

INSPECTION REPORT

BATCHWOOD SCHOOL

St Albans, Hertfordshire

LEA area: Hertfordshire

Unique reference number: 117674

Headteacher: Mr M E Hopkins

Reporting inspector: Mrs M Last
17171

Dates of inspection: 18th – 22nd September, 2000

Inspection number: 223612

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special (emotional & behavioural difficulties)
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	11 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Townsend Drive St Albans Hertfordshire
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr J Bailey
Date of previous inspection:	February, 1998

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Mr M Whitehead 21061	Team inspector	Mathematics Design and technology	Leadership and management
Mr T Hill 18261	Team inspector	Special educational needs Science Geography History	Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development
Ms M Cureton 17530	Team inspector	English Religious education	Quality and range of opportunities for learning
Mr G Watson 19996	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Art Physical education	The school's results and achievements

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Batchwood School caters for up to fifty-three boys and girls from 11 to 16 years of age with emotional and behavioural difficulties. At the time of inspection forty-six boys and girls were on roll. This is the only school in Hertfordshire with provision for girls with emotional and behavioural difficulties; there are several others for boys. With such a wide catchment area, particularly for girls, social conditions and the levels of challenging behaviour vary. A high number of pupils come from disadvantaged home backgrounds. Twenty are 'looked after children' and sixteen are eligible for free school meals. Whilst pupils come from a range of ethnic backgrounds none has English as an additional language. All pupils have statements of special educational need identifying their emotional and behavioural needs as their primary difficulty. However, many also have additional learning difficulties which affect their attainment and progress, such as literacy problems or specific learning difficulties such as dyslexia. Because of their previous experience of education, many pupils have a resistance to education and a difficulty working at a level appropriate to their ability. Pupils' attainment on entry is below average and the inspection therefore reports on how well the pupils achieve in line with their prior achievements and their work towards targets on their individual education plans. Pupils are taught in mixed, age-related classes following all subjects of the National Curriculum. All travel to school by taxi.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school is effective in its work and provides a good standard of education for its pupils in interesting lessons. The teachers are supportive of the pupils and take a genuine interest in their well-being and learning. They are generous in the time they devote to them. The headteacher and senior managers provide good leadership and role models; they ensure that the school runs as an orderly community. The school helps the majority of pupils improve their behaviour and therefore concentrate more effectively on their learning. On the few occasions levels of behaviour are extreme and difficult to handle, staff use good procedures for ensuring that disruption is minimised and that the work of the majority can continue. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Provides good quality teaching which enables pupils to increase their motivation and, by improved concentration, work well in lessons
- Displays a strong commitment to and understanding of the personal and academic needs of the pupils so that they achieve well in relation to targets on their individual education plans
- Acknowledges pupils' efforts and achievements through effective procedures for rewards and privileges which successfully motivate the pupils to try hard and overcome their difficulties
- The headteacher and senior management team provide strong leadership and, with the very effective work of the governing body, succeed in supporting pupils and raising standards
- Plans its financial affairs very well and ensures that all money is very effectively used to support pupils' learning both in school and in the local community

What could be improved

- The behaviour of the significant minority of pupils who do not always respond well in lessons
- The implementation of the school's policies and procedures to ensure the consistency and quality of behaviour management so that the best practice is shared throughout the school
- The provision for, and teaching of, information and communication technology throughout the school to equip pupils with better computer skills in order to support learning in all subjects
- Vocational education at Key Stage 4, in order to prepare pupils for the next stage of their lives
- The quality and range of information for parents to ensure they understand expectations of pupils' behaviour and the use of exclusions
- The permanent management of mathematics and religious education

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 February 1998 when it was found to have serious weaknesses. When monitored by HMCI in 1999, these weaknesses were judged to have been well addressed. The school has made significant improvements since the last inspection especially in regard to meeting the key issues identified for action. The school has improved teaching of National Curriculum subjects by appointing a specialist music teacher and providing opportunities for pupils to prepare for GCSE or the Certificate of Achievement by Year 11. It has also increased the range of activities included in physical education by the use of community facilities such as the local swimming pool and outdoor pursuits centre. The school has been unable to appoint a qualified teacher for religious education but in the meantime has made satisfactory interim arrangements by training a member of the support staff to undertake the role. Mathematics is currently very well taught, but by a temporary teacher, and the school continues to seek a permanent replacement. Arrangements for teaching information and communication technology remain a weakness. The school now meets all its statutory requirements.

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 5	by age 11	by age 16	Key	
Speaking and listening	n/a	n/a	C	very good	A
Reading	n/a	n/a	C	good	B
Writing	n/a	n/a	C	satisfactory	C
Mathematics	n/a	n/a	A	unsatisfactory	D
Personal, social and health education	n/a	n/a	C	poor	E
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	n/a	n/a	B		

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

Pupils make satisfactory progress in their work overall and good progress towards the individual academic and behavioural targets set for them. They make very good gains in learning in mathematics and achieve well in art, music, design and technology and physical education. Learning in all other subjects is satisfactory except in information and communication technology where a lack of opportunity and skilled teaching limits pupils' progress and understanding. Higher attaining pupils achieve well in GCSE and last year one pupil achieved a Grade A in art with two others gaining C grades. One pupil achieved grade C in French whilst several others gained distinctions in units of the Certificate of Achievement. The school has successfully reached the targets it set itself regarding pupil achievements.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Satisfactory. Pupils come to school prepared to work and learn. For a significant minority the attitudes they have formed during their previous school experience are hardened and difficult to break. However, most pupils improve their attitudes to learning whilst in the school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour overall is unsatisfactory but considering the SEN of the pupils, the majority settle and make good progress, behaving well in lessons. Some younger pupils are still settling into the school and have not yet learned its rules and procedures. Pupils in Year 11 show variable responses to work. However, with good support and encouragement, the majority of pupils are biddable and concentrate on their work in lessons.
Personal development and relationships	Relationships between staff and pupils are good especially where teachers know the pupils well and understand their needs and problems. Relationships between pupils are less positive with some instances of disagreement and argument.
Attendance	Satisfactory. Levels of unauthorised absence have been significantly reduced since the last inspection as a result of improved monitoring.

Pupils' attitudes and responses to learning are varied, but while a minority are sometimes disruptive they are, nevertheless, generally able to concentrate well in lessons and to make progress. Where relationships are good pupils display positive attitude to work, staff and each other. However, there are some occasions when misunderstandings or quarrels between pupils result in a significant amount of unacceptable behaviour. This is skilfully handled by most staff.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5	aged 11-14	aged 14-16	aged over 16
Lessons seen overall	n/a	Good	Good	n/a

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 strength of the school. During the inspection there was no unsatisfactory teaching. Almost seventy per cent of lessons were good or very good and five lessons were outstanding – these were in mathematics (three), French and art. Teaching in English and

science is good. In personal, social and health education it is satisfactory. In mathematics teaching is outstanding. As a result of the high quality teaching pupils make at least satisfactory and often good progress. Teachers know and understand their pupils well and in the best lessons are extremely skilled in managing the pupils' volatile behaviour, keeping them on task and working. Teachers pay good attention to pupils' literacy and numeracy skills and help them to use and improve them in lessons. The pupils' needs are carefully identified in their individual education plans and teachers ensure that they address and assess the pupils' learning targets regularly.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum is satisfactory overall. It is good at Key Stage 3 but no more than satisfactory at Key Stage 4 because there are too few opportunities for vocational education. Arrangements in information and communication technology are unsatisfactory.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Provision is satisfactory overall with good opportunities for pupils' social and moral development. This is strongly based upon the good relationships staff have with pupils and their commitment to helping and guiding them whenever possible.
How well the school cares for its pupils	A good system of tutorial work ensures that staff know their pupils well. The behaviour management system is well established and the rewards, sanctions and privileges are valued by the pupils. All staff give freely of their time to support and care for the pupils. The school makes good provision for child protection and health and safety procedures.
Partnership with parents	The school works hard to maintain strong links with parents and contacts them regularly by phone and letter in order to ensure that they are well informed about their children's progress. Despite these efforts, not all parents understand the use of some strategies, such as the use of exclusions.

The curriculum is good at Key Stage 3 but no more than satisfactory at Key Stage 4 as there are too few opportunities for pupils to take part in vocational activities in order to prepare them for their lives after school. The particular special needs of the pupils are well met in lessons and through help from other external staff from the local authority. The headteacher and staff make every effort to ensure that the school is an orderly community where pupils learn in security and with very effective support and guidance. Parents are contacted regularly, especially when difficulties occur; they receive a good range of information and the link teacher's role is effective in maintaining these arrangements. Nevertheless, some parents are unclear about the underlying reasons for some decisions.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher and senior management team provide strong leadership to the school and gives clear guidance to the staff. The headteacher is active in monitoring pupils' behaviour and their work. He is respected by them.

How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governing body is very effective in fulfilling its responsibilities. Governors visit the school regularly, they monitor the work of the school, observe teaching and ensure financial matters are administered very efficiently.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school places great importance on evaluating its performance and is successful in raising the quality of education and the standards achieved by pupils.
The strategic use of resources	Resources are used effectively to support the pupils' learning, to improve the quality of teaching and to make lessons interesting. Staff plan well for the use of such resources as videos, cameras and tape recorders but are less effective in their use of computers to support learning.

There is a good number of staff and learning support assistants to meet the needs of the pupils. However, the school continues to experience difficulty in appointing permanent staff to some key roles such as mathematics, information and communication technology (ICT) and religious education. Despite this problem, arrangements for teaching are satisfactory, with the exception of ICT where too few staff are sufficiently skilled to support pupils' learning. The school makes good use of the accommodation available and enhances its provision by the use of other community resources. Resources are good and used well to help pupils learn. Money is well spent and the school continually seeks best value for money.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Most pupils' improved behaviour • The speedy communication when problems occur • The friendliness and availability of the headteacher 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More information on reasons for exclusion • Delivery of weekly reports by Saturdays rather than Tuesdays • More consistent homework of a standard which challenges the pupils' thinking • Increased emphasis on vocational work for Year 11 pupils

Parents are supportive of the school's work and generally pleased with the improvement in their children's behaviour. Some have concerns over how their children will cope with life after school and inspectors agree that the curriculum does not provide sufficient opportunities for vocational study at Key Stage 4. Whilst they are firm in their opinion that the school has improved in its communication with them since the last inspection, parents do not always understand the reasons for some sanctions, such as when exclusions are imposed for what appear to be single incidents. Parental concerns over homework are supported by inspection findings; although many teachers set homework, the school has yet to agree clear and consistent strategies regarding frequency and content. The school has acknowledged the issues raised by parents and has imminent plans to address them.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Pupils' standards of attainment are below national expectations. All the pupils have statements of special educational need which reflect their emotional and behavioural difficulties and their additional general learning difficulties. Comparison with the standards of pupils in other schools is, therefore, inappropriate and judgements regarding pupils' achievements reflect what pupils know, understand and can do in relation to their previous achievements and targets identified on their individual education plans.
2. Pupils' levels of achievement throughout the school are satisfactory and often good, notably at Key Stage 4 in relation to their GCSE results. This represents a steady improvement when compared with the findings of the last inspection, and is recognised by the majority of parents. It is directly related to improvements within teaching, and recent developments within the curriculum such as providing greater opportunities for pupils to gain GCSE or the Certificate of Achievement at Key Stage 4.
3. At Key Stage 3, pupils achieve very well in mathematics and make good gains in art, design and technology, music and physical education. They make satisfactory gains in learning elsewhere, except in information and communication technology, where their levels of achievement are unsatisfactory. At Key Stage 4, pupils achieve very well in mathematics and art and make good gains in learning in design and technology, music and physical education. They make satisfactory progress in English, French and personal, social and health education, but have poor levels of achievement in information and communication technology mainly because the school does not provide sufficient learning opportunities. It is too soon to judge the gains in learning made in religious education because the school has only just begun to teach the subject.
4. In the majority of subjects, and notably in art, pupils develop their ideas well and build effectively upon what they have already learned as they grow up and progress through the school. Consequently, several of those leaving school achieve examination results within a limited range of subjects, which is commendable in the light of those pupils' individual learning difficulties, sometimes exceptionally so. In information and communication technology, however, pupils' gains in learning are increasingly compromised by the limited range of opportunities to develop and practise their skills by using the computers and other technology in all subjects of the curriculum.
5. Pupils' progress towards achieving targets set in their individual education plans is good and most make satisfactory progress in literacy and numeracy although the experience and memory of previous educational experience limits the achievements of some. The school is successful in ensuring that there are no significant variations in the levels of achievement of boys and girls, or in the gains in learning made by pupils of different ethnic or social backgrounds. The school has begun to set realistic targets in such areas as pupils' achievements and attendance, and is becoming more adept in refining those targets in the light of experience.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

6. The attitudes, values and personal development of the majority of pupils have improved since the last inspection and are satisfactory. However, the behaviour of a significant minority of pupils remains unsatisfactory. The majority of pupils arrive at school with satisfactory attitudes and intend to work. They settle down when the classes are managed in a disciplined, but caring way. This is a very positive achievement, given the disturbance and emotional damage they have suffered through previous school years. Year 7 pupils and those who are newly arrived in other years, present particular difficulties to teachers, as they have only just changed from schools at which they have failed or where they have experienced great difficulty in learning. In some cases they have been away from mainstream schooling for a long period of time. In lessons where experienced teachers are able to build positive relationships, through clear, firm and appropriately high expectations of pupils, they respond to lessons well. Pupils concentrate on their work and make good and sometimes very good progress. In lessons where newly arrived teachers have not had the chance to build positive relationships with pupils they have only just got to know, some pupils challenge the teacher and act up in class by showing off or disrupting each other's work. It was noticeable during the inspection that many classes were made more difficult to manage by the presence of visitors, who were seen by some pupils as a new audience to play up to.
7. The behaviour in lessons varies from very good to poor, but is predominantly good. For example, on occasions in physical education lessons, it is excellent. The revised behaviour policy is having a positive impact on the strategies that teachers deploy to manage difficult and challenging behaviour. In lessons of English the potentially disruptive behaviour is managed effectively and on a visit to a recording studio, that was part of a music topic, the pupils' behaviour was very good. In some lessons of science the pupils behave well and are keen to learn from the very good programme of experiments planned for them. The behaviour of pupils in lessons of mathematics is often very good; it is best where the teacher sets clear boundaries for all pupils and deploys excellent strategies for managing their behaviour. In some lessons of design and technology the excellent relationships between teacher and pupils ensure good behaviour that enables assignments to be completed successfully. The majority of art lessons are undisturbed and both girls and boys apply themselves to their work, enjoy the practical activity and make good progress. In some lessons of science, information and communication technology, personal, social and religious education and French, the behaviour of some pupils is unsatisfactory and occasionally poor. Their behaviour is characterised by unacceptable language, a refusal to work and generally disruptive behaviour. In many of these lessons, the class teacher and learning support assistant work hard to apply the behaviour management policy guidelines, by ignoring bad behaviour and rewarding good behaviour with positive attention. On these occasions the pupils do not understand the effect of their behaviour on both their own chances of success and those of others. Pupils show that they can be caring and supportive of each other, offering help in lessons and listening to their friends' problems. However, they do not respect other people's feeling on the occasions when they are rude.
8. The personal development of pupils is satisfactory and encouraged in lessons. The practice of daily monitoring of behaviour and progress is aimed at giving pupils responsibility for their personal progress through the school. This generally works well. Where pupils' behaviour becomes truly unacceptable, the school uses a high number of short-term exclusions as regular sanctions. For example, last term 134 half-day exclusions were used as sanctions. The effect of, and response to, this system is varied. For pupils who enjoy school and want to do well it acts as a deterrent to unacceptable behaviour. However, it can work against pupils' best interests when they may wish to demonstrate their disinterest in school and disregard for others. In these cases pupils sometimes regard short-term exclusions as a

holiday. Information gathered through the monitoring systems is not effectively analysed, to enable patterns of progress or failure to emerge in a way that can inform planning for individual or group progress in personal development. There is no clear pattern of disruptive behaviour between boys and girls. What is clear is that the mixing of very emotionally damaged girls with disruptive and difficult boys is very challenging for all staff. This is most noticeable where the lessons lack interest and challenge, or where potential disruption is not sensitively and firmly managed.

9. Attendance at 76.7 per cent appears to be unsatisfactory, and has improved since the last inspection but is still below the national average for similar special schools of 81 per cent. However, unauthorised absence has decreased from 14 per cent at the time of the last report to six per cent. There are a number of factors that contribute to the school's difficulties in raising the attendance rate. For example, of the 46 pupils on roll, three are long-term non-attenders. Their periods of absence range from six months to two years. The local education authority requires the school to maintain a place for these pupils on its roll. Additionally, two pupils are educated off-site. Therefore, whilst attendance appears to be unsatisfactory when all the long-term non-attending pupils which have to be counted, are taken into account, the rate rises to a satisfactory level.
10. Levels of attendance are further affected by the admission of a significant number of pupils in Year 10. In the last two years, eleven pupils, representing 24 per cent of total admissions, started at Batchwood School in Year 10. Many of these were pupils who had not attended school for periods ranging from several months to over a year. They find their introduction to formal school life difficult and they have problems with taking responsibility for their own behaviour. This has an unsettling influence on the existing pupils and their levels of attendance.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

11. The high standard of teaching is a strength of the school. A significant proportion of pupils exhibit very challenging and extreme behaviours during lessons. Through a thorough understanding of the pupils' difficulties and problems, and skilled management of their behaviour, teachers enable pupils to learn and to make at least satisfactory progress at both key stages.
12. During the inspection there were no unsatisfactory lessons and teachers successfully manage lessons where some pupils seek to disrupt the learning of others. Teaching is good in over four out of every ten lessons. Additionally, in almost three out of every ten lessons teaching is very good. Of the fifty-four lessons observed, five were outstanding. There is no significant difference in the standards of teaching between different age groups. This high quality teaching represents a significant improvement since the last inspection when teaching was less than satisfactory in six per cent of the lessons observed and good or better in 60 per cent.
13. Teaching is consistently very good or excellent in mathematics. It is also very good in art and good in English, science, design and technology, physical education and music. It is satisfactory in all other subjects and teachers have good levels of knowledge in the subjects they teach. However, not all teachers are sufficiently well-equipped in the use of computers to support pupils' work in all subjects of the curriculum. For example, non-specialist teachers and learning support assistants have difficulty in advising pupils when problems occur with their work and, on some occasions, the pupils do not use the equipment to full advantage. There is no significant difference in the quality of teaching between key stages or of boys and girls.

14. In the very best lessons teachers prepare a wide range of activities which they change frequently in order to maintain pupils' motivation and attention. Although there may be an element of distracting behaviour from some pupils, teachers show by example that they can continue to concentrate on their teaching and they expect pupils, similarly, to concentrate on their work. This effective strategy results in the majority of pupils continuing to complete their work successfully and to make progress despite the distractions of others. For example in a French lesson one pupil arrived in a very emotional state and was uncooperative at the start of the lesson. The teacher selectively ignored her comments and, after a few minutes, the same pupil had regained her composure and controlled her anger sufficiently to demonstrate her understanding and use of French with a good accent. Because the teacher understood the pupil well, leaving time for her to co-operate bore dividends, disruption was minimised and all pupils made progress.
15. Similarly, in a mathematics lesson, the pupils entered the room in a very excitable state but the teacher immediately gained their interest through introducing a task on probability, involving a bag of brightly coloured sweets. The teacher set clear expectations of work and behaviour and insisted upon co-operation throughout the lesson, refusing to carry on without it. As a result, the pupils' behaviour and response was very good and they soon grasped the principles of probability as well as enjoying the lesson – and the sweets.
16. In most lessons, where teachers plan activities that stimulate the pupils' interest and motivation, the gains in learning are good. Pupils try hard to do well and increase their knowledge and skills and the way lessons are planned enables pupils to keep working, even when the behaviour of others threatens to disrupt the lesson. For example, in a very good art lesson, the pupils made very good progress towards their individual projects for GCSE. The teacher took on a supportive and background role, prompting, suggesting and referring pupils back to their rough sketch work. This very effective technique enabled the pupils to continue with their high quality work in an enjoyable, relaxed and productive learning environment. Teachers try to create opportunities to promote and illustrate pupils' independence and growing maturity. They plan choices into lessons and involve students in evaluating the standards and purpose of their work. They frequently take pupils on visits away from the school and trust them to behave well; during the inspection behaviour on such visits was good and, on the visit to the music studio, was very good. Pupils demonstrated their confidence and knowledge by asking sensible questions of the studio technician.
17. Where teaching is no more than satisfactory, teachers are frequently still coming to terms with the demands of the pupils' behaviour and needs. On some occasions, despite the teachers' good knowledge of their subjects, their teaching is interrupted by pupils trying to distract them. In most cases they are able to teach through such difficulties and are relentless in maintaining the flow of the lesson. Teachers make effective use of the 'on-call' system to take immediate action when pupils' inappropriate response or behaviour is sufficient to halt the lesson and this efficient system is instrumental in maintaining the high levels of satisfactory teaching. It provides a space for the remainder of the class to settle and very often the offending pupil rejoins the lesson, the teacher accepts them back positively and both teaching and learning carry on successfully. In a minority of lessons, teachers do not use this system promptly enough and behaviour very occasionally deteriorates to an unacceptable level before help is summoned.
18. As a result of systematic teaching in well planned lessons, pupils make at least satisfactory gains in learning in all subjects. Learning support assistants also enjoy good relationships with the pupils and provide both effective learning support and often a listening ear to individual pupils. In some cases, due to the pupils' emotional

difficulties, their concentration can be poor and the amount of work they produce is small. Because teachers and learning support assistants are aware of these difficulties, they invariably provide a range of alternative activities to tempt pupils to do more. Pupils then frequently renew their interest and complete additional work, as in a music lesson where the teacher successfully redirected the pupils' concentration producing some additional music for a particular pupil to hear and appraise.

19. All teachers are aware of the need to improve the pupils' literacy skills and encourage them to tackle difficult words in reading and writing. For example, when a pupil cannot spell a word, teachers will encourage them to think about its structure and attempt to spell it themselves before showing them how. Teachers promote literacy in all lessons by the use of well-designed worksheets or written examples on the board. The specialist teacher provides good guidance to pupils and staff. However, teachers do not use computers consistently in lessons as a tool to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills.
20. Staff use assessment appropriately to identify the gains that pupils make in lessons and against targets in their individual education plans. Day-to-day assessment is satisfactory and enhanced by the regular assessment of behaviour and effort at the end of each lesson which is greatly valued by the pupils and used to inform planning and the implementation of the weekly rewards. The recently introduced 'progress check' document provides an increasingly clear record of pupils' progress and achievements. As pupils develop in maturity they contribute towards setting their own targets for learning and behaviour and all are involved in assessing how well they have met their aims. Teachers use this information well in lessons to focus pupils upon their work.
21. Teachers set homework regularly but there is no consistent expectation that pupils will always complete it. Parents also report that the homework is inconsistent and feel that it is sometimes too easy. Teachers have yet to define clear expectations for the quantity and level of homework.
22. The major strengths of the school are demonstrated in the staff's level of understanding of the pupils' difficulties. The commitment shown by the teachers and learning support assistants to raising standards is having a positive impact. Staff are genuinely concerned to ensure that pupils will learn, co-operate and work hard to do well.

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

23. The school provides the pupils with a broad and worthwhile range of curricular opportunities, which meet their interests, attitudes and special needs.
24. At Key Stage 3, provision is good. In addition to the range of National Curriculum subjects, pupils' particular special needs are met in circle time, where they are able to discuss daily events and problems. The curriculum at this key stage is well integrated. Careers education and work on some externally validated qualifications start as early as Year 9.
25. At Key Stage 4, pupils make limited choices from a range of subjects, thus giving them some control over what they study. A strength of the curriculum at this key stage is the opportunity for all pupils to take five subjects in GCSE. There is a valuable emphasis on other externally validated courses such as the Certificate of Educational Achievement. The lack of vocational courses, where students may learn

specific work-related skills and prepare for operating successfully in a working environment, is a weakness.

26. Curriculum provision, as set out in pupils' statements, is well met and good attention paid to pupils' special educational needs during lessons. No pupil is currently disapplied from the National Curriculum. The school, however, fails to meet statutory requirements with regard to information and communication technology because insufficient is taught and pupils are not taught how to use the computers as a tool in all subjects of the curriculum. Religious education has very recently been re-introduced after a lapse of twelve months and now meets all requirements.
27. The school has good strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy. Specialist skills of staff are efficiently used, but not all lessons are taught by specialist teachers. The school currently has no on-site provision for therapies or special programmes, but pupils receive a high level of individual counselling in such areas as anger management, relationships and dealing with stress. Pupils are referred to specialists whenever it becomes necessary. A doctor visits the school. A nurse visits frequently to chat informally with pupils and to give advice. The school day is carefully organised with more lessons in the morning whilst pupils' levels of concentration are high. All these arrangements have a positive effect upon pupils' achievements by ensuring their particular needs are met.
28. The curriculum is well monitored, and gives all pupils equal access to subjects and opportunities to succeed in them. Particular attention is paid to equality of opportunity and the attainment of pupils from ethnic minorities is also carefully monitored thus ensuring that all have appropriate opportunities for learning. The curriculum is enriched by break and lunchtime clubs that range through computing, chess and art to choir practices and play rehearsals. There are good opportunities at these times for pupils to take part in a wide range of supervised team games and athletics. There is a small but satisfactory programme of extra-curricular activities such as a school football team and privilege trips to places of interest. Pupils have recently attended a professional brass concert and a musical show. They have also undertaken a residential trip at a local activities centre.
29. The school provides an effective programme of personal and social education. Health education and issues to do with sex and the misuse of drugs are sensitively addressed. There is a satisfactory programme to promote good citizenship.
30. The curriculum prepares pupils for life after school by an effective programme of careers' education, in which the local careers service is fully involved. All pupils develop action plans, which are carefully monitored. There are some valuable links with the local community which allow work experience to be undertaken by almost all pupils. Pupils have some opportunities to sample Post-16 courses at a local college of further education. Pupils do not attend the college as part of their curricular provision and the amount of time devoted to developing pupils' vocational skills and knowledge is small and this is a weakness.
31. The provision for the development of pupils' spiritual development is now satisfactory. It is a strong principle of the school that pupils are provided with knowledge and insights into values and beliefs to help their social behaviour and to enable them to develop spiritual awareness and self-knowledge. In this they are successful because of the consistently high level of acceptance staff give to pupils even when they behave badly. Staff value pupils' contributions to lessons, however fleeting. They are entirely committed to the pupils in their care. Relationships are good, and through them pupils are able to appreciate a spiritual dimension. This acceptance and commitment also helps pupils to understand others and come to a

degree of self-knowledge. Inspectors saw planned instances of wonder and curiosity in art, music and design and technology, which extended pupils' imagination. The absence of all aspects of religion in the weekly assemblies is, however, a missed opportunity for promoting spiritual awareness. The newly introduced religious education lessons, have, so far, made little impact, but there is potential for them to make a significant contribution.

32. Provision for pupils' moral development is good. Training is consistent, and in some cases effective as pupils are made to see the consequences of their own behaviour. Teachers adopt a clear moral stance and are good role models for their pupils. In drama and personal, social and religious education there are good opportunities for the pupils to discuss moral dilemmas. Weekly assemblies continue to address moral themes.
33. The school promotes good opportunities for pupils' social development. Careers lessons and opportunities for work experience make a valuable contribution in this area. Lunchtime is a pleasant, civilised occasion. In a physical education lesson during the week of inspection pupils behaved in an exemplary fashion at a swimming pool where they were in competition with other schools. This underlines the positive contribution made by the physical education department to social training. Lessons in personal, social and religious education continue to place emphasis on developing self-esteem and a sense of worth. Teachers guide and shape behaviour whenever it is possible to do so, which, at many instances gives good results. The school has a well-understood policy of rewards and sanctions to encourage pupils to behave well.
34. There are some opportunities for pupils to take responsibility in the school. For example, pupils clear away dishes at lunchtime. Increasingly, pupils complete homework, thus taking responsibility for their own learning. Participation in the school council allows them to make some input into the running of the school.
35. The school effectively promotes the cultural development of the pupils in such subjects as English, where pupils read worthwhile texts. A theatre group has visited the school. In music lessons, pupils compose and listen to a range of music. In art, they see reproductions of great paintings and photographs of sculpture. Some opportunities to promote this aspect of pupils' development such as visits to museums and art galleries are, however, missed.
36. Pupils have an incomplete knowledge of their own culture due to gaps in their education. Knowledge of other cultures is poor, but written work on other religions has recently formed part of religious education lessons, and French makes a valuable contribution to pupils' knowledge of another culture at both key stages.
37. The school has successfully addressed almost all the issues raised in the last inspection. Music is now included at Key Stage 3. Physical education now covers all the required activities. Religious education has been re-introduced. The governors have now approved the sex education policy and the drugs awareness policy which are now being taught as part of the personal, social and religious education curriculum. The length of the school day has now been re-calculated and found to meet requirements. Time allocated to subjects is planned more carefully to provide a suitable balance between subjects. Policies and detailed schemes of work now exist in all subjects except information and communication technology. Co-ordinators have been appointed for music and religious education, but difficulties in staffing have led to the temporary absence of a co-ordinator for mathematics and no effective co-ordination of information and communication technology.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

38. The school provides good levels of care for its pupils and the staff are committed to ensuring that pupils thrive academically and socially. Although relationships between pupils are often volatile, those between staff and pupils are good. The headteacher and all staff work very effectively as a team, know the pupils well and are sensitive to the many issues that may affect behaviour and progress. Bullying, both physical and verbal, is actively discouraged. Teachers and support assistants meet after school to discuss the events of the day and to decide on any necessary action. Pupils can make their own feelings known at the weekly whole-school meeting in which all aspects of school life are discussed. The tutorial system ensures that all pupils are well-supported, including those new to the school, through a carefully-planned induction programme. Individual counselling is offered by the link teacher and, when medical duties do not take precedence, by the school nurse. Child protection arrangements are well organised, with staff training undertaken by the Education Welfare Service.
39. When practical help is needed, for instance if a pupil is unwell or needs first aid, it is given calmly and quickly and all incidents are appropriately recorded. There are efficient procedures in place to ensure that the school is a safe environment.
40. Pupils at Key Stage 4 receive valuable help and advice from the Careers Service to prepare them for the next stage of their lives. Where appropriate, work experience placements and college 'taster days' are arranged. Nevertheless, vocational education does not receive sufficient emphasis given the difficulties the pupils are likely to face in the world of work.
41. Provision for personal development, with an emphasis on self-discipline, is a fundamental focus of the work of the school and an integral part of each day's activities. Daily record sheets and weekly progress reports provide an accurate record of each pupil's progress towards agreed behavioural targets. However, there is not as yet whole-school monitoring of the effectiveness of the behaviour policy. The new behaviour policy is now well-established but good practice is not shared by all staff as there is some inconsistency in the management of certain groups of pupils. Overall, however, the management of behaviour is satisfactory and has improved since the last inspection.
42. Pupils understand and respect the fact that the number of merits earned has a direct effect on the privilege level they can reach. To encourage pupils' interest and commitment to improving their own attitude, high-level privilege groups are rewarded by trips out. In addition, pupils can trade merits earned for tangible rewards of their choice such as games, watches and items of stationery.
43. Although most pupils respond positively to these incentives, the unacceptable behaviour of a minority has resulted in a significant number of fixed-term exclusions. Last year there were 134 half-day exclusions, increased from 98 in the previous year. Opinion among parents at the pre-inspection meeting was divided on whether the use of exclusions is appropriate. For pupils who value coming to school, exclusions serve as a good deterrent, but, for some, they are regarded as a welcome opportunity to have a day away from school.
44. The monitoring of attendance has greatly improved since the last inspection and is now very good. The teacher responsible has very efficient systems in place and there is also regular support from the Education Welfare Service. The school has had great success in reducing the level of unauthorised absence, greatly exceeding government targets for similar schools.

45. The importance of regular attendance is very actively promoted and various strategies have proved effective in improving attendance. The fact that the rate remains below the national average is due to a number of factors beyond the school's control. Pupils join the school at different ages, some as late as 14 or 15. The information on these pupils is often patchy and outdated, making it difficult to establish a starting point for teaching and learning that challenges pupils appropriately and builds on their existing skills. Individual education plans are used well to monitor progress against targets and these are discussed between tutors and parents or carers and used effectively to identify new targets for learning. Weekly record sheets show how individual pupils have worked over the week and this information, which is shared with parents, although often late arriving, contributes towards the annual review of pupils' statements.
46. The school's procedures for monitoring academic attainment and assessing the attainment and progress of pupils are satisfactory. However, whilst examination results and national curriculum assessments are recorded efficiently, the resulting information is not yet analysed effectively to gain an overview of attainment and progress for pupils of different background, age or gender. Literacy skills are a focus of assessment and provide good information that shows the positive impact that the school is having on the development of pupils' skills. Overall, teachers make satisfactory use of assessment information in planning the development of the subject curriculum despite some inconsistencies between teachers. Individual teachers use it to adapt the content of what they teach for particular pupils, but there is no whole school planning for the use of such information.
47. Whenever possible, the school draws upon pupils' previous educational records, which at times are scanty if the child has been out of school. The school attaches great importance to gaining information on pupils' attitudes and values and makes a great effort to do so, as this helps them to deal with behavioural problems. Literacy and numeracy skills are tested on arrival and difficulties diagnosed reliably using standardised tests. The school provides a good level of support and guidance to all pupils who transfer. Support assistants also provide good support to pupils in all activities. Parents and pupils are closely involved when making plans for any returns to mainstream schools or other placements. All pupils are provided with a survey of their academic and personal achievements when they are sixteen and given realistic advice on making sensible choices. These are carefully monitored.
48. The pupils' personal development is well monitored and supported through individual discussion with tutors. The link teacher is available for more targeted support, where pupils may be going through a difficult stage of their development. She is able to use her home/school links to ensure that parents are kept fully in touch and are part of the process of support. This aspect of monitoring is good. Arrangements for annual review, assessments and the requirements of the Code of Practice are all good. Parents value the help given by the school in contracting additional support services.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

49. Although the widespread catchment area limits direct parental involvement, parents are, in general, very supportive of the school. All those who attended the pre-inspection meeting felt that it had improved in recent years and that their children were making progress. Twenty-eight parents have signed the home/school agreement. They praised the frequency with which they received information and felt, overall, that the school had strengthened its procedures for keeping them informed about activities.

50. In general, information for parents is good with regular phone contact, termly newsletters and home visits by the link teacher who provides a very effective focus for liaison between home and school. Pupils take their daily record sheets home every day so that parents can see what their children are learning and what progress they are making towards the targets set in their individual education plans. These sheets are also used as a means of writing notes to and from school. Severe Misbehaviour Slips (known as 'pink slips') and progress reports are produced and sent home for parents at the end of each week. However, some parents said that these sometimes arrive too late to be useful as they are not collated and posted by the school until the Monday of the following week when their impact is reduced. Others would have liked more information about the reasons for children's exclusions. The school has recognised this misunderstanding and has put plans in place to improve its systems.
51. There are good, formal opportunities to meet the teachers each term and parents are suitably involved in the annual review process and individual education plan target setting. In addition, annual reports are provided at the end of the school year, although the quality of these is variable as some emphasise description of what the pupil has done rather than specific information on skills and knowledge. All the parents at the pre-inspection meeting thought that the school does not provide enough homework and they suggest that that which is given is often too easy. The school does not yet have a consistent policy or practice regarding the amount and regularity of homework and this results in both pupils and parents remaining unclear about expectations.
52. There is no Parent Teacher Association but parents donate useful items to the school from time to time and there is good support for such events as the Year 7 buffet lunch, charity fundraising and school productions.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

53. The headteacher provides strong leadership and clear direction to all staff and through open discussions with staff he promotes professional development and strives to improve further the quality of education provided by the school. He has a very clear view of the high quality of teaching that takes place in the school. He visits classrooms regularly and observes the teaching upon which he reports clearly both to the teachers and the governing body. The school's aims are clearly reflected in the work of the school as they aim to get the very best out of all pupils by identifying their individual needs and responding appropriately.
54. The governors are very skilled in managing the school and, along with the headteacher, have a clear understanding of their responsibilities. They are well informed and experienced in education matters. Governors also play a very important role in overseeing the work of the school. They visit teachers in the classrooms as they are working and then report back to the governing body on their findings. The headteacher and governing body have put into place very good strategies for the professional development of staff. They include specific training on the management of challenging behaviour, restraint and training in literacy and numeracy strategies. These are now well established throughout the school. The headteacher, governing body and teachers with posts of responsibility are very effective in motivating the staff.
55. All staff are involved in the formulation of the school's development plan and are committed to improving the quality of education provided by the school. With such committed staff, the potential for improvement is good. The very careful financial implementation of these plans for the school involves the work of the senior

management team, the bursar and the governing body. Collectively they ensure that the school is moving forward on a firm financial foundation. The headteacher, governing body and the bursar carefully monitor the implementation of the plan.

56. There are very good induction procedures in place for staff who are new to the school which help them to understand their roles quickly and efficiently. Each new member of staff has a mentor and is given support and advice for a minimum of half a term, and after that, for as long as is appropriate. All staff work well together and have great respect for each other.
57. The school staff and governors have made good progress since the last inspection. The governing body is now well established, the school development plan now takes careful account of all financial implications and is a long-term working document. The governors and headteacher receive financial statements each term which are discussed in the finance committee meetings, and issues may then be raised at full governors' meetings. The school's financial position and practices were audited in January of this year. The report was very positive and the few minor issues that were raised have now been addressed in full.
58. There are sufficient qualified and experienced staff to meet the needs of the pupils in most subjects. However, the school regularly experiences great difficulty in appointing permanent teaching staff. Despite its very best efforts, it has been unable to appoint a permanent mathematics teacher but is very fortunate in obtaining a temporary and very well experienced teacher to cover the vacancy. Arrangements for teaching religious education have been taken over by a learning support assistant who has been effectively trained for the role. There is no qualified teacher to co-ordinate information communication technology. The school continues to make every effort to recruit appropriate staff.
59. The school's accommodation is good overall despite some shortcomings. Classrooms are of a good size and allow all pupils sufficient space for learning. In many corridors it is difficult to see the movements of pupils and the hall, whilst useful as a dining area, is too small and unsuitable for physical activities. The classrooms and corridors are well maintained, are free from graffiti and are enhanced by good quality displays, which help pupils' learning. The school makes good use of the local community and environment to enhance its own provision by taking classes regularly to the local swimming pool, a nearby sports centre and an outdoor pursuits centre.
60. Resources for learning are good and used regularly and well in lessons. Where pupils require enhanced facilities to support their learning the school makes additional arrangements. For example, the basic resources in music are enhanced by hiring the use of a recording studio to enhance the facilities for composition within the GCSE syllabus. Pupils generally handle resources well and take care with them during lessons.
61. The school's use of computers varies. For the purposes of school administration computers are used well. However, the use of computers throughout the school is poor. There are many times when computers and technology equipment would improve the quality of education in lessons, unfortunately many of these opportunities are missed. Grants have been used to develop the computer facilities within the school and other grants have been used for the development of teachers' skills. There is no qualified information and communication technology co-ordinator and despite their training, teachers are still not fully equipped to develop pupils' skills in information and communication technology.

62. The school places great importance in evaluating its performance and as a result has been successful in raising the quality of education it provides and the standards achieved by pupils. The headteacher and financial management team is very careful to ensure that the school always receives best value for money. Taking into account the high quality of teaching, the good progress that pupils make and the cost per pupil, the school provides good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

63. In order to raise standards in teaching and learning further the headteacher and governing body should:
- a) improve pupils' behaviour in all lessons by:
 - i) monitoring the effectiveness of the behaviour management policy in order to identify good practice and to share it amongst all staff to ensure effective approaches; and
 - ii) maximising pupils' opportunities for learning by continuing to emphasise the importance of good standards of behaviour within and around the school.
 - b) improve the quality of teaching and learning in information and communication technology in order that pupils use computers as effective tools for learning in all subjects;
 - c) continue to seek experienced staff to teach information communication technology and mathematics;
 - d) ensure that statutory requirements are met by continuing to monitor the current arrangements for religious education; and
 - e) increase pupils' opportunities for vocational education and an understanding of the world of work by improving arrangements for students to undertake increased work experience and to investigate the possibility of attending college link courses.
64. The headteacher and governors may wish to address these other issues:
- Continue to seek ways of reducing the number of exclusions and ensure that parents fully understand the reasons.
 - Review the consistency with which teachers set homework and their expectations in terms of quantity and quality.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	54
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	69

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9	26	41	24	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	46
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	20

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

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	20
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

Attendance

Authorised absence		Unauthorised absence	
	%		%
School data	76.7	School data	6

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	2
Black – African heritage	
Black – other	5
Indian	
Pakistani	
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	41
Any other minority ethnic group	

Exclusions in the last school year *

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	2	
Black – African heritage		
Black – other	10	
Indian		
Pakistani		
Bangladeshi		
Chinese		
White	122	
Other minority ethnic groups		

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

*** NB each of the figures above represents a half day's exclusion**

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11.2
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	4.3:1
Average class size	6.1

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	6
Total aggregate hours worked per week	182

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
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	£
Total income	558,689
Total expenditure	550,126
Expenditure per pupil	12,225
Balance brought forward from previous year	33,168
Balance carried forward to next year	44,731

Batchwood Results

Pupils were successful in achieving the following awards at the end of the last academic year (2000).

GCSE

SUBJECT	NUMBER ENTERED	GRADES ACHIEVED
Art	3	1 grade A 2 grade C
Mathematics	3	1 grade F 1 grade G
Science	4	1 grade E 2 grade F 1 grade G
French	1	1 grade C

CERTIFICATE OF EDUCATIONAL ACHIEVEMENT

Mathematics	2	2 distinctions
Science	5	3 distinctions 1 merit 1 pass
French	1	1 distinction
Literacy	5	3 distinctions 2 merits

ADDITIONALLY: ON DEMAND TESTS

Literacy	5	5 passed - level 3
AEB basic skills tests in health, hygiene & safety	1	1 pass

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	40
Number of questionnaires returned	11

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	50	30	0	20	0
My child is making good progress in school.	70	10	10	10	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	20	40	30	10	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	0	20	50	30	0
The teaching is good.	60	30	10	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	70	30	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	90	10	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	80	20	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	80	20	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	70	20	10	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	80	10	10	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	40	40	20	0	0

Other issues raised by parents

Parents are concerned about the use of exclusions and the reactions of their children to being away from school. Although the school feels that it has clear procedures the parents do not always understand the reasons for exclusions.

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

ENGLISH

65. Pupils make satisfactory progress in the subject at both key stages. Achievement is frequently very poor amongst pupils who are admitted towards the end of Key Stage 3. Overall, these pupils make satisfactory gains in learning by the end of Key Stage 4 when measured against their prior levels of knowledge and understanding.
66. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils are frequently prepared to speak up in lessons. They listen carefully to the teacher and to each other when they are interested. In a drama lesson in Year 8, pupils were able to sustain an interesting discussion about what should be done with the money found in a purse, and act out the various scenarios illustrating the consequences of their actions. About half the pupils are prepared to read aloud in class, some of them with appropriate expression. Pupils are often content to listen to them, as the well-chosen novels catch their interest and imagination. Almost all pupils can read very simple texts. Some, however, are avid readers. Pupils write in a narrow range of styles. Writing shows a sense of audience when it is destined to be published in the termly magazine 'The Batchword'. First drafts of work are often very short and contain major errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar, which improve on re-drafting. Some pupils produce independent writing of good quality which they do at home, but there is no consistent expectation that homework will be completed.
67. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils sometimes listen to others and reply to them appropriately. Pupils' speech on some occasions can be loud and offensive, but pupils know that if they want to communicate effectively they must alter their speech to suit the person and the occasion. Pupils, at times, profitably discuss classroom issues with their teacher and others. Pupils have opportunities for public performance and some are able to rise to the challenge. A high proportion of pupils are weak readers, but all can understand, enjoy and recall a simple story. Others can understand more demanding texts. Pupils in Year 10 showed interest, enthusiasm and perception of character, for instance in a lesson on 'Lord of the Flies', and were able to pay the close attention to text required for successful literary criticism. Pupils' writing is small in quantity and contains major and persistent errors in spelling, punctuation and grammar. When work is re-drafted, standards improve. Pupils do not get enough opportunities to word process their writing at either key stage, and this adversely affects their motivation.
68. Since the last inspection there has been a good level of improvement. Progress and attitudes have improved in Key Stage 4, although pupils' work rate continues to be slow. Many are still unable to take responsibility for their own learning although some pupils now take work home at their own request, although there is no consistent requirement for homework to be completed. Standards of speaking and writing continue to be weak, but show a satisfactory rate of improvement, often from a very low base. The library stock has been improved and this facility is now better used by all the pupils for reference and reading for pleasure. The department book stock has been greatly improved, particularly at Key Stage 3. A new and detailed curriculum of good quality is now being trialled in the subject. This is already providing continuity between lessons and key stages and gives invaluable help to non-specialist staff.
69. Teaching is good and where the pupils concentrate and persevere, they make satisfactory progress. Teachers have a good level of knowledge of the subject, particularly notable in lessons in literature in Key Stage 4. The pupils' behaviour in

English is satisfactory but with occasional instances of unacceptable language and over reaction. All classes are managed well, so that pupils are usually able to work in a calm atmosphere. All lessons are planned in some detail, which helps to maintain a good pace of work in the face of occasional distraction. Well taught drama lessons enhance pupils' speaking and listening skills at Key Stage 3. Teachers are prepared to give pupils a great deal of individual help in all lessons and thus enable them to stay on task and to succeed. Basic skills are routinely addressed in all lessons, and points of spelling and grammar well emphasised. The individual literacy work provided by the literacy tutor is successful in helping pupils improve their skills in reading. Relationships between the teachers and pupils in all the lessons observed were positive and constructive and this helped pupils to make the most progress of which they were capable.

70. The subject is well managed and led. Pupils with the poorest basic literacy skills receive skilful and effective additional teaching on an individual basis. Library initiatives including whole-school participation in 'Readathon' improves pupils' motivation to read. Lack of opportunity for using information and communication technology for pupils to present their writing in striking and original ways, adversely affects their will to write. Preparing copy for the school magazine, however, is a powerful motivator and pupils enjoy working towards publication.
71. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are better than their reading and writing. In design and technology and science, pupils discuss their work using a good subject specific vocabulary, which is reinforced as the lesson proceeds. There are good opportunities for speaking in French, and in art and music pupils are encouraged to discuss their compositions. There are further good opportunities for discussion within history and geography. Pupils have no difficulty in understanding instructions in physical education. Almost all pupils are able to read the simple texts put before them in lessons. Worksheets, maps and some reference books are used in history and geography. Pupils read very simple French. Great attention is paid to writing in food technology where pupils are given specific instruction on how to improve their work. There is an emphasis on good presentation of work in mathematics. Pupils effectively write up experiments and observations in science, but standards of presentation and accuracy are poor. Information and communications technology is insufficiently used, and this adversely affects the opportunities for pupils to understand and use such technology in their classroom work.
72. Some pupils' standards of reading limit their learning. Since the last inspection and the introduction of the literacy strategy the school has also improved individual support for pupils whose reading and writing prevents effective learning in other subjects and this has helped pupils use their reading skills more effectively. In these instances the use of information communication technology is well planned and beneficial.

MATHEMATICS

73. Pupils make good gains in learning at both key stages and achieve well in relation to their prior learning. Pupils in Key Stage 3 make very good progress and are keen to answer questions. They are very positive when they speak about their mathematics lessons. Pupils are able to study patterns made by different polygons when drawn next to each other. They develop their skills in addition as they add up shopping lists. When studying groups of numbers pupils learn the difference between the median, the mean and the range of numbers. Following on from this pupils now learn about co-ordinated geometry and are developing skills well, being able to draw graphs when presented with a selection of data.

74. The highly skilled teacher encourages pupils to be independent as they work and to develop their own ideas and methods of presentation as they answer questions that are set for them. This enables all pupils to work at their own pace and for those who have a good grasp of the concepts, they are able to complete more difficult work. Pupils who experience difficulty in understanding new concepts receive extra help from the teacher and the classroom support assistant. These strategies ensure that all pupils make good progress in their mathematics lessons. The behaviour of pupils in mathematics lessons is generally good. This is helped by the very clear boundaries that are stated by the teacher and pupils are absolutely sure about what is, and what is not, acceptable.
75. The quality of teaching of mathematics is consistently very good throughout the school and often excellent. The teacher has excellent subject knowledge and her skills in managing the difficult behaviour of pupils are also excellent. Lessons are very well prepared to ensure that pupils are interested. Wherever possible lessons are topical, for example, exercises are based on questions to do with the Olympic Games. This ensures that pupils are interested in their lessons and enjoy taking part and can relate the activities to their current experiences. They are enthusiastic when they enter the room and are keen to start work.
76. Pupils in Key Stage 4 also make very good progress. However they are less enthusiastic about their work and it is due to the skills of the teacher that they remain motivated. Wherever possible the mathematics is translated into practical tasks. For example one class visited local do-it-yourself stores where they collected data about the bathroom furniture and fittings. The real-life task set for them was to design from scratch a new bathroom as part of the en-suite facilities for a master bedroom. Pupils met this challenge with interest and excitement. They made comparisons between different sizes and shapes of baths. They also investigated the different shower cubicles that are available, comparing traditional hinged doors with bi-fold doors. Another Key Stage 4 class was very quick to grasp the concept of changing probability when picking out different coloured sweets at random from a carefully prescribed mixture. In these lessons the excellent management skills of the teacher ensured that not only did pupils enjoy their work, but they also learned a great deal.
77. The management of the subject is currently insecure. There is no co-ordinator for the subject and total reliance is made upon the supply teacher. Fortunately for the school the quality of teaching is excellent and the pupils are making good progress despite the uncertainty of the future. The headteacher and governors are fully aware of this difficult situation and are seeking to appoint a teacher permanently to this position.
78. The classroom is ideally suited for teaching mathematics and there are now sufficient resources for the subject. It was not possible to make judgements on the development of the subject across the whole-school curriculum as the supply teacher had been in school for only one week before the inspection. However, it is clear that pupils make good progress towards the targets that are written into their education plans. The teacher is aware of the targets and makes sure that pupils are constantly working towards meeting them.
79. The teaching of mathematics is a strength of the school and one from which all pupils will have benefited greatly during recent weeks. Despite the difficulties over staffing, there has been a significant improvement in teaching, learning and behaviour in this subject since the last inspection when some elements of teaching, progress and behaviour were unsatisfactory.

SCIENCE

80. The pupils make gains in learning at both key stages despite sometimes working quite slowly. The department has maintained the level of good teaching recorded in the last inspection report. Teaching is now good overall with very good teaching in almost half of the lessons observed. Good teaching has enabled the department to maintain the pace of progress that pupils make in most lessons, although progress is slowed down in lessons where the behaviour of pupils makes teaching very difficult. The newly appointed head of department is getting to know the pupils and understand their emotional and behavioural needs. In the mean time they are often very challenging and demanding of his attention.
81. Because of the emotional and behavioural difficulties they have faced during previous education, many pupils lack confidence and are sometimes reluctant to work independently. Nevertheless, they follow examination courses in the different branches of science and most pass them successfully. Through investigation and experiment in the wide range of modular courses, they learn about themselves and the world of scientific enquiry. In Key Stage 3 pupils make at least satisfactory gains in learning overall and frequently their progress is very good. Year 7 pupils know that water is made up of particles and they observe these during the evaporation process. Higher attaining pupils know that water particles move apart as they change from solid through liquid to gas. From this they learn that all materials expand when heated. In Year 8, pupils understand that the mildly corrosive chemicals they use in an experiment with food, cause skin irritation. They use them carefully and are able to identify foods that contain protein and write up their results in table form. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils learn the relative position of planets in our solar system. They made very good progress when they were able to use an overhead projector to sketch out a diagram of the earth and sun. Higher attaining pupils build up good quality projects on pollution and global warming, as contributions towards their Certificate of Achievement in science. The good support that teaching gives to their literacy development, is clearly evident in the sustained writing in these projects.
82. Pupils at Key Stage 4 make satisfactory progress and when they are well motivated and interested in the activities planned by the teacher, their achievements in lessons are very good. On occasion, when pupils do not behave well, their progress is unsatisfactory. Pupils in Year 10 know that skin acts as a barrier to prevent bacteria from entering the blood stream. Clear and confident teaching enables them to identify the sweat gland, the capillary veins and arteries and the follicle oil gland, from their neat diagrams of the structure of skin. By the end of Key Stage 4 they complete work on human reproduction for a GCSE module. They know that infertility may result from malfunctioning organs such as testes and ovaries. Higher attaining pupils can explain the function of the hairs (cilia) in the fallopian tube.
83. The quality of teaching is good overall and often very good. The teacher has an excellent knowledge and understanding of the subject, built up from sound qualifications and many years of industrial science experience. As a recently qualified teacher who is new to the school, he has not yet developed the secure relationships that lead to the fully effective teaching of difficult and damaged pupils. His calm, sensitive approach to challenging behaviour and his maintenance of high expectations of pupils' behaviour and work, should ensure that the department builds on the good foundations laid by his predecessor. He manages the very good resources for science efficiently and is always well prepared for lessons that are planned in detail. He is able to engage pupils and enthuse them through his own enthusiasm for teaching the subject. He does not always benefit from the good support of a learning support assistant and this makes some of the practical experimental work difficult to manage.

84. The schemes of work for science are very good and well linked to the National Curriculum. The subject is taught by modules of study that build towards the Certificate of Education and the GCSE single science award. Whilst assessment of pupils' progress towards these awards is relevant the school has yet to develop an overall and consistent approach to the assessment of other work and this represents a weakness within the curriculum.
85. The pupils' attitudes towards lessons are variable, but satisfactory overall. When the class is settled, pupils enjoy the practical investigations and carry out experiments with interest and enthusiasm. In many lessons they show surprise at their discoveries and advance their learning effectively. In lessons where a minority exhibit challenging behaviour, the teacher has to make decisions, based on health and safety concerns, that may result in the scaling down of practical work and the slowing down of progress for those who are keen to work.
86. Behaviour in lessons is unsatisfactory overall. The minority of very difficult pupils create considerable difficulties for the teacher, who has not yet had the time to get to know them. In the occasional lesson, these pupils have to be removed so that the lesson can carry on effectively. The personal development of pupils is satisfactory. It is encouraged through the responsibility they are given for the safe and efficient conduct of investigations. They act in a responsible way and help to set up and clear away after experiments. In the best lessons, pupils reveal a maturity of response that is encouraging to the teacher and gives an insight into the potential of the majority of pupils. It has been difficult for the pupils to settle down at this early stage of the term with a new teacher, and some very unsettled behaviour was observed. With the continued support of more experienced colleagues, the department is set to improve in the years ahead.

ART AND DESIGN

87. The school has made a good response to the findings of the last inspection. Provision for art is now good, and in some respects very good; the subject is a strength of the school.
88. At both key stages pupils make at least good gains in learning through well-taught lessons and a good range of practical activities, which pupils find particularly motivating. Pupils at Key Stage 3 create bold self-portraits, and become absorbed in decorating and colouring their work, using pencils and brushes with care and precision. Pupils construct bright, vibrant reliefs of their favourite foods, which then help to enliven the walls of the dining hall. They become familiar with the principles of roughing out their ideas in sketchbooks, developing and refining the drawings over a period of time. Although such projects take several weeks to complete, pupils look after their work carefully and take pride in the results, whilst maintaining an interest in the efforts of their classmates. In these various ways, the subject makes a positive contribution to their spiritual and social development.
89. Pupils at Key Stage 4 build upon this foundation very effectively and make very good progress. The school has developed a GCSE course that is particularly strong in promoting pupils' self-expression through three-dimensional work, and several pupils have achieved notable examination success with one outstanding pupil achieving an 'A' grade (and last year an A* for one pupil). Pupils use the potter's wheel independently and extremely carefully, and learn how to attach the handle to their pots correctly. They demonstrate extensive craft skills in handling chicken-wire and papier-mâché, and produce large-scale pieces that are both imaginative and

expressive. Some pupils provide written explanations of their ideas, and make sensible, considered comments on each other's work when asked.

90. Teaching in art is very good throughout the school. Lessons are well organised, and under-pinned by very positive relationships between all concerned, with the result that pupils are clear as to what is expected of them. The teacher successfully adopts a consistent, patient approach and uses quiet, open questions to help pupils decide what they want to do within a range of practical activities. This proves particularly effective in encouraging pupils to develop their own ideas and take responsibility for their work, and so they rise to the occasion. Low-key humour and neat touches of praise combine to create a relaxed working atmosphere, and this helps to keep the pupils on task for long periods. Staff work well as a team, time is used to good effect, and there is a good range of simple, practical tools and media for pupils to use. However, there are few resources such as posters and books to illustrate ideas and challenge pupils' thinking and, as a result, the subject's contribution to the pupils' cultural development is not as significant as it should be.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

91. Pupils show high levels of interest in design and technology and consequently make good gains in learning. However, their progress is sometimes limited by their difficulties in measuring and reading. In the food technology room Key Stage 3 pupils learn to work independently, and to take responsibility and to follow rules. They are all very successful as they blend together margarine and brown sugar, chocolate powder, flour and cornflakes to make Warwickshire biscuits. Pupils struggle a little with recording the work that follows their practical task but, thanks to the skills of the teacher, they complete a written record of their work. In the technology room another Key Stage 3 class works very hard as they complete an electronics project to make a membrane switch. The lesson is very well prepared by the teacher, he makes sure that all materials and equipment are ready for the pupils. He uses good quality materials and equipment and has comprehensive lesson plans that pay close attention to the new language which pupils will learn. Words including voltage, current, resistance, circuits and symbols are written clearly on the board for all pupils to see. There is a moment of real awe and wonder as pupils discover that the pressure switch that they are constructing really works.
92. Pupils in Key Stage 4 work extremely well as they plan a meal for a special occasion. The teacher's very good subject knowledge and experience enables her to harness their interests. For example, one pupil has family connections with fruit preparation particularly concerning pizzas. Another pupil decides to make coconut bread, this is her own idea and will be realised by modifying a standard bread recipe. Pupils are able to talk confidently about their work and are clearly pleased with their achievements. They plan and concentrate on the challenge that faces them – to make a written presentation of their ideas. The teacher encourages them and makes high demands of them concerning the presentation of their work. One pupil is working independently in the technology room making a go-kart. He is highly motivated and receives excellent support and guidance from the teacher. Despite limited experience in the use of basic hand tools, he uses them to good effect. He discusses clearly his own ideas and listens to advice from the teacher concerning joining methods and basic design. The problem to be overcome – in this instance – is a means of ensuring that the structure forming the roof of the go-kart is rigid and secure. After some considerable time and effort the pupil comes up with a solution that is successful.

93. Design and technology is taught mainly in two areas, namely technology (resistant materials) and food technology. Teaching in both areas is good. Teachers take careful note of each pupil's ability as far as literacy and numeracy is concerned and endeavour to increase pupils' knowledge and use of these skills during design and technology lessons. Lessons are very well planned and are in line with the National Curriculum, each area of study being carefully assessed.
94. The technology co-ordinator has been recently appointed and is highly skilled and knowledgeable in working with pupils who have emotional and behavioural difficulties. Lessons take into account each pupil's age, individual needs and interests. The teachers have high expectations and lay down clear boundaries concerning behaviour both in and out of the classroom. The technology teacher and food technology teacher together, form a strong team. They work efficiently together and are developing a very strong area of study within the school.
95. The very good quality of teaching in technology and food technology ensures that all pupils make good progress. The subject is taught in rooms that are specially designed to meet the demands of the subject. The food technology room is excellent and contains very good equipment and materials. The technology and textiles rooms offer excellent accommodation with materials and equipment that are satisfactory and used well to stimulate and interest pupils. However, there is little evidence of information communications technology being used as a tool for learning within the subject.
96. Pupils are now following an accredited course that leads to the Certificate of Achievement in food technology studies and also to the General Certificate of Secondary Education in design and technology. This year will be the first year that pupils aim for the Certificate of Achievement. In this and in all other respects, the subject has made significant improvements since the last inspection.

HUMANITIES (History and Geography)

97. History and geography are taught only at Key Stage 3. The pupils benefit from a well-organised humanities department that offers a balanced curriculum, with good opportunities for pupils to see how the humanities links with other subjects such as art, science, French and personal, social and religious education. Although no lessons of geography were seen during the inspection, pupils' work was seen, documentation studied and discussions held with the head of department. From these it is clear that pupils make satisfactory progress through the key stage in both geography and history.
98. In both key stages pupils' gains in learning are satisfactory. Year 7 pupils study the development of the Roman empire and the influences it left in Britain. They know that the Romans built roads and buildings that still survive throughout Europe. They reinforce their knowledge by visits to their own Roman town of Verulamium (St Albans). They give sensible reasons for the expansion of the Roman empire, such as the need for more land and for people to strengthen their armies, the need for people to work the land and provide food, and the need for more wealth and power. In Year 8 they use simple visual cues in diagrams to note the difference in our way of life in 1500 and 2000, gaining a sense of historical time as they work. They offer good reasons for the differences, such as the lack of general education in 1500, the different tools used to gather foods and the different ways of marketing them. At the end of the key stage, in Year 9, pupils study twentieth century world conflicts. They understand that international conflicts have features that are also present in personal and social disputes, features such as jealousy about the wealth, power and influence

of others, resentment and envy of other people's possessions. They know that some disputes blow up very quickly, but that others may build over a very long period of time. Video clips, including archive footage of world wars, help them to understand the real conditions under which such wars are fought and the reasons why they are fought. Geographical knowledge is woven into the social history of different nations. Pupils reinforce their knowledge of European countries and the map reading skills they gain in geography lessons. Good, confident and well planned teaching, enables pupils to undertake field work to build their basic skills. They start by mapping trails inside and outside the school, before going on to the planning of more difficult routes through the city of St Albans and beyond. They visit the Imperial War Museum and the Natural History Museum, along with a visit to HMS Belfast. These visits are well planned and evaluated.

99. The teaching of history is at least satisfactory and in almost half of lessons, good. Lessons are well planned and visits and field studies well prepared. The teacher and learning support assistant work well together to make the best use of the lesson time. They work with individuals and groups to keep the pace of the lesson going. Observation of lessons and examination of pupils' work show that they do record sufficient work by writing in order to demonstrate their understanding of the work they have covered. A discussion that introduced world conflicts was well managed, using questions that drew on pupils' knowledge of personal disputes to highlight the seemingly complex reasons for national and international conflicts. At times the teaching does not allow sufficient opportunity for pupils to develop independent learning skills.
100. As a result of the well planned teaching the attitudes of pupils to lessons are generally satisfactory, although, on occasion, the behaviour of a significant minority is disruptive and unacceptable. The teacher does not ignore such behaviour, but is successful in ensuring that it has a minimal impact on the learning of those pupils who wish to work. Her good relationship with the pupils and her confident teaching enables her to give individual attention to those whose behaviour deserves it.
101. The department has made a good improvement since the last inspection. There is now good provision for fieldwork and visits and homework is given at appropriate times. The system for the assessment and recording of pupils is now in place for both history and geography. The department does not make sufficient use of historical artefacts that pupils can handle to spark their imagination or to help them empathise with people who lived long ago. They do not have sufficient opportunity to dramatise history through dressing up, role-play or to use information communications technology. Local people who have personal memories of times long past, are not used to help bring that past to life.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

102. Provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is unsatisfactory. The school made an appropriate response to the findings of the last inspection in extending the range of available software, but has still not yet developed an appropriate scheme of work. There is too much emphasis on the pupils' development of simple keyboard skills, and not enough consideration is given to pupils using computers and other tools to support their learning in other subjects in ways that promote their understanding of ICT. As a result, although pupils make satisfactory gains in developing practical skills, their levels of achievement across the subject as a whole are unsatisfactory, and are poor at Key Stage 4 due to the aggressive, disruptive behaviour of a significant number of pupils.

103. Pupils throughout the school enjoy computers and are keen to use them, they behave well and display a natural curiosity when exploring the software. At Key Stage 3, pupils can log on and log off, and know the conventions around the use of passwords. They can type, though not always accurately, and can use the mouse skilfully to access menus and change the font or colour of the text. Some pupils work quite slowly but concentrate well, but others become bored with repetitive exercises, go off task, and begin to distract others in the class. Pupils at Key Stage 4 practise these word-processing skills reluctantly in the context of, for example, French exercises and some can import images from graphics programs. They are careful with the equipment; many are adept at finding their way around the screen and are fluent when using the keyboard to operate simple computer games. Many, however, are also less co-operative when asked to apply these skills to the task in hand. Pupils occasionally research information individually on such topics as the growth of human embryos, but most of their work in ICT consists of transcribing or redrafting pre-prepared text.
104. The teaching of ICT is unsatisfactory overall. Nevertheless the teaching of basic keyboard skills is satisfactory and sometimes good. Lessons are well organised, though somewhat routine, and staff prompt and support individual pupils effectively with the result that they stay on task and complete their work. Teachers are very familiar with the exercises, but are less confident when it comes to using more sophisticated features of the word-processing and publishing programs. They also lack the technical expertise to solve problems such as the printer's refusal to work. Staff display considerable patience in the face of extremely provocative behaviour from a significant minority of pupils, and generally use the 'on call' system effectively, although sometimes they leave it too late for the situation to be easily retrieved. Staff sometimes have great difficulty in getting pupils to conform, despite the fact that using the computers clearly motivates them, and in this respect the ease with which pupils can access the computer games is a particular disadvantage. Where ICT is used to support other subjects, such as science, French and individual literacy work, the teaching is at least satisfactory and occasionally very good. However, the subject does not often feature in teachers' planning and opportunities to use it that occur naturally in lessons often remain unexploited. Therefore, despite the strengths, teaching overall is unsatisfactory.
105. Information and communication technology is identified as an important element within the schemes of work across the curriculum. However, recent staffing changes have disrupted the teaching and development of the subject, the newly appointed co-ordinator is inexperienced in the subject, and the school does not monitor the whole curriculum closely enough to ensure that ICT makes the contribution that it should in other subjects. However, the school is aware of these issues, the draft development plan addresses them appropriately, and the co-ordinator is to receive appropriate in-service training later in the term.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

106. In French, pupils make at least satisfactory gains in learning and, by the end of Key Stage 4, higher attaining pupils are on target to achieve GCSE. Many pupils are reluctant to speak French due to a lack of self-confidence but they frequently overcome this difficulty in lessons and, copying the excellent model of the teacher, speak with a good accent.

107. The youngest pupils in the school know the letters of the French alphabet and enjoy repeating them with a video recording. They are interested in the lessons and try hard to do well in response to interesting activities. Their attention to detail was well illustrated when one noticed that 'comment' in French was also an English word and was able to define it in both languages. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils are able to reply to such questions as 'Qu'est ce que tu as fait?' both in speaking and writing and are therefore developing their use of the past tense. These achievements are largely due to the well planned teaching with a good mixture of speaking, listening, reading and writing which effectively keeps the pupils on task and motivated.
108. However, despite these strengths, there is a significant amount of unsatisfactory behaviour within this key stage. The teacher generally manages the pupils well by relentlessly continuing her lesson and eventually tempting pupils back onto task by her own enthusiasm and the activities provided. However, where this is not so easy to achieve, the teacher does not always summon help promptly with the result that the behaviour of one pupil influences the remainder and for a short period the learning of a small minority of pupils is compromised.
109. By Key Stage 4 pupils' attitudes are satisfactory overall, although behaviour was poor in one lesson when a personal conflict between two pupils spilled over into the lesson and they vented their frustration on the teacher. However, the teacher showed her strength and determination to succeed. She persisted in ignoring the unacceptable behaviour and maintaining the flow of the lesson so that eventually the pupils settled and were able to identify, in French, what they did during the holiday.
110. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall and includes one outstanding and two good lessons. The teacher has excellent knowledge of French and her own spoken language is faultless. In the very best lessons she knows the pupils well and insists on continuing her lesson in the face of difficult behaviour. She selectively ignores unacceptable behaviour and compliments those who work well – a technique that bears dividends as gradually all become drawn into the work. The teacher provides many good opportunities for pupils to develop their skills and understanding through the good use of resources such as video and tape recorder. However, the use of computers to support the work in French is only partly successful. Whilst pupils succeed well in transcribing their writing about their holiday to produce a good quality poster, once this activity is finished the teacher has no further appropriate activities planned and pupils drift off task and use the computers to play games for the final part of the lesson. Because the teacher is less skilled in this subject she has difficulty in providing relevant computer activities to maintain pupils' interest in French.
111. French makes a positive contribution to pupils' social and cultural education as they deepen their understanding of French culture and life.
112. The school has maintained the good standards found at the last inspection although a significant number of pupils demonstrate a range of difficult behaviour which, while not affecting learning overall, is not always consistently addressed.

MUSIC

113. The school now makes good provision for music and this is a significant improvement since the last inspection when music was not taught and the school did not therefore meet its statutory requirements.

114. All pupils now benefit from music lessons from an experienced, specialist teacher and, by the end of Key Stage 4, are able to work towards GCSE or a Certificate of Achievement in Music.
115. Pupils behave well in lessons and respond positively to the varied and interesting opportunities made available. Their achievements are below national expectations as a result of the learning difficulties associated with their emotional and behavioural difficulties. This has affected their attainment in terms of their technical knowledge and is also partly due to the fact that the subject has only been introduced to the school since the last inspection. Nevertheless in terms of their prior achievements and the targets set on their individual education plans, pupils make good gains in learning. Teaching is good. The teacher is very skilled in managing the pupils' behaviour and keeps them well motivated by her good use of activities and resources. For example, just as they are beginning to tire of working on a twelve bar blues composition, the teacher suggests that they record it and evaluate their own efforts. Hearing their work on tape is motivating for all the pupils and they respond very well to this activity, showing their ability to listen critically to their efforts and give their opinions.
116. The teacher makes very good use of the limited range of resources available and has recently arranged to broaden the opportunities for pupils at Key Stage 4 through the use of a local sound studio. Here they are able to work with a technician to perform, mix and enhance their own compositions through the use of computer-based technology. This is a very valuable extension of the curriculum and during their first visit the pupils showed a genuine interest in the opportunities available to them. They behaved impeccably and asked and answered questions with enthusiasm.
117. Music makes a very good contribution to the pupils' social, moral, cultural and spiritual development. At Christmas the pupils took part in a production of 'Oliver' and a nativity play. A talent show also helped pupils to demonstrate their skills and boost their self-confidence and self-esteem.
118. The curriculum, lesson plans and assessment are all of good quality and well used to guide pupils through appropriate steps of learning. However, the time allocation for Year 11 pupils preparing for GCSE is too little to allow them to complete their best work in time for the examination.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

119. The school's provision for physical education is now good. This represents a very significant improvement since the time of the last inspection. Staff have worked hard to negotiate and organise a wide range of appropriate activities using facilities out in the community; as a result, the school's accommodation, though still inadequate for physical education, does not now have an adverse effect on the teaching of the curriculum.
120. Pupils throughout the school achieve well in physical education, and their success is marked by nationally recognised awards in such sports as gymnastics and swimming. In the latter, pupils gain confidence in the local leisure pool, and develop a front crawl style which, though sometimes lacking in grace, is effective. They use floats to develop their technique in backstroke, and can retrieve weights from the bottom of the pool. Pupils have due regard for health and safety issues and take responsibility for their own kit. They show exemplary behaviour in a highly public place, which is a credit not only to themselves, but also to the clear, persistent demands made of them by their teachers. In football, pupils of all abilities learn to

attack and defend and combine as a team in competition against other local schools, whilst in tennis pupils learn the basics of racket control, and co-operate well when practising returns against each other. Older pupils use their physical skills in the context of adventurous pursuits such as rock-climbing and canoeing. They show qualities of patience and self-control when participating in sporting leisure pursuits such as fishing. In these respects, the subject makes a positive contribution to the pupils' personal and social development; it effectively helps them address their behavioural difficulties, and endorses the aims of the school particularly well.

121. The teaching of physical education is generally good and occasionally very good. Teachers know their pupils very well; they have a good grasp of the subject, and give clear demonstrations that are effective in helping pupils develop their own skills. Lessons are well planned, and teachers are careful to ensure that all pupils, irrespective of their physical abilities or behavioural difficulties, can participate. Pupils have a clear understanding of what is expected of them, and appropriate consideration is given to health and safety issues. In the most successful lessons, all these factors combine, with the result that pupils try hard and remain actively involved. Lessons are also brisk and, although the flow is sometimes interrupted by the need to address the behaviour of individual pupils, all staff manage the pupils well, and work together effectively as a team. Pupils' gains in learning and their personal contributions are recorded in line with the department's newly developed assessment procedures. These are comprehensive, if a little over-complicated, but opportunities for pupils to measure and review their own performance, though present in lessons, are under-exploited.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

122. During the past year no religious education has been taught in the school. The subject has now been introduced as part of a combined personal and social education programme. A suitable curriculum now exists in the subject with an appropriate amount of taught time to meet the requirements of the locally agreed syllabus. There is detailed lesson planning for the first term. This is of satisfactory quality. The subject has enough suitable textbooks and teaching materials. Due to the modular nature of the course no religious education lessons could be seen during the inspection. Work produced by the younger pupils earlier in the term was, however, scrutinised and found to be satisfactory. It is clear that pupils have opportunities to deepen their understanding of other faiths through references in other subjects such as geography, history and music. However, the current arrangements for religious education have not been in place long enough for judgements to be made on its effectiveness or the progress made by pupils. The school is aware of the need to monitor the subject carefully.