

# INSPECTION REPORT

## HIGHFIELD SCHOOL

Ely

LEA area: Cambridgeshire

Unique reference number: 110940

Headteacher: Mrs V. Ashton

Reporting inspector: Dr. Eric Peagam  
14943

Dates of inspection: 25<sup>th</sup> – 29<sup>th</sup> September 2000

Inspection number: 223643

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special (moderate/severe/multiple learning difficulties)
School category:	Community school
Age range of pupils:	2 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Downham Road, Ely, Cambridgeshire, CB6 1BD
Postcode:	
Telephone number:	01353 662085
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Appropriate authority:	Governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs. S. Friend-Smith
Date of previous inspection:	March 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Eric Peagam 14943	Registered inspector	Information and communication technology Design and technology French Equal opportunities	The school's results and achievements  What should the school do to improve further?
Daphne Johnston 9130	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development  How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents
Keith Tottman 2807	Team inspector	English History	How well is the school led and managed?
John Turnock 14814	Team inspector	Art Geography Religious education Under fives	
Jennifer Hall 14691	Team inspector	Science  Physical education Post 16 provision	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students?
Brian Fletcher 20457	Team inspector	Mathematics Music	How well are pupils or students taught?

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Highfield School is an all-age area special school, which takes pupils with a wide range of special needs from Ely, the surrounding villages and some from the Cambridge area. Pupils display a variety of conditions including autism, cerebral palsy, sensory impairments and some associated behaviour problems. The pupils come from all socio-economic backgrounds, including travelling families. About 15% of pupils qualify for free school meals, which is low for schools of this type. A small number of pupils come from minority ethnic backgrounds. Children arrive at different stages in their school career and with a range of prior educational experiences, but all are attaining well below average expectations on entry. Since the last inspection in 1996 the roll has grown from 62 to 96. In the autumn of 1999, the school moved into new premises, which have been remodelled and converted to provide many specialist facilities. This has inevitably made significant demands on management time and energy, with a consequent impact on overall school development priorities.

The school has a clear set of aims which relate to the educational and personal development of pupils, the creation and maintenance of a happy, safe, supportive and appropriate environment and the development of partnership and links with parents, other schools, business and community organisations and social groups. Educational priorities are largely decided at an individual pupil level with a focus on communication, literacy, numeracy and Independence in living and learning. Current development priorities are to increase provision for science and design and technology, and improve the Key Stage 4 and 16+ curriculum.

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

Highfield is a very effective school which has continued to improve its academic and social provision through a period of considerable disruption and which provides well for the wide range of special educational needs presented by its pupils. The very high quality of much of the teaching, the specialist provision and resources within the remodelled building and the high quality of the overall environment all make a substantial contribution to the good progress that pupils make. The school is effectively led and management is very successful overall in addressing its aims. Planning for development is good in many respects, in spite of the inevitably distracting effects of the considerable changes in environment and provision. There is still room for improvement in the management of teachers and the curriculum and the use of detailed development planning in determining spending patterns. The good quality of much of the education on offer and the good outcomes achieved mean that the school continues to give good value for money

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

- Good and often very good teaching, based on secure planning, ensures that pupils with a wide range of special needs make good progress, especially in basic skills.
- Teaching is considerably enhanced by the high quality of learning support from assistants, who lead groups in active learning and support individual pupils' academic and social learning very well.
- The very good premises with high quality specialist facilities are very well used to support pupils' academic and personal development.
- The very good ethos of the school and the very high quality of relationships and care for pupils contribute very well to enhancing their self-esteem and confidence.
- Very good provision for social, and moral development underpin very good behaviour and contribute well to pupils' very good attitudes toward learning and the school.
- The considerable efforts made to ensure effective partnerships with parents and the community result in parents being strongly identified with the school, which is also held in high esteem in the community.
- The consistent and coherent leadership by governors and senior management ensures that the school is very successful in meeting its aims.

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

- Planning for overall curriculum coverage and class timetables are insufficiently monitored to ensure that all statutory requirements are met and to secure a sufficient balance within and between subjects.
- Curriculum time is low, especially at Key Stage 4 and post-16
- There is still insufficient detail in school development planning, in particular in terms of the links to the budget process.
- Monitoring of teaching and provision for staff development are insufficiently established and linked.
- There are still insufficient facilities and resources to provide pupils with full access to the whole range of science and design and technology programmes of study.

*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 has made good improvement since it was last inspected in March 1996, most noticeably in that it

has moved from cramped unsuitable premises, which seriously restricted the curriculum, to a new, purpose-converted building that caters very well for the needs of the pupils. The key issues from the last inspection have been addressed; in particular the provision for the least able pupils, formerly unsatisfactory, is now good. At the same time, increased facilities, particularly for practical subjects, have enabled curriculum opportunities to be expanded, and this has been very evident in the strong development of art and information and communications technology (ICT), especially in Key Stages 2 and 3. Good links with the neighbouring secondary school have led to extended curriculum opportunities for older pupils, which are particularly good in drama. The school is well placed to improve further.

## 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	by age	by age	by age	Key
	5	11	16	19	
speaking and listening	B	B	B	B	very good A
reading	C	B	B	B	good B
writing	C	C	B	B	satisfactory C
mathematics	B	B	B	B	unsatisfactory D
personal, social and health education	B	B	B	B	poor E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B	B	B	

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

Overall, pupils achieve well, particularly in Key Stage 3 where they benefit from particularly good teaching, and in the early years, where provision is very good. The detailed individual planning and the consistent approach are especially effective for pupils with the greatest learning difficulties. Achievement in literacy and numeracy is good. In non-core subjects, best achievement is seen in art, music and aspects of physical education including dance. Pupils in Key Stage 4 and post-16 achieve satisfactorily in a limited range of externally accredited courses. Levels of achievement are never unsatisfactory in lessons in subjects that are taught, but overall achievement is not secure where timetabling does not ensure that adequate time is given to foundation subjects or when they are not taught in Key Stage 4. The school sets overall targets for progress in literacy and numeracy. These relate to the percentage of pupils making a specified level of progress and were substantially achieved this year.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have very good attitudes to their learning; they try very hard and take pride in their work. They respect one another and enjoy one another's success.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is very good at all times and makes a positive contribution to pupils' academic and social learning
Personal development and relationships	Pupils undertake small tasks and take personal responsibility willingly. They show considerable respect for each other. Relationships throughout are very good.
Attendance	Attendance is good, and pupils arrive punctually at lessons

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5	aged 5-11	aged 11-16	aged over 16
Lessons seen overall	3	3	3	3

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

Teaching is good overall. It is at least good in nine out of ten lessons and very good in about one-third. It is very good overall in Key Stage 3. Teaching is never unsatisfactory. The skills of communication, including literacy and numeracy, are taught well throughout. This quality of teaching is found in all subjects, although teaching in science is particularly strong, and this is reflected in the high quality of pupils' learning. There are particular strengths in planning and the sensitive management of classes. The individual needs of pupils, including those with the greatest special needs, are identified well and effectively met through work that is well matched to their abilities providing stimulation and challenge. The highly developed skills and effective deployment of learning support assistants are key features in the high quality of teaching.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall. Weaknesses at Key Stage 4 are largely balanced by good provision for the youngest pupils and those with the greatest special needs, and there is a balance of strengths and weakness in other subjects.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good, especially for personal development. This area remains a strength of the school. Social, moral and cultural development are very well provided for. Arrangements for spiritual development are good, although religious education and worship do not fully contribute.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares very well for its pupils and makes very good provision for their emotional, physical and personal needs. Procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare and for promoting their general well being are very good.

Art and music are significant strengths. The curriculum is well supported by use of the community and constructive relations with other schools, especially where drama is offered at the neighbouring school. There is good provision for the teaching of literacy and numeracy skills. Provision for pupils with the greatest needs has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now good. The curriculum for the youngest pupils is very good and is well used for older pupils for whom Early Learning Goals are appropriate. Support for personal and social development is good, especially circle time, and visits are well used. However, statutory requirements are not met in religious education and modern languages and there are significant shortcomings at Key Stage 4, particularly in science, design and technology and ICT. Overall breadth and balance of the curriculum are insecure between and within subjects; the irregular pattern to the timetable does not ensure good coverage. Curriculum time is short, especially for the oldest pupils

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory overall with a clear educational direction given. Good leadership enables the school to meet its aims very well. The roles of all subject coordinators are underdeveloped. Provision for under-fives is well managed.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	With a relatively small number of exceptions, the governing body fulfils its duties well and makes a good contribution to the leadership of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The school has made a start on evaluating its performance, but monitoring of teaching and learning and of major spending decisions is weak
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory. The school spends astutely on staffing, but does not adequately plan its staff development budget. Strategic planning is weakened by the absence of clear links between development proposals and the budget to



	support them. Best value is pursued vigorously and effectively.
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## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

<b>What pleases parents most</b>	<b>What parents would like to see improved</b>
Good range of information, particularly about their children's progress. Quality of support for their children's personal development. Family-like atmosphere in which every child is valued. Willingness of staff to discuss any concerns. Link with the neighbouring secondary school.	The amount of homework.

Inspectors felt that the school had an appropriate approach to homework, which is discussed with parents at annual review. They agreed with the parents about those areas on which parents commented particularly favourably

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The characteristics of pupils at this school make it inappropriate to report their attainment in comparison with national norms. This report will therefore focus on pupils' achievements in relation to their prior attainment and the progress they make, as well as giving examples of what they know, understand and can do.
2. Overall, pupils achieve well, particularly in Key Stage 3, where they benefit from particularly good teaching and in the early years, where provision is very good. The detailed individual planning and the consistent approach are especially effective for pupils with the greatest learning difficulties. Achievement in literacy and numeracy is good. The basic skills that pupils acquire are brought to bear effectively and support achievement well across the curriculum. For example, they measure out the correct ingredients to make a cake. In music, action songs provide opportunities for counting out loud and in geography pupils read simple maps and count cars in a traffic survey using a tally chart. Achievement in ICT is steadily improving as the programme promoted by the co-ordinator bears fruit and its use in other subjects is developing well. In non-core subjects, best achievement is seen in art, music and aspects of physical education including dance. Pupils in Key Stage 4 and at post-16 achieve satisfactorily in a limited range of externally accredited courses, including Accreditation for Life and Living Skills (ALL) and the OCR basic skills programme, although some pupils achieve well in the WJEC Certificate of Educational achievement in English and mathematics.. Levels of achievement are never unsatisfactory in lessons in subjects that are taught, but overall achievement is not secure where timetabling does not ensure that adequate time is given to foundation subjects or when they are not taught in Key Stage 4
3. Many older pupils in Key Stage 3 are making good and very good progress at their very different levels in reading, and in their use of language to answer questions and describe events. Here, many pupils are using adjectives with increasing accuracy, and good overall progress is promoted by some very good teaching from all adults in the classrooms. There is a very wide range of prior attainment amongst the oldest pupils in the school but overall progress is at least satisfactory..
4. Achievement in English is variable in primary classes, but is mostly good, reflecting satisfactory and often good progress from a wide range of prior attainment. It is good for pupils in Key Stage 3. Reading skills range from an initial sight vocabulary to near fluency. Literacy 'booster' sessions, which address IEP targets and use correction and praise effectively to support this good progress. Speaking and listening develop well; pupils review and improve what they say using appropriate vocabulary helped by effective questioning by the teacher. Writing develops slowly and at very different levels throughout the school. Many younger pupils are at a pre-writing stage but make satisfactory progress in copying shapes and then single letters. This good progress is maintained with older pupils in the school mostly because of regular practice and the attention given to individuals by support assistants as well as teachers. Part of the Key Stage 4 programme is delivered at the neighbouring secondary school where progress is excellent, with pupils' skills, confidence and self-esteem improving visibly in a single session. Last year, three of four pupils in Year 11 entered for the Certificate of Achievement gained merits; this year, pupils are expected to be entered for English and drama.
5. Pupils achieve well in mathematics in Key Stages 2 and 3 and satisfactorily at Key Stage 4 and post-16. Pupils' achievement at Key Stage 4 and Post-16 is satisfactory. By age eleven, pupils write, order and match numbers. They add and subtract. They recognise and name common shapes such as the triangle and the square and weigh objects to establish the relationship between, for example, conkers and glue sticks. By age fourteen, pupils understand place value, add and subtract two digit numbers and order and manipulate numbers. The oldest pupils estimate the cost of shop items, prepare a list in order of price and plan the expenditure of a small budget. A small number of pupils have achieved sufficient competence in number to join pupils at the neighbouring secondary school to prepare for public examinations and last year 3 pupils passed.
6. Achievement in science in Key Stages 1 and 2 is generally satisfactory over time, although pupils receive well below the average time allocation for science compared with similar schools. Pupils develop their enquiry skills by working in groups, predicting and recording whether a range of objects will float or sink. By Year 6 pupils have very good recall of prior learning about rocks and their properties. Achievement in Key Stage 3 science is good. Higher attaining pupils are achieving standards only a little below average and are developing a degree of independence in their investigative skills. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils investigate the effect of exercise on breathing and heart rates. They use simple equipment and keep a record of their results Pupils do not have access to their entitlement to science in

Key Stage 4 and no accreditation in Key Stage 4 science is offered, which would support achievement.

7. In other subjects, achievement is good and, in art and music, it is very good. In physical education, good achievement is enhanced by the range of outside facilities to which pupils have access. In information technology, achievement is well supported by the good and growing range of resources available, which are increasingly being used to promote learning in other subjects. Good progress in PSHE leads to good achievements in pupils' understanding of their own needs and those of others around them. They develop an appropriate understanding of issues related to health and personal safety, and thoughtfully discuss issues in their daily lives and personal relationships.
8. The school sets overall targets for progress in literacy and numeracy in addition to the detailed and specific targets set for individual pupils. These relate to the percentage of pupils making a specified level of progress and were achieved this year with the exception of a minor shortfall at Key Stage 4.

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

9. Standards of behaviour and the level of pupils' commitment to school remain high. Attitudes, behaviour and relationships throughout are very good. Pupils enjoy school life and take part in all activities as fully as they can.
10. Pupils try very hard in lessons and are keen to contribute to the best of their ability. They listen carefully to instructions, concentrate well on tasks and take pride in their work. Pupils show respect for others' efforts and celebrate one another's achievements. There is a high level of mutual support and, when working together, pupils help each other with consideration and sensitivity. They enjoy practical activities, sharing resources sensibly and using equipment carefully. Many pupils have mature attitudes to their studies and work independently. In art and technology, pupils select appropriate resources and take responsibility for tidying away. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties respond well to the sensory curriculum and therapy. These pupils are valued and respected members of each class, and receive considerable support from their peers.
11. Overall pupils' behaviour is very good, contributing to the calm atmosphere around the school. At times there is some inappropriate behaviour, mainly in Key Stage 4. Pupils play together or relate to each other constructively at break times, and have a great deal of fun on the excellent climbing equipment outside. Lunchtime in the dining hall is a good social occasion. Older pupils appreciate their new social room and behave responsibly. Pupils enjoy very good relationships with adults and their peers, which make a positive contribution to their self-esteem and learning. Parents are very pleased with standards of behaviour and comment that the school is a happy place that their children are keen to attend.
12. Pupils respond well to opportunities to participate in assemblies. For example, pupils in Key Stage 3 presented their work in technology with confidence. Pupils' contributions are always considerably received in an atmosphere of mutual support. Outside school, on educational visits or while using local facilities, for example the swimming pool or drama lessons at the neighbouring secondary school, pupils' behaviour is excellent. As part of the daily routine, all pupils undertake small tasks of responsibility and carry them out willingly.
13. The attendance figures of the school are above the national average for schools of this type, with little unauthorised absence. Pupils arrive punctually by provided transport.

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

14. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. This is a significant improvement since the previous inspection when some teaching in physical education and technology was unsatisfactory. Teaching has a positive impact upon the quality of pupils' learning and the progress they make. The highly developed skills and effective deployment of learning support assistants are key features in the high quality of the teaching.
15. Teaching is good or better in nine out of ten lessons and very good or excellent in over one-third. There is no unsatisfactory teaching. The best teaching is in Key Stage 3, where all lessons are at least good and over half are very good or excellent. Elsewhere teaching is good overall.
16. The skills of numeracy and literacy are well taught throughout the school. The school sets targets for progress and these were substantially achieved this year. Achievement in literacy and numeracy is good. The National Numeracy Strategy has been successfully introduced and teaching in this area is already making a positive impact upon learning, particularly in oral and mental work. Teachers are secure and confident in teaching basic skills. Teachers understand the individual needs of their pupils very well and plan accordingly.
17. Good teaching is found in all subjects and this is reflected in the high quality of pupils' learning. Where teaching is of particularly high quality, as in Key Stage 3 science, for example, the lesson is thoroughly

planned and very well organised. Good use is made of the very good accommodation and resources and the pace throughout is brisk. The teacher has high expectations of the pupils and questions are well directed to engage maximum interest and response. Pupils' individual needs are supported well. Occasional weaknesses occur in lessons, that nevertheless remain satisfactory, when lesson planning is insufficient to guide the teacher and pupils have too few opportunities to use their literacy skills.

18. In the great majority of lessons, however, the quality and effectiveness of teachers' planning is a particular strength. Clear learning outcomes are identified for all lessons on the basis of the known prior learning of the pupils. The individual needs of pupils, including those with the greatest special needs, are identified well and effectively met through work that is well matched to their abilities, providing stimulation and challenge. Planned sessions are specifically devoted to their needs when they engage in musical activities and use light and sound as a prelude to massage designed for relaxation and sensory awareness. This represents a significant improvement since the previous inspection when it was noted that some pupils' needs were left out of account in lesson planning.
19. It is routine practice to share the objectives of the lesson with the pupils so that they know what they are doing and what is expected of them. In nearly all lessons teachers maintain a sharp focus on the objectives returning to them frequently throughout the lesson. At the end of lessons teachers confirm learning by well-judged questions and give each pupil the opportunity to say what they have learnt. In all lessons, pupils are eager to respond and are proud of their achievements. . This acts as a spur to further learning.
20. Teachers use a wide variety of teaching methods to engage and retain the interest of the pupils. Teachers give clear explanations and check to see that pupils understand. They present lessons in a lively way, which stimulates interest and involvement. For example, in music, teacher and pupils exchange greetings in song. Teaching is sequential. Teachers are adept at using knowledge as building blocks so that pupils acquire a secure foundation of basic skills. Teachers know that pupils learn by doing and all lessons have a strong practical content. In music, for example, pupils play instruments, beat out rhythms and sing. In mathematics, pupils use scales to compare the mass of different objects and in design and technology pupils construct a spider's web by weaving a variety of materials across a circle.
21. Teachers and learning support assistants manage the pupils very well. They are kind and affectionate and understand the needs of each pupil. They are generous in praise and encouragement. At the same time they are firm and purposeful in ensuring that pupils acquire the basic skills in a positive and structured learning environment. They encourage pupils to help each other and to help themselves, thus ensuring that they develop independence and self-esteem. It was noted at the previous inspection that a few staff used inappropriate physical contact with some pupils. This is no longer the case. The school now gives very clear guidelines for physical contact and the conduct of teachers is beyond reproach. Indeed, relationships between teachers and pupils are outstanding and firmly based upon mutual respect.
22. Teachers assess pupils' progress well in English, mathematics and science. Good records are kept. Teachers carefully note what they will assess in lessons and clearly link these assessments to the key points they plan to teach. Teachers have worked hard to ensure consistency of assessment methods across all year groups and this represents an improvement since the last report. The targets set in the individual education plans continue to be linked to the needs identified in the statements of special educational needs and are reflected in classroom practice. Carefully structured assessment is less evident in the foundation subjects other than history and geography, where work is required to bring procedures into line with the best practice in the school.

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

23. The quality and range of learning opportunities are satisfactory overall; and they are best in the early years and in Key Stage 1 where they are good. Improvements in the curriculum since the last inspection are satisfactory overall. For pupils with the greatest special educational needs the opportunities for learning are now good. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. These pupils make very good progress in swimming. There is an appropriate focus on teaching the basic skills of literacy and numeracy and this provision is good. There is an overall imbalance, however, in the allocation of time between subjects. Some lessons are too long; for example a two-hour block for physical education, and pupils would benefit from more frequent but shorter lessons. The extensive time allocated to dedicated literacy and numeracy lessons severely limits time for Key Stage 2 science, which falls well below that found in similar schools. There is insufficient planning in subject schemes of work for the promotion of literacy and numeracy, and information and communications technology, through study of

other subjects. Music and art are strengths of the school; and dance and musical performances extend and enrich the curriculum for all pupils. The move to new accommodation has improved facilities for specialist subject teaching, but weaknesses remain in design and technology for work with resistant materials. The continuing unsatisfactory quantity of resources in science limits coverage in depth of this subject.

24. In most subjects, the National Curriculum requirements are in place, although planning for Curriculum 2000 is still at an early stage. Statutory requirements are not met for the teaching of religious education in all years, for modern foreign languages, and for science and information and communications technology in Key Stage 4. The development of the Key Stage 4 and post-16 curriculum is a priority on the school development plan but procedures for modification to the current Key Stage 4 curriculum have not been followed. A daily act of collective worship is not provided. Teaching time meets national recommendations in Key Stage 1 but falls short elsewhere, especially in Key Stage 4 by over two and a half hours. The introduction this year of formal written lunchtime targets, although not formally extending the recognised teaching time, is a good initiative for promotion of pupils' personal and social skills.
25. In spite of the constraints imposed by the transport system, the provision for extra-curricular activities has improved since the last inspection. A satisfactory programme is provided including residential experiences, a Youth Club and recreational activities at lunchtime. The curriculum is extended further through visits to places of worship, art galleries, and to places of scientific, geographical and historical interest. The policy of walking to visits wherever possible, and the very good use of the time spent travelling to activities, extend opportunities to develop pupils' personal and social skills. There is very enthusiastic participation in dance productions and sports days. There is good access to the curriculum and to extra-curricular activities for all pupils. Pupils with the greatest learning needs have individual programmes and also lessons with their peers. In Key Stage 4 and at post-16, all pupils participate in drama in a local secondary school, where higher attaining pupils also access GCSE and Certificate of Educational Achievement classes in English and mathematics. Very well planned individual programmes help pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties to progress from home tuition to learning in school and participation in visits off site.
26. Provision for personal, social and health education is good overall, and is especially enriched by the many opportunities that are firmly established in the planned curriculum for pupils to develop their personal and social skills in other lessons. The requirements for sex education are met. Schemes of work for personal, social and health education in each class for this term are satisfactory. There is a scheme of work from primary age through to post-16 to secure continuing progression in this subject. Good use is made of circle time at the beginning of the day in the early years, and in Key Stages 1 and 2, to support the development of personal and social skills. The work related curriculum and careers education and guidance in Key Stage 4 and post-16 are satisfactory. The requirement to provide careers education and guidance from Year 9 is in place. Links with the community are very effective in supporting learning, for example, for vocational opportunities such as visits to local employers and services, and links with local organisations for dance, horse riding, trampolining and swimming. Links with the Cathedral are used very effectively to support learning across the curriculum. Good relationships with a local secondary school secure opportunities for integration. There are, however, limited opportunities to link with local further education providers to help older pupils prepare for leaving school.
27. Provision for personal, social and health education is good, enhanced by the informal contribution that occurs at break times, particularly in the dining hall, and during travelling time to outside facilities and local places of interest. The content of the programme is appropriate and places good emphasis on self-awareness, forming constructive relationships and building self-confidence. The co-ordinator joined the school this September and has yet to examine the planning and schemes of work in detail. The policy is good and includes provision for an understanding of health issues, including drug and sex education. The subject is taught well by class teachers and the quality of resources is good.
28. Careers and vocational education are taught throughout the school, across the curriculum to younger pupils and as a discrete unit to pupils in Key Stages 3, 4 and post-16. Older pupils work for OCR accreditation and Accreditation for Life and Living Skills (A.L.L.), which include learning about work and achievement in key skills. Local businesses and establishments are used effectively to help pupils develop some understanding of the world of work. The newly-appointed co-ordinator is keen to revise the programme for the whole school, replenish the resources and re-establish links with the local F.E. College. Pupils are not attending any link courses this year. A new programme for pupils in Key Stage 3 is being introduced this term after staff have undertaken training. The careers adviser is trained to work in special education. He offers individual interviews and a careers evening for parents and pupils in Key Stages 3, 4 and post-16. Pupils in Year 10 and above undertake work experience during the spring term. A good choice of placements is available and pupils are usually successfully placed. Teaching is mainly

good. Provision for the work-related curriculum and the extent to which it prepares pupils for the next stage in their lives are satisfactory.

29. The school has established good relationships with business groups and organisations in the community, which contribute to pupils' learning and extend personal development. Good use is made of local facilities, such as the sports centre for swimming and gymnastics, the library, drama studio and the Riding for the Disabled charity. Pupils visit the cathedral and teachers find the Cathedral Resource Centre useful. These facilities enhance the curriculum and provide a great deal of pleasure for pupils. Local charitable groups have raised money for equipment, most notably the minibus, and educational trips. Many employers are willing to provide work experience placements. Two pupils from a secondary school in the city visit the same class each week to work on planned tasks as part of their Duke of Edinburgh Gold Community Service. The school takes opportunities when they occur to invite visitors from other cultures. Last term a Japanese student introduced pupils to Japanese customs and a German visitor came as a representative of the twinned town.
30. The school has good links with the local group of special schools; the head teacher has been chairperson for three years. Staff endeavour to work closely with mainstream schools to enable a smooth transfer for pupils or to prepare for integration. There are particularly strong links with the neighbouring secondary school: at Key Stage 3 onwards, pupils have opportunities for inclusion in several areas of the curriculum and to attend the youth club. The drama lesson observed at the secondary school was very successful in extending the curriculum and pupils' personal and social development. A mathematics lesson attended by three pupils, however, was a negative experience. This arrangement is being reviewed. A community parent and toddler group meets every week in Class One and provides beneficial opportunities for integration for the youngest pupils. Pupils who are leaving visit F.E. colleges in the area, accompanied by staff, to help them with their future choices.
31. Provision for pupils' personal development is very good. The very high standards of provision for personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, reported at the last inspection have been maintained in the move to the new accommodation. Provision for moral, social and cultural development is very good. Provision for spiritual development is good. The teaching of right and wrong is firmly embedded in school life. Staff expectations are very high and they provide good role models. Many of the group and paired activities encourage co-operative behaviour. Many activities promote self-esteem and confidence; for example, walks to town, minibus travel, residential opportunities, dance performances, sports days, integration into mainstream school, and mutual support in the dining hall. Pupils are taught to recognise their own strengths and to be tolerant of others' weaknesses. Music, art and dance significantly widen the cultural dimension of the curriculum. Pupils study other cultures as part of their geography and history studies. Visits to the theatre, art galleries and museums are important occasions for supporting cultural development. Students visiting from abroad bring to life the cultures of other countries, Japan, Germany and India, for example. Religious education theme days help pupils to a greater understanding of different religions and beliefs. Pupils are encouraged to appreciate natural beauty. Circle time, assemblies, and visits to the Cathedral are all occasions when the spiritual dimension of school life is promoted. There are missed opportunities however for pupils to experience a regular lesson of religious education and daily collective worship.

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

32. The school continues to care very well for its pupils and provides a high level of personal support, which helps pupils gain in confidence and self-esteem. Staff have a good knowledge of pupils' individual qualities and needs, and their home circumstances. They respond to pupils in a warm, encouraging and positive way at all times. Pupils are closely supervised throughout the day in a safe environment. Parents appreciate the family-like atmosphere, in which every child is valued. They feel that they and their children are supported well and that there is an appropriate emphasis on helping pupils become as independent as possible.
33. Procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare and for promoting their general well being are very good. Child protection procedures are in place and training is provided for all staff. There are detailed health and safety procedures and safe practices. The minor health and safety issues raised in the previous report have been resolved. The school now has clear guidelines on physical contact and the use of restraint. Appropriate records are kept of all incidents and accidents, and parents are informed. Staff work very well in collaboration with outside specialists to support pupils' welfare. There is an appropriate programme for the teaching of personal, social and health education, including drugs awareness and sex education, which takes sensitive account of pupils' physical and emotional development. The school nurse gives valued advice on aspects of health education. During circle-time staff effectively help younger pupils develop their self-awareness and their relationships with others; whilst older pupils are progressing well

with inter-personal skills.

34. The school is successful in meeting the aim stated in the behaviour policy to make expected behaviour clear to pupils. Pupils accept good behaviour as part of school life and generally only a light touch is required to maintain the high level of discipline. Any problematic behaviour is dealt with sensitively to minimise disruption. On one occasion during the inspection, staff needed to use restraint, a situation that was managed and carried out to the highest standard. Parents receive a copy of the behaviour policy and report that misbehaviour is managed well. Staff are constantly encouraging and quick to praise all achievements, however small. Pupils respond particularly well to the celebration of good work and behaviour in the 'Golden Book' and the presentation of certificates in assembly. Registers now comply with government regulations and absence is monitored with the support of the education welfare officer. Good attendance is promoted, for instance, by the staff's warm welcome at the beginning of the day and the positive ethos of the school.
35. Procedures for assessing pupils' academic progress are satisfactory overall. The use of assessments to inform planning is also generally satisfactory. Procedures for assessment have improved since the last inspection. A consistent system has been introduced for assessment in English, mathematics, science, history and geography. Progress in each of these subjects is assessed each half term, and the curriculum is carefully matched to individual learning needs. The amount of support needed to achieve in the subject is also recorded. The assessment systems in other subjects are not so well developed. In physical education, except for swimming, the assessments are unsatisfactory, as they are in religious education. An annual assessment week in May brings all assessments up to date and includes coverage of the National Curriculum assessment tasks in the core subjects for pupils at the end of Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. This annual assessment is the only formal assessment in many of the foundation subjects and is too infrequent to be effective in supporting curriculum planning. Assessments in the core subjects, history and geography are mostly used very well to write informative annual review reports. Portfolios of assessed written work, records of achievement, photographic and video evidence provide useful examples of progress across the curriculum. Effective procedures are in place to monitor and support pupils' academic progress. An issue for action will be for the school to bring assessment procedures in foundation subjects up to the standard of the best practice in the school
36. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very good. The Annual Review reports indicate teachers have a very good knowledge of pupils' strengths and difficulties. At the end of the report, priorities are set for the next individual education plan (I.E.P.), including personal and social targets where appropriate. Objectives in IEPs are specific, realistic and supported by detailed strategies and identified resources to ensure that pupils make progress. Every pupil has a record of achievement, which is taken home at the end of the year. These contain photographic records of participation in curricular activities and often include pupils' evaluation of their own achievements. Pupils are helped to assess what they have done well in their learning, to review targets and set new targets for improvement. There is an opportunity for pupils to express likes and dislikes and to recognise their personal qualities. Secondary-aged pupils are encouraged to take more responsibility for their learning and attend the Annual Review meetings. The home-school diaries are used extensively and provide an effective way of seeing how well pupils are progressing and personal development has improved over time. Learning support assistants give very effective support, building pupils' self-esteem and enabling them to take part in lessons as fully as they can.

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

37. There continues to be a high level of satisfaction amongst parents with what the school has to offer. Staff work hard to ensure close links between home and school and have established a successful partnership. Parents make an important contribution to the work of the school and this has a very positive impact on their children's learning and personal development.
38. Parents think highly of the school's provision. They are very pleased with the quality of information they receive, particularly on admission, and feel strongly that they are well informed about their children's progress. They find the Annual Review reports and meetings very informative and the home-school diaries particularly useful. Parents appreciate the close contact they have with the school and feel they can comfortably approach staff with their concerns. They value the partnership for managing behaviour and the way their suggestions are received. They like the caring environment and the extent to which staff improve their children's self-esteem and confidence. Parents mention particularly the programme for leavers and the way the staff help their children to mature and become more responsible. Some parents are critical of the amount of homework set. The inspection team judges that homework is set appropriately, but agrees with the other views expressed by parents.

39. Parents receive a very good range of information about the life of the school. Frequent newsletters keep parents up to date with activities, events and developments; the annual open evening in June offers parents the opportunity to look at pupils' work and talk informally to staff, and aspects of the curriculum are presented at the governors' annual report to parents. Annual Review reports provide very good information about pupils' achievement and progress. Parents are expected to attend the Annual Review meetings, when they are fully involved in setting targets and decisions about strategies to support their children's learning. Every six months parents receive their child's revised I.E.P. and are invited to discuss it if they wish. The school regards parental involvement in their children's learning as very important and strongly encourages parents to share any concerns. Parents find the home-school diaries a useful and effective means of exchanging information.
40. Parents give good support to performances, sports day, fund-raising and social events. Coffee mornings are held every half term to provide a focus for a parental support group, and recently a new parent-teacher association has been formed. A number of parents help with swimming and riding, and during the inspection seven parents assisted with the music workshop. Photographs and letters of thanks show that the school held a successful party for the opening of the new premises. Staff value parents' contributions and enjoy these good relationships.

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

41. Leadership by the governors and headteacher is consistent and coherent. A significant achievement of leadership and management is to have established the school on its new site, with all the uncertainties and frustrations involved in that sort of development, whilst improving the provision since the last inspection and adjusting to an increasing number of pupils with changing patterns of learning difficulty. The school's aims, which relate to establishing individual learning programmes, an appropriate learning environment and working in partnership with a broad range of people, are met very well. The school has set appropriate targets for this year, which include attainment levels in literacy and numeracy.
42. The governors are supportive, informed and have established an appropriate range of effective committees; they have undertaken training in various aspects of the work of the school. Their good understanding of the work of the school derives from looking at assessment data, from reports to their meetings, from visits to the school and from attendance at training days. They fulfil their statutory duties except with regard to the provision of weekly teaching in religious education, a daily act of collective worship and the requirements of the National Curriculum at Key Stage 4.
43. Little is delegated beyond the senior management team of the school, which comprises headteacher, deputy and senior teacher. At this level, delegated responsibilities are clear, and revised formal job descriptions are about to be ratified. The responsibilities of the senior teacher are significant in light of having a heavy teaching commitment; the provision for Under-5s is very well managed. The role of subject co-ordinators is little developed; they have no responsibility across the age range for subject development, spending or curriculum continuity. As a result, planning for overall curriculum coverage and balance within subjects is neither monitored nor secured. Whilst the draft job descriptions for the senior management team identify responsibility for timetabling areas of the school and minibuses, they do not refer to the lesson timetables, which are devised by teachers within key stage groups. The school recognises the need to identify a co-ordinator for special educational needs; this is necessary because there are pupils with significant additional needs and it is unclear who, for example, oversees the provision for pupils with severe communication difficulties requiring communication and electronic aids.
44. The monitoring and evaluation of teaching is developing but unsatisfactory overall. Some observations of teaching have occurred but this has not involved peer observation, there is no established programme and few teachers have been seen teaching. The role of co-ordinators is not sufficiently developed to promote evaluation of the teaching in subjects. The school has made a very good start on monitoring overall pupil performance through an assessment 'week', planned to be an annual event, when data is collected to inform teachers' future planning. At times, training days involve staff and governors in reviewing development and establishing priorities for subsequent development.
45. Further professional development needs of teachers are identified in part through the appraisal process which is undertaken, and there are meagre records of recent training undertaken, but there is no coherent annual plan, derived from observed practice, which is fully costed and linked to the school's development plan. The school is developing its performance management plan and governors have undertaken appropriate training. The priorities for development, which include subject co-ordination, inclusion strategies and the curriculum for older pupils, are appropriate.
46. There are just sufficient teachers for the needs of the pupils and the curriculum and, as a result of a deliberate policy, a very generous allocation of classroom assistant staff, who make a significant and successful contribution to learning. The school has large teaching groups and teachers have little non-



contact time to manage and monitor subjects. Only a few staff have additional qualifications in special education. Overall, the match of teachers' qualifications to the subjects they teach is weak in many areas; the school is experiencing difficulties in recruiting staff with qualifications closely matching its needs. The appointment of staff from mainstream schools, without previous special school experience, places additional demands on the induction arrangements. However, the staff handbook does not outline the induction arrangements for new staff and, although recently-appointed staff feel they are sufficiently supported in general, they are unclear about the exact amount and nature of the support they should receive.

47. The spacious and recently-adapted accommodation available to the school is very good overall with many excellent features. The limitations imposed on the physical education programme by the poor accommodation noted at the previous inspection have been effectively overcome in the new school. A very good range of specialist rooms enables the delivery of the National Curriculum and is supplemented by well-appointed facilities for the youngest pupils, school leavers, library and administration. However, specialist facilities for science and design and technology are limited. Outside areas are exceptionally well equipped and the conversions made to the building have provided a very high quality environment for learning and teaching. It is maintained at a very high level of cleanliness. The provision of learning resources is good overall. The only exceptions to this are in design and technology and modern foreign languages where provision is unsatisfactory. For other subjects, the quality and availability of resources are, at least, good. In science, resources are of good quality, and used well, but are insufficient. Although there is still a need for more books, fiction for example, the new school library is developing well.
48. Governors and managers manage the overall delegated budget well and carry forward a sufficient but not excessive margin; this has been achieved at a time of uncertainty about some of the likely costs of running a new building. Governors have a good oversight of expenditure and contribute to the determination of the school's development plan. Long term financial planning has been understandably restricted because of moving to new premises and changes in pupil numbers. As at the time of the last inspection, the development plan is not closely costed and some expenditure, on subject materials and training for example, is decided during the year on the basis of request to the headteacher and senior management team. At all levels, the school attempts to achieve best value for the money it spends; governors are seeking to compare the performance and costs of the school with others through the comparative information now becoming available; the school's administrative officer is very successful in securing the lowest prices available across a range of items.
49. Systems of financial management are very good overall with one weakness. The school is not planning to introduce a fully computerised information management system for some time but maintains a very close control of its spending through a manual system in conjunction with monthly position statements from the LEA. Governors receive regular reports and statements of the financial position throughout the year. The maintenance of inventories is a recognised weakness in that they have not been checked annually and the authorisation of write-offs and disposals is not in place. Staff are addressing this aspect currently. The school's finances have not been subject to external audit since before the previous inspection. Day-to-day management and administrative practices are very good; communication, including that through a range of purposeful meetings, is clear. The support to teachers and senior management from office administration is excellent.
50. In light of the good standards achieved, the good teaching and the improvements made since the last inspection, the school continues to give good value for the money it receives.

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

51. In order to improve the school further, governors, headteacher and senior management should:
  - Ensure that curriculum planning and class timetables are monitored to ensure that statutory requirements are met and there is a sufficient balance within and between subjects (para. 23, 43);
  - Increase curriculum time to meet levels expected especially at Key Stage 4 (para. 24);
  - Improve school development planning, in particular in terms of the links to the budget process to ensure that priorities are adequately identified and costs incorporated into the budget (para. 45);
  - Ensure that monitoring of teaching and provision for staff development are securely established and linked (para. 44, 45);
  - Improve facilities and resources to provide pupils with full access to the whole range of science and design and technology programmes of study (para. 23, 47).

52. In addition, the governors should consider addressing the following minor issues in their action plan
- Ensure that requirements for collective worship are met (para. 31);
  - Bring assessment procedures in all foundation subjects up to the standards of the best practice in the school (para. 35).

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	80
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	37

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	31	55	10	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	96
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	14

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

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	6.5

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.2

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	
Indian	
Pakistani	1
Bangladeshi	
Chinese	
White	93
Any other minority ethnic group	

### Exclusions in the last school year

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

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

## Teachers and classes

### Qualified teachers and classes: Y[ ] – Y[ ]

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	11.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	8.5
Average class size	9.6

### Education support staff: Y[ ] – Y[ ]

Total number of education support staff	28
Total aggregate hours worked per week	910

FTE means full-time equivalent.

## Financial information

Financial year	1999/2000
	£
Total income	816,575
Total expenditure	843,502
Expenditure per pupil	7,375
Balance brought forward from previous year	60,251
Balance carried forward to next year	33,324

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	96
Number of questionnaires returned	40

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	80	15	5	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	65	30	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	55	45	0	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	25	40	20	3	3
The teaching is good.	75	20	0	3	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	65	33	0	0	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	88	13	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	78	20	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	63	35	3	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	78	18	0	0	5
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	73	20	3	0	3
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	50	20	5	8	15



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

### **AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE**

#### **Early Learning Goals**

53. In the last inspection the children under five years of age were not reported separately. However, the issue regarding the need to provide appropriate accommodation for the children has been fully addressed by the establishment of the new indoor and outdoor facilities. The accommodation includes a fenced outdoor tarmac area with soft landing for climbing and a grassed area with appropriate equipment for the children's physical development. Indoors, the children benefit from the use of the school hall, softball room and a well-equipped sensory room. The provision for the very youngest children and for older pupils for whom Early Learning Goals are appropriate is very good.
54. On entry to the reception class the staff operate a baseline assessment and progress assessments are in place. The children enter the reception class with very low levels of attainment. Given the special educational needs of the children it is unlikely that the seven children under five, and those older pupils for whom an early years curriculum is appropriate, will reach the early learning goals by the time they leave this class. However, due to the wide range of stimulating activities, good teaching and the very effective use of accommodation the children make good progress towards the targets in their individual education programmes in relation to their capabilities. Due emphasis is given to children's personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy and mathematical development.

#### **Personal, social and emotional development**

55. In relation to their individual targets, by the time the children reach the age of five, they make very good progress in personal, social and emotional development. However, the children are unlikely to meet the early learning goals given their special educational needs. Drinks at snack-time provide children with choices, help them relate to one another and communicate with adults in the class using Makaton signing. Children take turns and they respond very well to the teacher and learning support staff. However, even though the children have little independence, because of their special educational needs, the staff is very effective in providing a wide range of stimulating activities. The children are enthusiastic in their response to the stimuli in the sensory room and during music sessions offered by a visiting musician in the specialist accommodation. Teaching and non-teaching staff work very hard to build up the children's self-confidence and self-esteem. Children respond well to one another and are gaining confidence during imaginary role-play in the 'kitchen' area. Children are showing an increasing independence when they change into more appropriate clothes for physical development. They are beginning to form good relationships with adults and other children. For example, they work as part of a group, when counting the farm animals into sets and they take turns when playing a game of 'Lotto'. They understand the need for appropriate behaviour in order for groups to work together harmoniously. The teachers and learning support staff have high expectations for good behaviour. Teachers and support staff explain clearly the difference between right and wrong and as a result behaviour is good and often very good in lessons. Children are beginning to understand the consequences of their words and actions. However, they have little personal independence and need a great deal of support when selecting resources for themselves and only a small minority work independently without adult support. Children are beginning to understand that people have different needs, views, cultures and beliefs, which need to be treated with respect. For example, the children experience aspects of the major world religions and the workshops conclude with an assembly attended by the local clergy and the Bishop of Huntingdon. These workshops make a significant contribution to the children's spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

#### **Communication, language and literacy**

56. In relation to their individual targets by the time the children reach the age of five they make good progress in speaking and listening and satisfactory progress in reading and writing. The planned activities for communication, language and literacy are very good. The staff place importance on learning through talk, and due emphasis is given to helping children communicate by using Makaton signing. For example, during the 'Show and Tell' session individual children choose an object from the interest table and show it to the rest of the group. Teachers and learning support assistants encourage the children to feel, observe, and attempt to give the initial sound of the object to the rest of the children. During 'Circle Time' children recognise their own name and familiar words associated with the daily weather chart.

Children make up simple sentences about the daily weather patterns and some children read the sentence back to the teacher. They are beginning to sequence the letters in their own name. Writing skills are at the very early stages of development and therefore the majority of the children are unable to write their own names and familiar words. Teachers are effective in helping the children recognise the alphabet by name and sounds when completing puzzles. However, the alphabet frieze is too high for it to be used effectively as a teaching aid. The talking computer programmes promote the children's speaking and listening skills. They listen well to stories told by the staff and talk about the characters or objects in the story. Children enjoy talking about the photographs of past events in the reception class. Imaginary conversations take place from time to time. However, much is adult directed due to the limited independence of the children. Children have access to 'Big Books' such as, 'I love animals'. However, they rely heavily on adult supervision and support during these activities and therefore independence is not evident. Children enjoy looking at picture books and the four-year-olds are beginning to know that pictures and words convey meaning. There are very good interactive and well-labelled displays to aid children's recognition of their own names and simple words. For example, the display on hedgehogs and owls promotes excitement and discussion. Children are beginning to associate sounds with patterns in nursery rhymes and songs, for example they sing and sign the song, 'I can sing a Rainbow'. Children's early handwriting skills are promoted by practising pencil control by matching objects together. A small minority of children writes some recognisable letters, which are generally correctly formed. The high quality experiences offered by the teachers and the learning support assistants are having a positive impact on the progress the children make in their communication, language and literacy skills and children achieve well.

### **Mathematical development**

57. In relation to their individual targets by the time the children reach the age of five they make good progress in mathematics. The planned activities for mathematics are very good. However, the children are unlikely to meet early learning goals by the age of five given their special educational needs. The teaching staff and learning support assistants are very effective in helping to extend the children's mathematical vocabulary, and they are successful in encouraging them to participate in number games and problem solving activities. For example, some children talk about 'smallest' and 'biggest', 'heaviest' and 'lightest' during play dough activities. During the 'Show and Tell' session individual children choose an object from the interest table and show it to the rest of the group. Teachers' and learning support assistants encourage the children to feel, observe, and count simple patterns in the chosen objects and they are beginning to use simple mathematical language. Floor layouts help the children follow directions and in imaginative role-play in the 'kitchen' area children sequence objects, for example, when sorting plates or fruits. Children are beginning to recognise shapes by their colour and properties, such as circles, squares and triangles. The children count and match farm animals to the correct numeral up to five. With adult help the children are beginning to recognise and use numbers one to ten during practical activities and are becoming familiar with number songs and rhymes. With good one-to-one support from adults the children measure their height in centimetres, the results of which are recorded by the staff on the height chart. The staff provide many opportunities for the children to add and take away. However, children find it difficult to relate to addition by combining two groups of objects and they find subtracting difficult. They begin to understand the passing of time when they look at the hands on the clock at snack and dinnertime. Through practical activities when mixing ingredients for cooking, children are beginning to develop an understanding of capacity and volume, weight and measurement.

### **Knowledge and understanding of the world**

58. Children make good progress in knowledge and understanding of the world. They explore and investigate objects and materials, using their senses as appropriate. They plant cress seeds and bulbs and have visited animals on a farm. They look closely at similarities, differences, patterns and change in the daily weather. They look and talk about hot and cold when studying different clothes. Children undertake simple experiments in floating and sinking and question why things happen and how things work. For example, they are beginning to understand about vibration when observing the 'Jelly Beans' jumping up and down on a drum skin when hit with a beater. Children build and construct with a wide range of objects, selecting appropriate resources to assemble and join materials. For example, children make hedgehogs and owls out of recycled materials and make a circus ring out of boxes for the 'Millennium Circus'. They use information and communication technology to support their learning. For example, children use the computer mouse to 'drag' and 'drop' objects to make a frog and use a talking programme to match objects by colour. Children are beginning to understand the passing of time when they talk about past and present events in their own lives and those of their families and other people, such as birthdays and holidays. For example, they persevere when trying to communicate with adults about the

important events in the past such as a birthday or a holiday. The children readily identify the features of the classroom and are keen to find out about their environment both indoors and out. Children are beginning to understand their own culture and the beliefs and those of other people. For example, when celebrating Easter, Christmas, Mothering Sunday and when the children experience aspects of the major world religions through religious education workshops.

### **Physical development**

59. In relation to their individual targets by the time the children reach the age of five they make good progress in physical development. However, the children are unlikely to meet the early learning goals by the age of five. The facilities for physical development are very good in terms of the specialist accommodation. There is a well equipped, stimulating outdoor area for the children's physical development. Indoors, they benefit from the use of the school hall, softball room and a well-equipped sensory room. They use the climbing and balancing equipment but need the support and help of the teachers and learning support assistants in order to gain confidence. Teachers intervene very well during the planned activities, challenging and supporting the children to improve their skills. During indoor activities there are good opportunities for the children to develop spatial awareness through the rolling of a ball, running fast and slow, using hoops, skipping and stopping on the teacher's command. Children use a wide range of large and small equipment but with limited confidence and skill. Children are developing manipulative skills with increasing dexterity and control when using play dough, scissors, pencils, and paintbrushes and when controlling the computer mouse.

### **Creative development**

60. In relation to their individual targets by the time the children reach the age of five they make good progress in creative development. However, the children are unlikely to meet to early learning goals by the age of five. Children explore sound using tuned and untuned percussion instruments, in the specialist room, led by a peripatetic musician. They enjoy singing the 'Greeting Song' and nursery rhymes accompanied by the accordion. Children play musical games and enjoy hitting the drum and making the 'Jelly Beans' jump up at different rates depending on the loudness or softness of the sound. They are beginning to play loudly and softly at command and attempt to hit their own instrument at the correct place in the song. They experiment with colour and texture when painting pictures and make three-dimensional models of hedgehogs and owls using recycled materials and paint. They make collages and butterfly mobiles. There are good opportunities for mixing primary colours and producing simple printing. Children respond in a variety of ways to what they see, hear, smell, touch, and feel. For example, they enjoy responding to the different sounds, coloured lights and musical instruments in the sensory room and expressing their feelings when touching and smelling and making cakes. They express their ideas and feelings through imaginative role-play. The displays of work and photographs illustrate the wide range of stimulating educational activities offered to the children.

### **Teaching and learning**

61. The quality of teaching and learning ranges from very good to good and in the majority of lesson is good. There are detailed written records of children's progress towards the Early Learning Goals in personal, social and emotional development, communication, language and literacy and mathematics. This information is passed on to parents and the teachers in Key Stage 1. A member of staff is responsible for monitoring the progress of each child, and staff uses these records to inform planning. Teachers are secure in their subject knowledge in all areas of learning. Activities are well planned to meet the needs of the children with special educational needs and those with physical and moderate learning difficulties. The policy for special educational embodies the Code of Practice for Special Educational Needs and is understood by the staff. Individual education plans are well targeted and are regularly reviewed. Teachers' and support staff work very well together as a team, are very well deployed and plan together. They ask challenging questions, explain clearly and encourage the children to think when solving problems. Staff group children appropriately and, during the wide range of activities, most of which are adult-directed, the children are encouraged to use their initiative when selecting materials or activities. Both girls and boys are encouraged to take part in all activities. Extension activities are provided for those children who finish tasks quickly in communication, language and literacy and mathematics. The Early Years staff has undertaken training in order to improve their subject knowledge and methods of teaching. There are regular staff meetings with the teachers' in Key Stages 1 and 2 and the senior management team. These initiatives are proving to be a very valuable in helping the staff to improve teaching, planning and assessment techniques.



## ENGLISH

62. The standards achieved at the last inspection were mostly good. Currently, progress and the standards achieved are still mostly good.
63. Progress is variable amongst pupils of widely different prior attainment in primary classes, but is mostly good. In Year 4, for example, pupils have remembered well their phonic work from previous lessons; progress in identifying letters of the alphabet and identifying the right initial sounds is good. Older pupils in the primary age range, where reading skills range from having an initial sight vocabulary to near fluency, progress is satisfactory and often good. In Year 6, partly because of the astute deployment of generous levels of assistant staff to small groups and individuals, progress in reading is good.
64. Many older pupils in Key Stage 3 are making good and very good progress at their very different levels in reading, and in their use of language to answer questions and describe events. Here, many pupils are using adjectives with increasing accuracy, and good overall progress is promoted by some very good teaching from all adults in the classrooms. There is a very wide range of prior attainment amongst the oldest pupils in the school but progress seen is at least satisfactory. Part of the programme for Key Stage 4 pupils is delivered at the neighbouring secondary school where, in an observed drama session, very good teaching successfully encouraged pupils to follow mime and copy movements expressing feelings sensitively in 'public' performance. Progress in this situation is excellent, with pupils' skills, confidence and self-esteem improving visibly in a single session. Last year, three of four pupils in Year 11 entered for the Certificate of Achievement gained merits; this year, pupils are expected to be entered for English and drama.
65. Over the past year the school has successfully introduced an appropriately modified version of the Literacy Hour at times during the week to pupils in the primary age range. This is making a good contribution to improving skills. Pupils review and improve what they say in groups using appropriate vocabulary to describe, for example a bank robbery, as a result of effective questioning by the teacher and encouraging feedback from all staff. Progress in articulating complex sequences and building on each other's contributions is very good. Literacy 'booster' sessions are very well taught because they are a consistent attack on identified reading needs, they address IEP targets and use correction and praise effectively. As a result, as in Year 6, pupils discuss pictures sensibly and make good progress using their phonic knowledge when spelling and when confidently 'spelling out' the word in front of the group.
66. Writing develops slowly and at very different levels throughout the school. Many younger pupils are at a pre-writing stage but are making satisfactory progress in copying shapes and then single letters. By the end of the primary stage, some are printing letters, others are writing their names, and some write in legible but unlinked script, which stays 'on the line' and shows good regard for letter size. In some cases, very good progress has been made toward writing in short sentences. Albeit with significant differences between pupils, this good progress is maintained with older pupils in the school, mostly because of regular practice and the attention given to individuals by support assistants as well as teachers.
67. Teaching in English is good and often very good throughout and, in conjunction with positive attitudes and maintained application from pupils, is promoting learning and good achievement over time. Individual planning, a detailed knowledge of pupils' learning difficulties and the contribution from, often, high levels of support staff are significant strengths of the teaching. Pupils are mostly cheerful, amenable and hardworking; they try hard and behave very well. Contributions to language development in other subjects is good; very good attention is given to this aspect, in science for example, and there is a planned emphasis on key words in, particularly, art, history and geography.
68. Policy, schemes of work and practice meet the requirements of the National Curriculum. Although English has a named co-ordinator, she has as yet no whole-school role or responsibility although there are plans to address this. As a result, there is no detailed overview of English across the age range and, with too little time and no brief to do it, the co-ordinator does not contribute to timetabling overall or evaluate teaching and learning in the subject.

## MATHEMATICS

69. Pupils achieve well for their age and ability in Key Stages 2 and 3. Pupils' achievement at Key Stage 4 and post-16 is satisfactory. All pupils make good progress in learning about number and use it correctly, for example, when telling the time, counting money or making purchases from the school tuck shop. Progress in other areas of mathematics is satisfactory and by the time they leave the school most pupils understand weights and measures and how to use them in their everyday lives. Overall, a good standard has been maintained in mathematics since the previous inspection.
70. Primary-aged pupils write, order and match numbers. They add and subtract. They recognise and name common shapes such as the triangle and the square. Younger pupils learn the basic language of time by

putting pictures of day and night in the correct order. They count from one to ten and back. They add ones and tens to given numbers on the whiteboard. Older pupils count out sums of money to purchase fruit from the class shop and learn to use words like less and more, larger and smaller. Other pupils use scales to compare the weights of common objects balancing them against a changing number of conkers. Pupils establish equivalence and write: 'One glue stick equals five conkers'.

71. Key Stage 3 pupils are more confident in their use of number. Many understand place value. Pupils add and subtract two digit numbers. They halve and double numbers. They find the middle number of a set of five. They practice their knowledge of number in board games and bingo. Key Stage 4 pupils estimate the cost of shop items and prepare a list in order of price. They plan the expenditure of a small budget. A small number of pupils who have achieved satisfactory competence in number join pupils at the neighbouring secondary school to prepare for public examinations.
72. Pupils know how to use number in other areas of the curriculum. For example, they measure out the correct ingredients to make a cake. In music, action songs provide opportunities for counting out loud and in geography pupils read simple maps and count cars in a traffic survey using a tally chart.
73. Overall, the quality of teaching is good. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. Of all lessons seen, over sixty per cent were good, very good or excellent; the remainder was satisfactory. One excellent lesson began with oral work that enthused and stimulated the pupils. The lesson objectives were shared with the class, which meant that all pupils understood what they were going to do and how they were going to do it. In turn, this gave the pupils confidence and a share in their own learning. As a result, they were eager to take part and quick to contribute. They stayed on task and made good progress. At the end of the lesson, what had been learnt was checked and confirmed.
74. All teachers have good relationships with pupils. They assess the needs of each pupil individually and tailor an appropriate work programme. They feel secure in this environment, which improves their performance. Teachers have high expectations and are generous in their praise and encouragement. In the lessons that are only satisfactory the pace is slower and the attention of the pupils is not maintained. In all lessons, the close teamwork of the teachers and the learning support assistants is exemplary and makes a major impact upon the quality of learning.
75. The subject is well managed on a day-to-day basis. However, the co-ordinator does not take responsibility for Key Stage 4 and post-16 although there is planning to address this. Therefore, some continuity in teaching and progress is lost. The co-ordinator has limited time to monitor and evaluate the work of her colleagues and there are too few opportunities to share good practice. All pupils have targets for mathematics and progress towards them is carefully monitored and recorded. The co-ordinator has worked hard to implement the national numeracy strategy. It is now fully in place and is already making a positive impact upon learning. Resources for mathematics are good and are very well used to stimulate and retain the pupils' interest but too little computer work is planned on a regular basis. There are bright and stimulating displays, which encourage and support number development. Overall, mathematics is taught in an environment that provides well for individual progress and for the acquisition of key skills.

## SCIENCE

76. Only four science lessons were timetabled during the inspection, one in Key Stage 2 and three in Key Stage 3. Much of the evidence for the judgements made is from a scrutiny of pupils' work, assessment records and annual review reports from last year.
77. In lessons in Key Stages 2 and 3, learning is very good, and in Key Stage 3 it is at times excellent, reflecting the quality of teaching. In Key Stage 2, the youngest pupils develop their enquiry skills by working in groups, predicting and recording whether a range of objects will float or sink. The use of resources is especially effective. Teachers use an imaginative approach to recording results for pupils who are not yet able to write, lessons benefit from very good preparation and organisation and highly effective support from the learning support assistants. Pupils learn to distinguish the words floating and sinking, and they are all actively participating in the practical work. The achievements of all pupils are good in relation to their various stages of learning. By Year 6 pupils have very good recall of prior learning about rocks and their properties. On a visit to the town to promote application of prior knowledge, the quality of teaching is very effective, promoting the use of scientific language and at the same time promoting the four basic literacy skills of speaking, listening, reading and writing. The lesson is very thoroughly prepared and every opportunity is taken during the walk to the town to promote the development of personal and social skills and road safety. The support assistants are knowledgeable and provide many very effective opportunities for pupils to answer questions that require them to think.
78. In Key Stage 3, the quality of teaching is always very good and at times excellent. In these lessons pupils achieve very well. In one lesson, excellent use is made of the new science room to develop pupils' enquiry skills and to build their knowledge of materials and how well they conduct electricity.

Teaching constantly re-enforces new scientific language. The match of work to learning needs is excellent. Higher attainers are achieving standards only a little below average and are developing a degree of independence in their investigative skills. By the end of Key Stage 3, pupils investigate the effect of exercise on breathing and heart rates. They use simple equipment and keep a record of their results. Higher attaining pupils understand the action of the ribs and diaphragm during breathing in and out. Lower attaining pupils with a lot of support participate in practical work. Augmentative speaking aids are in use where needed. Some assistants, however, require more induction on how to support pupils who are using these aids.

79. When all the evidence of learning is taken together, achievement in science in Key Stages 1 and 2 is generally satisfactory over time, but pupils receive well below the average time allocation for science compared with similar schools. Achievement in Key Stage 3 science is good. Pupils do not have access to their entitlement to science in Key Stage 4. No accreditation in Key Stage 4 science is offered. The school has not followed the procedures for modifying the Key Stage 4 curriculum and the statutory requirement for science at Key Stage 4 is not met. In spite of the limitations of the curriculum, pupils have a very positive attitude to science; they behave very sensibly with equipment and when out of school on visits. Relationships in science lessons are very good and often excellent which maximises learning time.
80. As reported at the last inspection, there is still an unsatisfactory range and quantity of science resources that restricts the depth of coverage of the National Curriculum programmes of study. There is no lockable chemical store and risk assessments are not yet developed. Insufficient use is made of new technology. The Governing Body has recognised the need to develop further the science curriculum and a science development and training plan is in place. The science curriculum makes a good contribution to pupils' social, cultural and moral development, for example, through practical work in groups, working safely with equipment, and visiting museums and places of scientific interest. The science co-ordinator, a non-specialist, is relatively new in post but very committed to raising the profile of science in the school. The science co-ordinator is, however, not given sufficient time to develop the subject across the school. The monitoring, evaluation and development of teaching in science is unsatisfactory. Overall improvement in the provision for science since the last inspection is satisfactory; especially the improved science room; standards of achievement; quality of learning and teaching; pupils' attitudes to science and the development of a satisfactory system of assessment.

## **ART AND DESIGN**

81. Art and design is a strength of the school. Since the last inspection the school has made good progress in improving the provision. An effective system has been developed for assessing and recording pupils' progress and achievements, using a portfolio of pupils' work, which is annotated by the teachers' to indicate progress. For example, the teacher labels individual pupils' work to illustrate whether the work is completed independently or with adult help. Assessment procedures now identify clearly what pupils know, understand and can do and assessment informs teachers' future planning.
82. A limited number of lessons were timetabled during the inspection week. However, judgements are based on discussions with teachers, work on the classroom walls, photographic evidence and the pupils' previous work. In all key stages, pupils make very good progress towards the targets set in their individual education plans and when set against their capabilities. In Year 7, pupils paint pictures based on the Bayeaux tapestry. They produce a repeating pattern and they know that pictures without words can tell a story. Pupils are beginning to understand the work of other artists in their own locality when they visit Ely Cathedral to look at the stained glass windows. Pupils use their observational skills to draw Buddleia flowers in a vase. In Year 8, pupils investigate, combine and manipulate materials to make a 'Totem Pole'. During lessons pupils evaluate their work and as a result make improvements. In Year 10, pupils create self-portraits and a large frieze entitled, 'A Storm in a Teacup' based on Surrealist art.
83. The quality of teaching and learning in the primary years is good and in Key Stage 3 ranges from good to very good and in the majority of lessons is good. No teaching was observed in Key Stage 4 and post-16. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and make effective use of Makaton signing to communicate with the pupils. As a result, pupils' interest and motivation is high. Teachers make very good use of the specialist accommodation for art. They ask challenging questions and encourage the pupils to use the correct vocabulary when talking about 'Sculpture'. Teachers plan well and make regular assessments of pupils' progress. They have high expectations for learning and behaviour, which is good and often very good. Learning support assistants make a significant contribution to the progress pupils make in lessons. Pupils enjoy the subject and work collaboratively. They have very good relationships with all adults and one another. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are well promoted in art lessons and staff use the digital camera to record their work in progress.

84. There are good cross-curricular links with history, geography, science, English and mathematics. There is a policy for art but the scheme of work does not make it clear what the pupils at each key stage are to learn and as a result continuity and progression in learning across the key stage is not made clear. The accommodation is very good. There is currently no monitoring of teaching and learning across the key stages.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

85. In the previous report, no judgements were offered about pupils' achievements in design and technology, but opportunities were reported as being severely limited by lack of facilities and resources. There have been significant improvements in the subject, but there are still shortcomings, which have been recognised by the school in identifying the subject as a priority within the school development plan. Achievement is satisfactory for primary-aged pupils, where they acquire skills in making, using a range of materials and have some experience of design using a range of construction kits. They learn well in lessons that provide experience in combining the visual and tactile qualities of materials, making a web to illustrate the story of a spider looking for a home, and demonstrate effective skills in paper weaving. Teaching is good and pupils are offered suggestions for extending this work for homework. However, the range of experiences within the subject is limited, there is a significantly greater emphasis on making than on designing and the co-ordinator is aware of the need to develop the subject in this phase to enable it to be clearly differentiated from the programmes of study in art and design under the new National Curriculum.
86. Key Stage 3 pupils achieve very well across a range of designing and making skills. In lessons, very good and, at times, excellent teaching, underpinned by high quality planning, ensures that, in spite of a limited range of facilities, pupils are offered opportunities to develop most of the skills identified in the National Curriculum programmes of study in tasks which reflect those they would undertake in a mainstream school. They are very well supported in practical work by the learning support assistants, who make a significant contribution to the overall quality of teaching. Year 8 pupils draw well on what they have learned in science in designing and making a 'steady hand' game. They share ideas, work together to design a class prototype and use this as a basis for individual models. They join a variety of materials, setting their conductor wire in a plaster of Paris base and develop good responses to the design problems encountered. They evaluate their own and each other's work and suggest improvements they would make next time. Year 9 pupils apply their understanding of the need to design for a purpose when they produce ideas for clocks aimed at different age groups. They reflect on their designs and consider the materials they will use to make the design they have evolved. In food technology lessons, they respond well, as when a group of lower-attaining pupils express their preference for baked potatoes prepared by different methods. While they are not able to differentiate sufficiently between the outcomes of the cooking methods to compare them, they try hard to evaluate the outcomes and answer the questions offered on a worksheet.
87. Key Stage 4 and post-16 pupils demonstrate skills in making as when they make soda bread as part of their independence programme. In doing this, they follow a design, measuring and mixing materials and applying the cooking process to change the properties of the raw materials. They compare a range of types of bread, ranking them for preference and identifying characteristics that make them desirable. However, the design and technology curriculum requirements are not met, as the objectives of this programme do not relate to the National Curriculum programmes of study other than incidentally.
88. The co-ordinator, who is based in the early years class, monitors the overall planning by individual teachers and key stage meetings ensure that there is a degree of coherence in planning within each key stage. However, overall arrangements for co-ordination are insecure, there is insufficient structure to provide for continuity of learning and assessment procedures are weak. A number of strands are missing at each key stage and there is limited provision to ensure that pupils successfully build on previous learning. The school has spent wisely in acquiring a range of small tools and materials that enable pupils to experience work with compliant and resistant materials. However, planned arrangements to use the resources of the neighbouring school to provide access to workshops and other specialist facilities have not yet materialised and the result is that, while arrangements for food technology are greatly improved, there are still insufficient facilities and equipment in this subject.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

89. Since the last inspection the school has made good progress in developing a system for assessing and recording pupils' progress and achievements in geography. Assessment procedures now identify clearly what pupils know, understand and can do and assessment informs teachers' future planning.
90. Achievement in geography is good and pupils make good progress. In Year 4, pupils undertake fieldwork

in the school locality and in the city of Ely. In follow-up lessons pupils examine photographs and discuss features, such as the Pelican Crossing, and ask questions about the purpose of the post office, chemists and hotel. Pupils use their literacy skills to write an account of what they have observed in the contrasting environments of the school and the city. During fieldwork, Year 6 pupils compare the volume of traffic near the school with a busy trunk road into the city of Ely. They use the information to complete a traffic survey and discuss the similarity and differences in the type of vehicles using the roads. Through practical work they make a map of the road network surrounding the Cathedral, using strips of paper and toy vehicles. The pupils use their numeracy skills to make a tally of the number of vehicles they observe in ten minutes. They are beginning to understand the reasons for the network of ring roads around the city in order to prevent traffic congestion. In Key Stage 3, Year 7 pupils build three-dimensional models using road tracks and a variety of buildings in order to help them draw a scale map. They are developing an understanding of geographical vocabulary, such as scale, symbol and key. In Year 8, pupils visit the Stoke Bruerne Canal Museum as part of their project on 'Rivers' and 'Inland Waterways'.

91. Very good opportunities are provided for the pupils to use their design skills when making a lock gate out of balsa wood and card. Pupils have been on a canal narrow boat and understand the customs and traditions associated with people who live and work on canal. For example, they know that 'Navigators' built the canals to provide a network for moving goods. Very good use is made of photographs to recall the event and promote speaking and listening skills. Pupils use their writing skills when completing a worksheet during the canal museum visit and the computer for writing their accounts of the visit. In Year 9, pupils use information books and CD-ROM to retrieve information about the Rainforest. For example, they know the names of many of the animals that thrive in rainforest conditions and that the rainforest has a 'forest floor, 'under story' and 'forest canopy'. The higher ability groups in Year 9 are developing mapping skills by identifying objects using co-ordinates and four place grid references. Pupils study the water cycle and label landscape features such as lakes, river tributary and mouth.
92. A limited number of lessons were timetabled during the inspection week. However, judgements are based on discussions with teachers, talking to pupils and the scrutiny of work. The quality of teaching and learning in the primary years is good and in Key Stage 3 is very good. No teaching was observed in Key Stage 4 and post-16. Teachers have good subject knowledge and make effective use of Makaton signing to communicate with pupils and as a result maintain their interest in the set tasks. They ask challenging questions and encourage the pupils to use the correct geographical language. Teachers plan well and make regular assessments of pupils' progress. They have high expectations for learning and behaviour, which is good and often very good. Teachers make good use of resources to support learning. For example, organising trips to places of interest, the use of photographs, the computer and digital camera to support learning. Learning support assistants make a significant contribution to the progress pupils make in lessons. Pupils enjoy the subject and work collaboratively. They have very good relationships with all adults and one another.
93. There is a policy and scheme of work that assists teachers in planning and provides continuity and progression in learning. A published scheme supports teaching and learning. Although there are effective strategies for recording pupil's progress the marking of pupil's work is inconsistent between classes and there are insufficient maps and aerial photographs to support learning in Key Stage 3. The accommodation is very good. There is currently no monitoring of teaching and learning across the key stages.

## HISTORY

94. History is taught by class teachers through two topics per year at Key Stage 2 and throughout the year at Key Stage 3; it is not taught at Key Stage 4. In the few history lessons seen during the last inspection, the quality of learning and progress were judged to be mostly good and very good. Few lessons were seen taught during this inspection but, on the basis of these and scrutiny of pupils' work from last year, progress is judged to be mostly good throughout the age range taught.
95. The teaching and learning within a transport topic studying old and new fire stations amongst older primary pupils are good because teaching is planned to draw on pupils' previous experience successfully, clarifies their misconceptions and uses relevant artefacts. Features of the 'old' and the 'new' are recognised by pupils who are gaining a sense of chronology and increasingly using key words appropriately. Satisfactory and sometimes good progress is evident in the work of pupils of this age on the ancient Egyptians supported, as with other topics, by a visit to a museum, and on the Victorians through studying school life in those times. Past work also shows a growing understanding of how the Normans developed their defences in castles and how the Romans extended transport in Britain.
96. Very good teaching, including the crucial contributions of support staff, accounts for good progress

amongst a group of Year 9 pupils of very mixed prior attainment who are examining changes in architecture over time through visits to local churches and to Ely cathedral. Overall management, the extent to which the lesson relates to previous visits and the ready availability of staff who know the pupils very well makes this very high quality teaching. Here, as with other topics, the planned experiences of resources in the neighbourhood, followed up in class subsequently, are promoting well pupils' understanding. Previous work in files, substantial in some cases, indicates good progress amongst Key Stage 3 pupils learning about the twentieth century, from life in the 1st World War trenches to housing and family life during the 2nd World War blitz. Overall, an interested response from pupils who maintain their effort and very good behaviour, in conjunction with well-planned teaching, is maintaining the mostly good progress reported at the last inspection.

97. There is an adequate policy and the scheme of work for history pays due regard to the National Curriculum; there is a detailed topic grid. The subject is co-ordinated by the deputy headteacher who no longer teaches it and, although there is monitoring of the paperwork, there is no direct monitoring of classroom teaching and no subject development plan. Resources are good and the move to new premises has enabled them to be grouped into a resource room from which class teachers can draw materials. There is evidence of growing links to other subjects, art, design and technology and science for example, and the use of planned visits is a strength.

### **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)**

98. ICT, identified as an area of weakness in the previous report, has been significantly improved so that current achievement, representing good progress from a low skills base, is good. Pupils increasingly display confidence and competence in using a range of applications at a level appropriate to their understanding, and using the skills they develop to enhance work in other subjects. The skills of teachers and learning support assistants are being steadily upgraded as the result of a determined and consistent approach to training on the part of the co-ordinator. The major effect of this is seen in the confidence with which they approach ICT and plan to use it in their own work as well as their lesson planning. Pupils make particularly good progress when teachers or learning support assistants work with small groups to develop a particular skill and the high quality of individual attention is reflected in the speed with which they grasp new skills and concepts. However, the newness of much of the programme, together with the range of ability in each year group, mean that the present progress is not yet reflected in significantly higher levels of skill for pupils who have been in the school longest.
99. The youngest pupils use 'My World' to practise mouse skills, using 'select' and 'drag and drop' to assemble a 'frog' from a kit of parts. They respond by clicking 'yes' or 'no' when asked questions by a talking program. Primary-aged pupils recognise that every-day objects respond to signals and instructions and demonstrate this through the use of a keyboard and 'touch and tell' toys. By the end of Key Stage 2, higher-attaining pupils compose and print simple text using a range of word-processing applications. They switch on the computer, access applications, find their work, edit it and save it in their own folders before shutting down the computers. Key Stage 3 pupils extend their skills as they learn to 'cut and paste' and demonstrate skills in control technology as they programme a 'roamer' to carry out a predetermined series of movements. They explain what they are doing and identify the reasons why they sometimes do not achieve their intentions. They increasingly use their skills in other subjects as, for example in geography, where they use it to record evidence and write about their findings. However, provision for, and access to, ICT for pupils in Key Stage 4 and at post-16 is unsatisfactory and achievement is limited to very basic skills within the OCR programme.
100. Teaching is always at least satisfactory and, particularly where staff have benefited from the co-ordinator's training programme, it is good and often very good. Learning support assistants play a particularly significant part in this subject when they confidently lead groups of pupils. Monitoring, assessment and feedback of learning are good and promote progress well within lessons. The subject is very effectively promoted by the co-ordinator; as well as regular in-service training and workshops, there is a regular newsletter for staff that keeps them well informed of developments. Continuity of learning is underpinned by an assessment system that records pupils' levels of achievement within a graded schedule, and work in other subjects is well supported by suggestions of how ICT can be used. However, there is no whole-school monitoring of teaching and learning and this is a weakness.
101. Resources are sufficient and improving, although they are not evenly distributed through the school. However, arrangements to ensure accessibility mean that all teachers have the opportunity, with sufficient planning, to have access to the resources they need, and in most cases this is achieved. There is good planning to upgrade and enhance resources for ICT.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **French**

102. As was the case with the previous report, too few lessons were seen for a full range of judgements about teaching and learning in French. In the one lesson seen, teaching and learning were good, and pupils responded very well to the opportunity to use simple expressions, identify and ask for a range of food and participate in a simulated breakfast. There was a good balance of oral and practical activity and the teacher demonstrated a good command of the language. Pupils are still at an early stage of learning French and there is an appropriate emphasis on oral work rather than reading and writing. This is well supported by opportunities to explore the culture of France. There is no specialist teaching. French is offered only to Key Stage 3 pupils, where formerly it was taught at Key Stage 4 as well, and lessons are planned and delivered by the individual class teachers. The enthusiastic, newly appointed co-ordinator is still in the process of identifying an appropriate scheme to underpin planning and teaching and makes effective use of opportunities to meet with and learn from teachers in other special schools. Resources are limited at present and are not sufficient to support the full range of National Curriculum requirements. However, very effective use is made of those resources that are available, to make lessons interesting and varied.

### **MUSIC**

103. Pupils achieve very well in music throughout the school. The good standard noted at the previous inspection has been maintained and enhanced. Pupils make very good progress in music and derive a great deal of pleasure and enjoyment from it. Music continues to be strength of the school.
104. The music workshop, which provides opportunities for pupils who cannot communicate by voice to respond to music in a wide variety of ways, is a key feature of the school week, from which the pupils benefit immensely. Each pupil has an adult working alongside as together they sing and act a sequence of songs designed to stimulate maximum response and interaction. Songs range from 'Skip to my Lou' to the 'Highfield Goodbye Song'. The pupils relax during the session, enjoy the activity and play a full part. Singing is also heard in all assemblies. It is robust and tuneful and confirms the sense of community so apparent in the school.
105. As pupils progress through the school they have access to a full music curriculum. Pupils perform on instruments and voice. They listen to a wide selection of music and are invited to say how it makes them feel. Pupils also make up their own tunes and rhythms and play them on percussion instruments.
106. Primary-aged pupils pitch and sustain notes. They know the difference between loud and soft and which to use when adding emphasis. They play a range of percussion instruments, tuned and untuned. They listen carefully as others perform. Pupils greet each other in song and tap out their names on chime bars. They recognise patterns in music and clap rhythms, either following the teacher or choosing one of their own. They know about waltz and march time and count the beats in a bar.
107. Older pupils know how to group instruments according to the sound they make and the way they are played. They correctly identify unseen instruments, played by the learning support assistant behind the piano. They know about pitch and say which notes are high and which are low. Pupils compose patterns of four notes and play them to the class, who offer their opinions. They record their compositions. Pupils listen to a good range of music, classical, jazz and folk and discuss their preferences.
108. The school uses the services of a specialist music teacher very well. He, in turn, works closely with learning support assistants to provide music lessons of quality. Teaching is good with many very good features. The teacher's knowledge and understanding of music are excellent. He also uses his considerable performance skills to enthuse the pupils who respond keenly when asked to perform themselves. Music lessons are very well planned and provide pupils with a good musical education. Pupils are very well managed and relationships are based upon mutual respect. Pupils are confident and secure in music and perform at their optimum level. They also enjoy music lessons and gain considerable personal fulfilment from them.
109. As at the previous inspection, music is well resourced and has an extensive range of good quality percussion instruments. These are well maintained and well used. The music scheme of work is good and provides very good continuity and progression, which is strengthened by specialist music teaching. Pupils have an opportunity to perform in end-of-term concerts and enter the local schools' music festival. Recently, the school celebrated in grand style with the 'Highfield Millennium Big Top', which featured a range of musical items including a circus band. Music continues to thrive at Highfield.

### **PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

110. The quality of learning and the standard of achievement in physical education are good across the

school. These high standards are achieved because the quality of teaching is consistently good and because pupils have a very positive attitude in lessons, on and off site, and display very high standards of behaviour. Pupils are pleased to demonstrate their skills to their peers and participation rates in public dance performances and on sports day are high. Pupils with the greatest special educational need have good access to physical education. Post-16 students, for example, achieve very well in swimming; and the youngest pupils with the most learning difficulties enjoy body awareness and new perspectives gained on the trampoline. Parents make a very good contribution to support for learning in trampolining and swimming. Teachers and assistants make very good use of opportunities to walk to off site activities, for example to swimming, a sports hall and dance studio, to promote personal and social skills and road safety. Overall improvements in the provision for physical education since the last inspection are good, especially the quality of the accommodation and resources.

111. Pupils who have the most learning needs make good progress in trampolining, learning how to climb on and off the equipment with little support, and bouncing from a sitting position; and in Key Stage 1 and 2 dance, developing the confidence to take part and perform in front of peers at the dance studio. There are no targets for individual pupils in the dance and trampolining lessons against which progress can be monitored. Key Stage 2 pupils are learning to ride a horse with confidence. The progress of a pupil with extreme learning difficulties is very good. The time taken to travel to the stables has improved since the move to new accommodation. Once at the stables the time spent waiting to ride is, however, extremely long and unchallenging. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils are learning very well to travel by different means along a bench in their gymnastics lesson. They learn to jump off apparatus, which for some pupils requires great perseverance. Pupils learn to take turns, work in a group, work safely on the wall bars and other equipment, and to take some responsibility for putting equipment away. In swimming lessons at the end of Key Stage 2, pupils make good use of travelling time in the minibus for structured conversation. Relationships are excellent, support staff well deployed, with the result that achievements in swimming are good.
112. Key Stage 3 pupils are achieving a good standard in indoor hockey skills during a long two-hour lesson that at times encourages a slower pace. The quality of teaching is good with some very good features. The management of the pupils is very secure. Very good use is made of demonstrations to introduce pupils to new skills, with the effect that pupils prove their basic stick skills, dribbling, passing and receiving the ball. Carefully chosen, well-graded activities match pupils' different stages of development well. Pupils behave well, are co-operative, they persevere and listen to instructions. They learn to appreciate others' successes. Staff provide good role models in all physical education lessons and change into suitable clothing.
113. Good use continues to be made of the local swimming pool for pupils in Key Stage 4 and post-16. Pupils practise their swimming strokes and diving and make good progress overall. The highest attainer makes very good progress learning first to dive from a sitting position, then from standing. Students with the greatest learning difficulties also make very good progress, developing the confidence to float whilst supported, to walk in the water, and to hold the side and kick. The support for these students is very good. Lower attainers make slower progress in the water because some of the support staff, although very willing and caring, have not yet received enough training to teach the water skills programme. Assessment procedures and the use of last week's swimming assessments for planning the next lesson are good. The management of the lesson is good.
114. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' personal and social development. The statutory requirements for physical education are in place and pupils experience all the required areas of activity. Residential visits for outdoor and adventurous activities extend the curriculum. The quality of the scheme of work for physical education is unsatisfactory and does not secure opportunities for planned progression from the primary to secondary stages. Except for swimming, assessment procedures and the use of assessment for planning are unsatisfactory. The subject co-ordinator is a non-specialist and newly in post. There is insufficient time provided to meet the responsibilities expected of a subject co-ordinator. The monitoring of teaching, of the physical education curriculum, and of achievements in physical education is unsatisfactory.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

115. Since the last inspection the school has not addressed the issue regarding the establishment of a systematic approach to assessing and recording pupils' progress and achievements in religious education. The current programme of study is based on the Cambridge Agreed Syllabus for the children under five and is modified to meet the needs of the pupils. However, it is not clear what the pupils in Key Stage 3 and 4 should learn from the programme of study. There is no scheme of work and no secure, identified weekly time allocation for the teaching of religious education. It is not clear from teacher's plans that there is clear distinction between the teaching of personal, social and health education, 'Circle



Time' and religious education. The subject is currently not sufficiently broad and balanced and does not meet statutory requirements.

116. A limited number of lessons were timetabled during the inspection week. The sample of previous work was also insufficient to be able to make judgements about pupil's standards of achievement in Key Stages 2 and 3. Only two lessons were time tabled during the inspection week in Key Stage 2. The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Teachers' subject knowledge is satisfactory. Pupils' literacy and numeracy skills are promoted in lessons and teachers make effective use of resources to support learning. In Year 4, pupils begin to learn about similarities and differences between Christianity and Hinduism. For example, they compare the importance of festivals and the different symbols associated with Christianity and Hinduism. Pupils show respect for the opinions of other people with different beliefs and know about some of the Christian rites of passage, such as baptism and marriage. In Year 5 pupils are beginning to understand how Buddhists live their lives and watch a video about the 'Monkey King' as an illustration of how humans should behave to one another. Pupils in all the key stages have the opportunity to experience Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Sikhism and Buddhism during the planned religious education days.
117. Resources are satisfactory overall. There are adequate books and artefacts to support Christianity and the major world faiths. There is no monitoring of teaching and learning and new teachers are unclear about which aspects of religious education they should teach in Key Stages 3 and 4.