupils with challenging behaviour.
51. Pupils' attendance is very good. There was no unauthorised absence recorded during the academic year 1998/99. There has been an increase in the level of attendance since the previous inspection as a result of the school's good procedures for actively monitoring attendance. The escorts who travel with pupils on the school transport provide helpful liaison between home and school. The majority of pupils are punctual arriving at school at the start of the day but there are occasions when the late arrival of school transport delays the start of lessons. Procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good with home contact being made if pupils are absent for a period of time. The school has satisfactorily addressed the key issue of non-compliance with the statutory requirement to report attendance noted at the previous inspection.

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

52. The contribution of parents to their children's learning is very good. The school attempts to involve parents in all aspects of their child's education and to work in partnership with the school to ensure that all children achieve their potential. Through the annual review meetings, parents are helped with ways of encouraging and supporting their children's learning at home. The school has an open door policy and parents feel that they can

approach the school if difficulties occur and their concerns are listened to sympathetically and addressed.

53. The Friends of the School organise a range of activities and raise funds to support the school. The governing body, staff and pupils appreciate their efforts. A small group of parents regularly helps within the school, listening to reading and supporting on visits to the swimming pool. Parents are regularly consulted about new initiatives such as the home/school agreement. The annual governors' report to parents' meeting is held before the summer barbecue which is both popular and well attended. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is very good.
54. The quality of information provided to parents is very good. The home/school diary provides a valuable, daily means of communication between the school and parents and this is valued by both parents and staff. A termly meeting is held to review the individual education plan targets set at the annual review and pupils' progress is reported annually to parents. There is a parents' notice board in the school. The headteacher produces a weekly newsletter which celebrates pupils' successes, and the Strathmore Grapevine is published termly reviewing the activities of the school. Parents are involved in meetings with external agencies to discuss the progress of their child and plans for future support. The school now successfully meets the statutory requirements for reporting attendance annually. These figures are also reported in the prospectus and the governors' annual report to parents.

#### **HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?**

55. The headteacher, governors and senior management team provide satisfactory leadership. They give educational direction and have successfully fostered a very positive ethos in the school where pupils' individual needs are supported, their efforts valued and they feel secure and happy. Teamwork in the school is effective and there is a shared commitment to raising standards and providing pupils with a worthwhile educational experience.
56. The school's leadership has made a satisfactory response to the last inspection overall. Most of the key issues identified during the last inspection have been successfully addressed but those concerned with curriculum matters are still outstanding. Although arrangements to monitor and support the quality of teaching are now good, similar arrangements to monitor and develop the curriculum, to address curriculum balance and entitlement and to ensure statutory compliance are weak.
57. Key roles in the school are properly delegated and those staff with management responsibilities work well together and share common aims and purpose. Governors undertake a range of tasks which support the management of the school. They take their responsibilities seriously and are committed to the success of the school. The chair of governors is particularly effective and works very closely with the headteacher. Governors are actively involved in the daily life of the school and know its strengths well. They visit both formally and informally and have an informal monitoring role with identified classes. Whilst the school has introduced effective systems for monitoring teaching, learning and the pupils' progress towards targets on their individual education plans, there is insufficient monitoring of the school's performance overall by the governing body. Despite their close involvement in the school, governors do not appear to be particularly well informed about the required areas for development and weaknesses in the school, for example governors were unaware of the failure to address all the key issues from the last inspection and have not identified the unsatisfactory use of time in the curriculum. Governors have produced a school

development plan which provides a baseline against which improvements in the school can be measured. For example, since the last inspection, the headteacher and deputy headteacher monitor teaching in all classes and all curriculum areas have co-ordinators; both these areas are clearly identified in the school development plan. Nevertheless, despite all curriculum areas being led by a co-ordinator, there are still subjects without effective schemes of work or with schemes only in draft form and the management of this aspect of the school's work is unsatisfactory.

58. All staff make good use of resources and accommodation overall, and the school is very efficient in its strategic use of resources. Financial planning and control are very good; the monitoring of the school budget is very efficient and the headteacher effectively exercises day-to-day financial control ably assisted by a very effective administrative assistant. The governing body considers all budgetary and financial questions carefully and is circumspect in its decision making. The day-to-day financial controls and procedures are very effective and administration is very effective. The school has been audited recently and the report identifies the good practices which are in place. All proposed purchases and developments are carefully evaluated to ensure best value is obtained.
59. There is a good number of teachers and classroom assistants to support the pupils in their learning. The teachers are all appropriately qualified and generally have a good level of knowledge of the subjects they teach. The current exceptions are in information and communication technology and music. In information and communication technology, teachers and assistants do not yet have sufficient skills or confidence to ensure that all pupils make as much progress as they should. The management has not ensured that the time allocated for teaching music is adequate and subsequently, pupils do not receive enough teaching to develop their knowledge and understanding; the subject has been reduced since the last inspection. Many co-ordinators are new to their posts and, at the time of inspection, were still familiarising themselves with the role. Classroom assistants play a very valuable part in supporting pupils' learning; they have good opportunities for training and are increasingly developing their skills in techniques of learning support, which, in turn, helps the pupils to improve their work and make progress. All staff benefit from a good induction system which includes the provision of a mentor to guide them in their work in the school. The headteacher holds annual professional interviews with all staff and the school is on target to introduce performance management strategies from January 2001.
60. The school's accommodation is good in quality and satisfactory for the number of pupils on roll at each key stage. Should the number of pupils increase to its maximum, or Key Stage 1 pupils be admitted, the accommodation would be overcrowded. However, the school makes good use of the accommodation and is imaginative in ensuring that every corner is used to best effect. Storage of large items of equipment is inevitably a problem but the school makes every effort to keep corridors and social areas as uncluttered as possible. The school has done well to improve facilities for changing since the last inspection.
61. Resources are good overall and used well for the benefit of the pupils' learning with two exceptions. The use of computers which, although adequate in number, are not sufficiently well used to promote pupils' skills in manipulating their way around the screen and the peripheral. Therefore, they are unable to use them as a supportive tool for learning in other subjects. There is a very good range of musical instruments in the music therapy room. These are currently used very effectively with the pupils receiving music therapy but not used in the school as a whole.

62. Given the satisfactory leadership and management of the headteacher and governing body, the good achievements of pupils, the very strong, supportive ethos in the school, the very good teaching and the very effective and efficient administration, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

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

In order to raise standards further the school should:

- Improve provision for information and communication technology by:
  - providing sufficient teaching time in all classes for pupils to learn the necessary skills;
  - ensuring that staff provides relevant opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology in all subjects of the curriculum;
  - ensuring that staff continue to receive relevant training which enables them to support pupils appropriately.

(Paragraphs 6, 17, 24, 25, 30, 59, 88, 97-104)

- Introduce specific behaviour management plans for the few pupils with challenging behaviour which are consistently applied by all staff.

(Paragraphs 10, 28, 41, 50, 70, 77)

- Improve the overall monitoring of the school's strengths and weaknesses by ensuring that:
  - governors have a clear and explicit understanding of their monitoring function;
  - governors have clear systems and strategies for gathering good quality, impartial information to inform their considerations.

(Paragraphs 56, 57)

- Improve the provision for personal, social and health education by:
  - ensuring that everyone is clear about the content of the subject;
  - recording the pupils' acquisition of skills and showing their progress over time;
  - identifying long- and medium-term plans for the subject;
  - ensuring the subject is given a precise time allocation which reflects its prominence within the school's aims.

(Paragraphs 23, 30, 35)



- Improve curriculum planning and monitoring throughout the school by:
  - ensuring that all subjects of the National Curriculum are taught at each key stage in response to the latest guidelines;
  - ensuring that all subjects have long- and medium-term plans for teaching;
  - ensuring the headteacher and senior management team carefully monitor teachers' planning, what is taught in lessons and what pupils learn as a result.

(Paragraphs 7, 29, 33, 57, 68, 72, 73, 74, 88)

- Increase the provision for music so that pupils at all key stages receive enough teaching to enable them to develop their knowledge, skills and understanding of the subject in line with the National Curriculum attainment targets.

(Paragraphs 27, 61, 107-112)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	56
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	54

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
12	17	16	11	0	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	43
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	9

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	8

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	3
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	2

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	5.8

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0

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

### ***Ethnic background of pupils***

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	1
Indian	3
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	1
White	33
Any other minority ethnic group	6

### ***Exclusions in the last school year***

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	2	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

### ***Teachers and classes***

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	8
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	4.7
Average class size	6.1

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	388

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	728741
Total expenditure	713595
Expenditure per pupil	15513
Balance brought forward from previous year	27991
Balance carried forward to next year	43137

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	43
Number of questionnaires returned	21

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	17	4	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	5	16	0	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	4	17	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	2	8	5	1	1
The teaching is good.	9	11	0	0	1
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	8	13	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	11	10	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	10	10	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	6	14	1	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	10	11	0	0	1
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	8	11	0	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	9	7	2	3	0

### Other issues raised by parents

The parents' views of the quality and effectiveness of what the school provides and achieves are very good. There was a good response to the parents' questionnaire circulated prior to the inspection. Parents feel that their children are safe and enjoy coming to school. They praised the school productions such as the Christmas play and also the sports day. They also felt that the school was open and accessible and listened to any concerns they might have. They felt that the annual review meetings were well planned and were happy with the outcomes. Parents particularly valued the quality of the escorts on school transport and the relationships between classroom assistants and their child. Concerns were expressed about the amount of homework children were given and also the range of extra-curricular activities that the school offered. The findings of the inspection were that the amount of homework given was linked to each pupil's abilities and therefore appropriate. The school tries hard to provide a range of extra-curricular activities but is inevitably limited by the need to get pupils onto the

local authority transport at the end of each day. Inspectors therefore judged that the range of extra-curricular activities was satisfactory.

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

### **ENGLISH**

63. In relation to their abilities, pupils make good progress overall in English throughout the school. When measured against their prior levels of knowledge and understanding, pupils make satisfactory gains in learning at Key Stage 2 and good gains at all other key stages. Students in the further education group also achieve well. These good gains in learning are a direct result of good teaching and all teachers take full advantage of other opportunities to reinforce pupils' learning. This is especially noticeable in the skills of speaking and listening when pupils talk to their teachers and friends during lunch and play times and to visitors with confidence. They obviously enjoy and value these opportunities to develop their communication skills either by sign or speech.
64. The youngest pupils at Key Stage 2 are beginning to develop their speaking and listening skills and their understanding of books and reading. The staff use a good range of interesting materials to capture the pupils' imaginations and as a result, they can understand a story, answering simple questions about it. They name body parts and animals, colour in a small blocked outline with scribble and read single words that are supported by symbols. All pupils really enjoy sharing stories, particularly when they can look at the pictures in the book, turn the pages or feel special tactile books. Teachers pay careful attention to the needs of lower attaining pupils and ensure that they can sign 'good morning' or can be fully involved in a story when helped to touch real objects such as models of the animals.
65. By the end of Key Stage 3 when pupils are 14, the highest attaining pupils are reading more complex text. Teachers plan tasks, which challenge the pupils but also ensure their success, such as completing missing words in a comprehension exercise or writing and spelling simple words. For example, one pupil could make three new words when given the 'oo' sound. Lower attaining pupils can copy write their names and can read very simple books. This good standard of attainment is a result of high teacher expectations, a good knowledge of how to progress literacy skills and a skilful use of praise and reinforcement.
66. By the time pupils are at the end of Key Stage 4, they speak clearly, make and listen to contributions in class discussion and value the contributions of all. For example, in one lesson, the teacher made good use of a lighted candle as the stimulus for poetry writing and developing pupils' vocabulary. The words generated were glued to outlines of candles and then recited to the group. The pupils' skills in reading were later demonstrated in assembly when they read to the whole school.
67. Pupils' skills in writing are satisfactory at Key Stage 2. Many pupils at this stage are still developing an understanding of mark making and have yet to write their names. However, as they move through the school, pupils achieve well and by the time they reach Key Stage 4, many can write sentences and more extended text expressing their fundamental thoughts and feelings.
68. The quality of teaching in English is good. Teachers are skilled in teaching all aspects of the subject and plan lessons which pupils enjoy. Throughout the school, attainment in English is enhanced by staff consistently signing and by the good use of symbols. The use of signing is a significant improvement since the last inspection. However, for a

very small minority of pupils who require a more careful and systematic approach to the acquisition of language and communication skills, the teachers do not plan their lessons in sufficient detail for the needs of all the pupils to be met with the result that some tasks within the lesson are not matched to the wide range of pupils' needs – being too difficult for lower attaining pupils and too easy for higher attaining pupils. However, overall, teachers and classroom assistants have a good understanding of the needs of the pupils and how to meet them through the teaching of basic skills. Computers are only used in a limited way to practise writing and word recognition and in this regard the curriculum is unsatisfactory.

69. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is usually good and they understand the expectations that teachers have of them during each lesson. They particularly enjoy their drama activities when they can participate in a practical way. Students in the Further Education Group look forward with great anticipation to their drama lessons in the local comprehensive school.
70. Behaviour, whilst never less than satisfactory, is sometimes unsettled when the pupils do not understand exactly how the staff expect them to behave. Occasionally, in these instances, one or two pupils are distracted and because they do not have specifically identified targets for their behaviour, there is no consistent approach to dealing with the difficulty between adults.
71. Pupils' attitudes to their English work are usually good or very good. They usually enjoy very positive relationships with staff and each other. They are keen to engage and work hard. Occasionally, higher attaining pupils display great humour in their responses. For example, in drama when miming what foods we like to eat, one pupil decided he would eat maggots. Pupils' learning within English lessons is usually good. In two lessons, learning was excellent. In both these lessons, teachers used careful planning and imaginative strategies to engage and motivate and were very clear in their intended learning outcomes.
72. While assessment procedures are satisfactory overall, they are insufficiently detailed or rigorous in identifying all aspects of what pupils have learnt as a result of the lessons they have received. Nevertheless, it is clear that on an individual basis, pupils make good progress against the targets set for them in their individual education plans. Similarly, the absence of a long-term plan to ensure that curriculum coverage is systematically recorded means that the ways in which pupils build upon their previous learning is not currently identified.
73. There have been satisfactory improvements in English since the last inspection, notably, the success with which the school has adopted the principles of the National Literacy Strategy. Signing is now a consistent feature of English teaching across the school. Although sometimes over detailed, the use of symbols continues to be strength in helping pupils understand written text. The use of big books and group reading has been a notable development. Creative English work in drama and poetry continues to enhance the subject. The curriculum is satisfactory and meets requirements. However, the absence of any long-term planning, the continued absence of systematic monitoring and the weakness in communication strategies for a few pupils, mean that overall improvement in the subject is satisfactory.
74. The role of the subject co-ordinator as a leader is not fully developed throughout the school. The co-ordinator has been successful in acquiring literacy resources and extending the role of drama but there is no pupil library. Long-term planning, monitoring, evaluating and establishing good assessment procedures have still to be secured.

## MATHEMATICS

75. By the end of all key stages, pupils make good gains in learning in relation to their abilities and needs. By the age of eleven, pupils are showing improvements as a result of teachers using the National Numeracy Strategy effectively. Pupils' learning shows clear evidence of good progress. For example, pupils' number identification and simple counting skills are developing well. The higher attaining pupils can recognise and name numbers on a number line on the classroom wall and can count the number of familiar objects in a small group. Some pupils can subtract mentally. In one class, pupils knew that if the teacher took away one object from a group of four, then three remained. In many lessons, good practical activities, including games and songs, provide good stimuli to pupils' learning in mathematics. By the age of 14, all pupils have consolidated their mathematical skills to such an extent that lower attaining pupils have some sense of numeracy and can undertake some simple calculations, name shapes and coins, whilst more able pupils can use number to solve simple problems and support other work. For example, weighing flour accurately in food technology. By the age of 16, pupils are using their mathematical knowledge in social situations, for example on shopping expeditions they have an idea of what they can buy within a budget. They can measure accurately using simple units and they are beginning to make reasonably accurate estimates of numbers, money and time.
76. The teaching of mathematics is good at all key stages and at Post-16. It is good or very good in more than half of lessons and excellent in two lessons. Teachers have a sound understanding of the subject and of pupils' needs and abilities. Their expectations are high and lessons are conducted at a good pace which maintains pupils' interest. This good teaching results in pupils who want to learn, who behave well and enjoy work in mathematics. All pupils show interest, they work in groups, help each other and share resources willingly. Teachers plan their lessons well; they know the content of pupils' individual education plans and target work appropriately. In the best practice, pupils' work is retained by teachers, annotated and used to inform assessments.
77. Teachers generally manage pupils' behaviour very well; they maintain them on task and do not allow pupils to distract each other. Only on the very few occasions when pupils have very severe behaviour problems, are teachers less effective, usually due to lack of rigorous behaviour management programmes being in place. Usually, teachers insist on high standards of behaviour and work and are committed to pupils' learning. They use classroom assistants well, often giving them responsibility for a group of pupils. Resources are used well by teachers and pupils' work is displayed effectively.
78. The subject is very well managed by the co-ordinator who has good mathematical understanding and deep knowledge of the learning needs of pupils with severe learning difficulties. The co-ordinator regularly visits colleagues' classrooms to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning in mathematics. A very impressive scheme of work has been produced but disappointingly is still only in draft form. There is an urgent need to finalise this and make it available to all staff so that the approach to the subject is consistent and other staff are supported in terms of tasks, approaches and assessment processes. Resources for mathematics are good; they are sufficient in quantity and are of good quality. In many lessons, pupils were observed using mathematical skills and knowledge and all teachers encourage the use and development of the subject in non-mathematics lessons. The good standards in mathematics have been maintained since the last inspection and there has been an improvement in the quality of teaching of the subject.

## SCIENCE

79. It was only possible to observe science lessons at Key Stages 2 and 3, but scrutiny of pupils' work, teachers' planning and other documentation has enabled judgements to be made in all key stages.
80. In relation to their abilities, pupils make very good gains in learning in science at Key Stages 2 and 3. This represents a significant improvement compared with the findings of the previous inspection when some areas of teaching and progress were unsatisfactory. It was not possible to see any science lessons at Key Stage 4 during the current inspection.
81. Because teachers employ a very practical approach to science and use resources that are meaningful, the pupils respond well, take an interest in their work and therefore make very good gains in learning. For example, at Key Stage 2, pupils enjoy handling fruit and vegetables, they know their names and that they have different smells and tastes. At Key Stage 3, pupils know the difference between materials and understand the concept of 'absorbent'. They are able to classify different materials by measuring the amount of water each absorbs. They are therefore able to see how science impacts upon their own lives by making clear connections to tasks around the house, for example by understanding that some materials collect more liquid than others and will therefore make better dishcloths.
82. Teachers have a secure knowledge of their subjects and use resources well. For example, a school display showed that at Key Stage 4, pupils learn about electricity and are able to construct a circuit to make a light bulb and buzzer work. They are able to record their findings through simple written tasks and drawings. Staff stress the health and safety aspects of the topic as they teach, ensuring that the subject makes a significant contribution to their social and personal development. Pupils with additional need are helped to communicate their thoughts and ideas through the sensitive use of signs and symbols. All pupils behave well in science lessons; they show good attitudes to their work, handle the resources with care and enjoy working on practical tasks.
83. All class teachers contribute to the teaching of science and overall, the quality of the teaching is very good. Teaching is satisfactory in two lessons, very good in three lessons and outstanding in one. Scrutiny of pupils' work at Key Stage 4 showed good progression, particularly with higher attaining pupils who had been able to record their achievements through writing or diagrams. In the best lessons, teachers use a variety of strategies that both extend the pupils and keep them interested in the work by ensuring that they are fully involved in handling and working with materials such as the fruit, the dishcloths and the electric circuits. Staff work well together as a team, relationships are good and praise and encouragement are used to good effect with the result that pupils gradually become more independent. Pupils are given tasks and are expected to work out the answers on their own. A good range of resources is available in the resource centre and these are available to all the teachers. The majority of lessons are brisk and pupils' work is carefully marked with words or stickers of encouragement which are much appreciated and displayed by the pupils.
84. There is a policy and a scheme of work for the subject drawn up by the co-ordinator with the support of all the teachers concerned. Close links with other areas of the curriculum are identified, for example in personal and social development. Pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject are reinforced in these areas, particularly in terms of promoting healthy lifestyles through sex and drugs education. Discussion



within lessons also ensures that the subject makes a valuable contribution in developing pupils' communication skills.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

85. Within lessons, pupils make at least satisfactory short-term gains in learning. Of the four lessons observed, progress was satisfactory in two, very good in one and outstanding in another. However, although teachers have satisfactory levels of knowledge in the subject, pupils are not presented with lessons that progressively help them to build on their skills and improve their control of materials, tools and techniques. Their progress in the long-term is more difficult to quantify at Key Stages 2 and 3 but slightly better at Key Stage 4 where excellent teaching inspires pupils and helps them to learn very effectively.
86. Pupils' gains in learning within lessons at Key Stages 2 and 3 are satisfactory. They can name most common colours and use brushes, sponges and stencils with varying degrees of control for printing. Where teaching is no more than satisfactory, teachers do not always pay sufficient attention to developing the pupils' techniques in using the ranges of resources and media available. Teachers make good references to the work of other artists and use them to illustrate different styles and approaches. As a result, at Key Stage 3, pupils can use the work of Van Gogh to inform their own work using pastel and fabric collage and trace images identifying key features. At Key Stage 4, where the gains in learning are exceptionally good, pupils select and use resources to make three-dimensional models using different colours and textures effectively. The teacher makes very good use of the experience that pupils gain through visits to local amenities such as the Thames Young Mariners' Centre where they draw inspiration from the many photographs on display. They use these as reference material and therefore make informed decisions about their choices of colours and materials.
87. Teaching is good overall and outstanding in the one lesson seen at Key Stage 4. Where it is excellent, the teacher has high expectations of the pupils, but she ensures success by carefully teaching pupils how to use the materials available so that their careful concentration results in good work. Pupils' behaviour is very good; they find art activities exciting; they enjoy experimenting with the range of materials such as crayon, paint and different kinds of paper. Pupils also enjoy the interaction they are encouraged to have with each other during art lessons and this helps them appraise their own work and make supportive comments to others. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' social and cultural development.
88. Classrooms and social areas of the school are enhanced by displays of pupils' work. These add to the general positive atmosphere of the school and enable pupils to see a range of artwork as they walk through the school. The subject has maintained its satisfactory level since the last inspection but the lack of a clear curriculum to guide pupils through a pathway of increasing skills and knowledge is a weakness. Furthermore, there is very little use of computers as a support for learning in art either to explore the work of other artists or to experiment with graphics packages.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

89. Pupils' achievements in relation to their prior learning are good in design and technology at all key stages. By the end of each key stage, they have clearly gained in knowledge, skills and understanding so that older, higher attaining pupils particularly are able to make items of good quality. For example, a Key Stage 4 group made biscuits in a food technology lesson which were successfully baked, decorated and served. In another

Key Stage 3 lesson, pupils are making moving models of a skeleton using card and straws to display the principles of mechanisms and control. Pupils use skills and knowledge from other subjects well in design and technology lessons such as numeracy skills in weighing and counting and reading skills in understanding the names of ingredients.

90. The quality of teaching in design and technology is good in most lessons, very good in one and excellent in a further lesson. In the very best teaching, the exciting and practical tasks planned by the teachers and the high expectations that they will work hard and do well has a very positive impact on their learning and attitudes to the subject. All pupils are very positive, their behaviour is very good as they concentrate well and want to do well. For example in a food technology lesson, all the pupils were given separate tasks towards preparing a class lunch and each worked to maximum capacity on their particular tasks whether it was laying the table, grating the cheese, baking cakes or washing up. All pupils enjoy food technology; they have a very positive attitude to the lessons and look forward to the end when they can eat the resulting products.
91. Teachers use the subject well to promote other areas of learning. For example mathematical skills in weighing and measuring; science in making models using mechanisms; and personal, social and health education where pupils work together and choose materials and methods. Teachers' subject knowledge is generally very good and they have both high expectations and an awareness of how the subject can be used to generate learning across a whole range of subjects. They manage pupils appropriately, ensuring their safety in practical lessons and are imaginative in their approach, for example one class visited a bakers before making their own bread in food technology.
92. The subject is well led by a co-ordinator and a draft scheme of work of good quality has recently been produced and assessment is satisfactory. Resources for the subject are good. The good standards pupils achieve and the high quality of teaching in the subject have been maintained since the last inspection.

## **GEOGRAPHY AND HISTORY**

93. History and geography are taught as separate subjects at all key stages. Only one lesson in each subject was observed during the course of the inspection due to timetable arrangements but observation of these lessons and scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' documentation show that standards of achievement in the subjects are good given the pupils' abilities and previous learning.
94. The quality of teaching in history and geography is good. In a Key Stage 4 history lesson, teaching was very good. Teachers plan a good mixture of practice and theoretical work. This combination helps pupils to gain a clear understanding of time past and the contrast with current times. Teachers are knowledgeable about their subjects and provide good, clear explanations and demonstrations. As a result, pupils are gaining an understanding of how people used to live. For example, when studying clothes, they have previously visited museums and seen some 1960's clothes on display. In the next lesson, they were delighted to be 'trying on' clothes and by wearing them, gained a good understanding of how the clothes felt and why people dressed as they did. They are beginning to have some understanding of chronology. The teaching in this lesson stimulated the pupils by gaining their interest, allowing them to experiment and prompted them to ask questions and make pertinent observations, for example, one boy observed that some people wear bell-bottomed or flared trousers today.

95. In the geography lesson, a Key Stage 2 class are undertaking a project on food and were able to identify that some foods originate in other countries and are brought to shops from many different sources. They have some understanding of routes and plans in that they have discussed how they could walk to particular shops from school. The teaching in this lesson was good; it was well planned and a range of different approaches was used which drew on pupils' knowledge and skills from other areas such as mathematics, English and personal, social and health education.
96. Pupils enjoy history and geography lessons. They show interest and behave well. The level of observations they make and questions they ask are good and indicate that they are beginning to appreciate and understand aspects of the subjects. Both subjects are well led by the co-ordinator and documentation, although in draft form, is of good quality. Resources for the subject are satisfactory and good use is made of the environment for visits. Standards of pupils' achievement in history and geography and the quality of teaching have been satisfactorily improved since the last inspection and this has had a positive effect on pupils' learning.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

97. The school has not made sufficient improvements in information and communication technology since the last inspection. There is insufficient direct teaching of skills for pupils to develop the necessary competence to use computers with confidence. Additionally, the use of computers as a tool to support other subjects of the curriculum is underdeveloped and there was limited use of the computers during inspection. Information and communication technology (ICT) is still not taught as a discrete subject in the school and its use in the support of other subjects is unsatisfactory.
98. There are schemes of work for the subject but these are insufficiently detailed to guide what teachers should cover in lessons. For students over 16, the guidelines are clearer and students' progress more easily tracked.
99. With the exception of one Key Stage 4 lesson, no ICT teaching was seen during the inspection. Judgements are therefore based on inspectors' observations of pupils using computers in lessons. The use of computers across the school is inconsistent. It is best used in English to support pupils' understanding of language and to promote reading and writing skills. However, the school sometimes makes too much use of the symbol writing facility, which adds symbols to text, resulting in cluttered printing which is difficult to read and understand. Nevertheless, this is a useful facility, which with more structured use, could be of great benefit to the pupils. In mathematics, the use of the technology is mainly restricted to practising simple number bonds. Information and communication technology is not used in science. The school has yet to develop a programme of assessment in order to decide whether any pupils would benefit from specialist switches to aid their learning.
100. There is little evidence of pupils' computer work around the school. Computer generated symbols and typefaces are used well in displays or to annotate pupils' work but staff generally produces these.
101. There is insufficient evidence to make a judgement about pupils' knowledge, skills or understanding at the end of either Key Stages 2 or 3. In a Key Stage 4 class, however, information and communication technology is used imaginatively to support work in English and the teacher uses the time to teach new skills and to assess pupils' progress against targets set. Pupils can load a program, use the mouse to log on and shut down the computer and word process basic vocabulary with degrees of

independence. The teaching, learning and pupils' attainment are excellent and the pupils make very good progress in the lesson. However, because of the lack of a progressive learning programme in the previous key stages, staff cannot demonstrate pupils' progress.

102. The school is resourced with up-to-date hardware in each classroom including colour printers and Internet access in the Post-16 unit and the resource room. The need to audit software compatibility with the new machines and the provision of suitable aids for learning have been identified but learning time has been lost by not completing this task promptly. Some new touch screens arrived during the inspection but a structured plan for their use is not yet in place. The sensory room is very well resourced and timetabled for use. This and the dark room provide very good resources for pupils' learning.
103. The subject co-ordinator has provided some in-service training on the use of the Internet but the level of staff expertise, whilst unsatisfactory overall, is variable and staff are gradually improving their confidence. The subject development plan has resulted in many issues being addressed but progress has been very slow in implementing the main points for action. The subject does not fully comply with the requirements of the National Curriculum and the school is missing opportunities to maximise pupils' skills.
104. Arrangements for the provision and teaching of ICT are a weakness within the school and insufficient progress has been made since the last inspection.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **French**

105. One lesson of French was seen and the quality of teaching was outstanding. As a result of previous teaching, pupils were clearly confident in repeating phrases. Planning by the teacher and the speech and language therapist was extremely thorough and they made excellent use of simple symbols and pictures to maximise pupils' understanding. All staff worked in role as waitresses, showing the menu and taking orders from the pupils. There was an atmosphere of great enjoyment and excitement about the lesson and behaviour was excellent as pupils tried so hard to give their opinions. As the lesson progressed, they became more adventurous and spontaneously put simple sentences together themselves. By the end of the lesson, when they had chosen their preferred drink and snack, they were able to say 'J'aime le chocolat chaud et le pain au chocolat'. With clues, higher attaining pupils could also use the negative form.
106. The introduction of French at Key Stage 3 to the curriculum represents an improvement since the last inspection. Pupils now have the opportunity to understand a little about French culture and to experience the sound of people they know speaking a foreign language. This is clearly a beneficial and uplifting experience, which is enjoyed by all. Pupils are making very good progress and the teaching is of the highest standard. The subject makes a good contribution to the pupils' cultural and social development.

## **MUSIC**

107. It was not possible to observe any music lessons during the inspection as they were all timetabled on one afternoon the day before inspection commenced.
108. The school has not maintained the provision for music found at the last inspection. With the exception of music therapy, arrangements are unsatisfactory. All music lessons are undertaken during the one afternoon when the specialist music teacher is employed by the school. Classes are paired with each pair receiving a weekly lesson for two terms each year. Given the nature and range of the pupils' learning difficulties and the complexity resulting from mixing classes, these arrangements provide too few opportunities for pupils to develop their skills and knowledge in the subject. No other classes feature music on their timetables at other times of the week although some teachers do provide informal opportunities for pupils to sing songs, for example during the early morning and afternoons.
109. The part-time teacher is also the co-ordinator for music but has no planned time to shape, guide, direct or evaluate the subject, although he has started to develop a scheme of work.
110. Arrangements for music therapy, however, are very good. The therapist provides very high quality opportunities for pupils to enhance their communication and express their feelings through the use of the excellent resources in the pleasant therapy room. The criteria for pupils to receive music therapy are very clear and agreed between therapist, teacher and headteacher. The records kept by the music therapist are extremely detailed providing a clear picture for parents and staff of the pupils' experiences and increasing confidence.
111. It is not the purpose of music therapy to extend pupils' musical skills in terms of technique and understanding. It is even more significant then that one of the pupils observed in a therapy session, demonstrated a significant strength in playing the keyboard by twice ending a composition by playing a dominant/tonic sequence in the bass. He also demonstrated that he could maintain a steady rhythm and control the pace and characteristics of his playing. Due to the very limited opportunities for music teaching, such pupils' skills are not being met.
112. The school has provided good opportunities for pupils to take part in Christmas pantomimes and other musical events from time to time, and these are very much appreciated by parents. However, music does not form a significant part in the life of the school and many opportunities are lost to develop pupils' musical skills and to extend their appreciation and enjoyment of music in its various forms. The headteacher and governing body are aware of this weakness and have included it in their current action plan for attention.

## **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

113. Pupils' standards of achievement in physical education are good in relation to their abilities and needs. They make good progress through the key stages in a range of activities including gymnastics, games and swimming and adventurous outdoor activities. This good level of achievement is the result of pupils' very positive attitudes, their evident enjoyment of all physical activity and good teaching.
114. By the time pupils are eleven at the end of Key Stage 2, higher attaining pupils can work with a ball. They can balance it on one hand and move it onto the other, roll it along the

ground independently to one another and kick it hard. One pupil during this exercise, kicked the ball so hard his shoe came off. Lower attaining pupils can roll a ball to a friend with adult help and catch it with adult support. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties can float on their back and tummy in the hydrotherapy pool and can blow bubbles in the water.

115. By the age of 14 at the end of Key Stage 3, most pupils have made considerable progress in their swimming. They understand the rules of water safety. Higher attaining pupils can swim a length of a swimming pool independently on their fronts and backs. They can retrieve weighted hoops from the bottom of a one-metre deep pool. Lower attaining pupils can kick their legs holding a float in their hands, jump into deep water and exit from the water using steps. Photographic evidence shows pupils developing good skills in adventurous outdoor activities. They can ride a horse maintaining a good position in the saddle and control the horse using reins, and they can abseil down a 20-metre wall.
116. By the age of 16 at the end of Key Stage 4, many pupils have sophisticated gymnastics skills. They know how to warm-up for an activity. They can walk backwards along a bench, perform a backwards and forwards somersault and know how to present a dismount from a piece of apparatus. During adventurous outdoor activities, pupils can work as part of a team to steer a boat and take responsibility for a group of friends. At Key Stage 4, pupils have very good individual physical education targets. Pupils throughout the senior years look forward to, and compete keenly, in the Borough swimming gala.
117. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in physical education are always very good. They are delighted and excited with the new skills they learn, are very enthusiastic about their lessons and work with gusto in them. They enjoy physical challenge and they are quick to congratulate each other on each other's successes. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties become extremely excited when using the school hydrotherapy pool. For example, in the pool, one pupil was heard to verbalise for the first time. The quality of teaching in physical education across all key stages is always at least good and often very good or excellent. The very good attitudes and behaviour are a result of the good relationships that pupils enjoy with their teachers. Teachers have very good knowledge of individuals' needs and inspire high levels of confidence. Classroom assistants have a good understanding of lesson aims and are clear about their roles. Assessment is not yet systematically undertaken for all pupils except at Key Stage 4 where it is good. However, there are some very pleasing photographs of physical education work in pupils' individual records of achievement.
118. There is no long-term planning to ensure systematic coverage of the subject across all key stages. The role of subject co-ordinator is not yet fully established but the school has well advanced plans to identify the detail of what is learnt and being taught throughout the school.
119. Resources for teaching the subject across all key stages are adequate. There are some very useful pieces of outside play equipment including climbing frames, slides, bikes and trikes. This equipment extends the opportunities for pupils to develop their physical skills and is a particularly good feature of playtimes. The school uses facilities in the local community well, such as swimming pools and gyms, to extend physical education opportunities. Whilst the school is generous in its proviso of the hydrotherapy pool for other community users, its use is not fully exploited as a resource for learning within the school, for example, for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties

or those with specific medical difficulties where more time in the water would be beneficial.

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

120. The school has responded positively to the findings of the last inspection when the scheme of work had not been completed. Provision for religious education is now good and the subject embodies the aims and values of the school particularly well.
121. Pupils and Post-16 students make good progress in religious education. They behave sensibly, respond well to questions and take a pride in their work. They treat the moral implication that lies behind parables such as the 'Good Samaritan' and ask the pupils what would they do in similar circumstances. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of such issues as 'friendship' and 'caring for others' in various ways through their attitude towards their peers during playtime and the dinnertime. In this way, religious education makes a significant contribution to the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
122. The quality of teaching is very good and, because it interests and motivates pupils, they behave well and show a good response in lessons. For example, at Key Stage 2, pupils celebrated the Jewish New Year using suitable artefacts and practical demonstrations that enabled them to understand the existence of other religions besides their own. At Key Stage 3, pupils listened to the 'Story of the Good Stranger' who had helped a person who had been robbed. The story was told in carefully selected language that pupils of all abilities were able to understand. The teacher made a clear relationship between the Bible story and the pupils' own lives, thus promoting their deeper understanding. For example, how they might act if they saw someone fall over in a shop. At Key Stage 4, the parable of the 'Good Samaritan' was taught using pictures and followed by the pupils acting the parts to demonstrate the three main concepts of the parable: stealing, ignoring and helping. The drama session fostered a reflective approach to enable the pupils to understand themselves, others and the world around them. The teaching in all three stages encouraged positive attitudes towards religious beliefs and practices of others.
123. The co-ordination of religious education is very effective. There is a comprehensive scheme of work that actively promotes the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. It is endorsed by a clear policy that reflects the locally agreed syllabus that has recently been revised to follow the SACRE syllabus. Pupils' and students' knowledge and understanding are reinforced by cross-curricular links in other subjects of the curriculum such as drama, art and personal and social education. Assessment is not yet fully in place. The subject is also sufficiently flexible to take account of topical events as they occur and to reflect the faith of individual pupils if necessary. Mention was made of one pupil in the class who will be returning to India for a holiday to celebrate the Hindu festival of Diwali. There is a good range of artefacts available, visits are planned to local places of worship and this reinforces their religious knowledge and understanding. Religious education makes a significant contribution to collective worship and to pupils' spiritual understanding.

## PROVISION FOR POST-16 STUDENTS

124. Provision for students who are Post-16 is very good and offers very effective opportunities for students to prepare for their lives after school.
125. Students' achievements are very good. Their development of core skills, particularly those of communication and working with others, is good and they learn to apply them very effectively in a wide range of activities, age-appropriate situations and vocational courses, all of which allow them increasing responsibility and independence. As a team, they apply their number skills when running a mini enterprise; they wash cars and write the daily dinner menu using word processing skills appropriately. Students become familiar with the demand of local further education colleges, and those who are more able, successfully cope with the expectations of local employers. They express themselves gracefully and without any trace of self-consciousness when practising body movements in music and movement, and work hard to improve their physical skills when using community facilities such as the swimming pool or the leisure centre. They show increasingly mature behaviour, both in school and whilst out in the community, and also take responsibility for a number of routine tasks around the school, such as distributing the dinner menu and looking after the school gardens where they have won prizes for two years in succession. They perform these tasks successfully with good grace and often without supervision. Students are keen, willing and attentive, they are also extremely co-operative and relaxed with each other. They thoroughly understand how to express their views in a socially acceptable manner both within school and in the wider community.
126. The teaching in the department is at least good. In half the lessons observed it was very good because students are treated as young adults and with dignity and they respond to this approach and try hard to do their best. The quality of teaching is the strength of the department. The teacher understands both the individual needs of the students and the content and structure of the vocational educational course extremely well. As a result, lessons are very well planned and organised and everyone knows what is expected of them. The quality of relationships is good and all the staff, together with external professionals such as further education college instructors, work very effectively as a team. They are supportive of students, encouraging but quietly insistent when dealing with behavioural issues, and extremely skilful in establishing an approach that reflects the students' development as young adults. There is high expectation from the staff for the students to be responsible and independent, with the result that they rise to the occasion. In the most successful lessons, a variety of strategies, such as clear, open questioning and signing, are used to very good effect and all staff are skilful at taking students' contributions on board and then actively using them to extend and develop the students' understanding. A particularly good example of this was the shopping trip, which involved the development of a number of skills. There was meticulous preparation, writing a shopping list, estimating the cost of the items, checking the amount of total money needed and using public transport. The natural, honest way in which the students prepared for this trip clearly showed that this sort of approach is embedded within the department and that the students' personal and social development is exceptionally good as a result. Planning needs to be clearly related to the development of vocational educational core skills with opportunities for students to plan and assess their own work.
127. The school is using the ASDAN accredited vocational educational courses and the students are following the four modules: 'Towards Independence', 'Using Transport', 'Meal Preparation' and 'Horticulture'. In developing these courses, the school has responded positively to the needs of the students to develop a wide range of activities in



the department's curriculum. These build very effectively on students' experience from lower down the school and enable the students to apply their understanding in new and different contexts such as the work experience programmes and further education link courses. The pupils in the transition class at Key Stage 4 are preparing with appropriate plans for entry into further education, for example attending activities at the Thames Young Mariners where they have the opportunity to acquire many new skills. These skills include planning, observing and developing a team spirit so that they will, as students, be even better placed to exploit the opportunities provided for them in further education. These links and other use of community facilities such as the library, the shops and local places of interest represent good preparation for the next stages of their lives.

128. The resources in further education are good. Accommodation includes a bungalow with facilities for cooking, washing and sleeping providing a valuable experience of being away from home overnight, some students for the first time. Students and staff stay in the bungalow on an occasional Friday night to develop the students' own independence. The department has two computers that are used well and students are making increasingly effective use of the Internet to research topics of interest.