

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **RIDGE VIEW SCHOOL**

Cage Green Road, Tonbridge, Kent. TN10 4PT

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 119050

Headteacher: Mr Adrian Carver

Reporting inspector: Alan Lemon  
20165

Dates of inspection: 25.09.00 – 29.09.00

Inspection number: 223661  
Inspection carried out under section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community Special
Age range of pupils:	2 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs M Moody
Date of previous inspection:	18.11.96 – 21.11.96

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
Alan Lemon OIN: 20165	Registered inspector	Art	What sort of school is it?
			How high are standards? How well are pupils taught? How well is the school led and managed? What should the school do to improve further?
Mary Malin OIN: 19567	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?
Mike Kell OIN: 13101	Team inspector	Science	How good are the opportunities for pupils' personal development?
		History	How well does the school use all its resources?
		Religious Education	
Nick Smith OIN: 22391	Team inspector	Information Technology	How adequate are the school's staffing, accommodation and learning resources?
		Music	
		Physical Education	
		Equality of	

		opportunity	
Carol Etherington OIN: 16198	Team inspector	Mathematics	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils and students?
		Modern Foreign Languages	
		Special Educational Needs	
Rosanna Boarder OIN: 28136	Team inspector	Provision for under-fives	How effective is the school's assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic performance?
		English	How effective is the school's educational support and guidance in raising pupils' achievements?
		Geography	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Ridge View School is a day special school for 100 pupils situated in north Tonbridge serving towns and villages across West Kent with populations having a diverse range of socio-economic needs. Twenty-three pupils are eligible for free school meals. There are 91 boys and girls in the age range of 2 to 19 on roll, which includes 19 children attending the nursery part-time. Most of the children in the nursery are being assessed in relation to Statements of Special Educational Needs and some may continue into full time education at the school. All other pupils have a Statement of Special Educational Needs. Forty-seven have severe learning difficulties and 21 have profound and multiple learning difficulties. The school provides for 10 autistic boys and girls in the age range of 11 to 19 who have additional moderate or severe learning difficulties. They are all educated separately in the autism unit and are drawn from a far wider geographical area than the other pupils. Several pupils from the main school continue their education beyond the age of 16 in the further education department, which presently has 12 students. The large majority of pupils and students are white. One is of Indian and 2 are of Bangladeshi ethnicity. For 4 pupils, English is an additional language and one is at an early stage of language acquisition. Because of their special educational needs the attainment of pupils entering the school is well below that expected for their age.

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

Ridge View School is an effective school, which has come a long way since its last inspection. The good quality of leadership and management provided by the governors, the headteacher and his staff has enabled the school to improve well. The school is providing good value for money and has the energy and commitment to improve even further.

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

- Through good leadership and management the school has made the improvements necessary to create an effective school.
- The school provides very well for autistic pupils in the autism unit, particularly through very good teaching, which leads pupils to achieving very well.
- It provides a good curriculum for children in the nursery and through very good teaching ensures they progress well.
- The school has introduced the National Strategies for literacy and numeracy well and, as a consequence, has raised the standards pupils achieve.
- The school promotes pupils' personal development well so that they progress towards increasing independence. Pupils develop very good relationships and learn to be sociable by following the good role models presented by the adults.
- Pupils' are taken care of very well. A significant number of pupils whose behaviour is extremely challenging are managed very effectively and they are able to make good progress.
- The school has promoted good relationships with parents. They have very positive views of the school's contribution to their children's development.

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

- The breadth of the curriculum for students over the age of 16 in the main school, particularly in challenging the higher attaining students more and raising the academic standards they achieve.
- Applying greater rigour to ensuring the efficient use of time in the school day so that all pupils gain the greatest benefits from the time they spend in school.
- Extending the monitoring of the school's work in order to identify and resolve the inconsistencies in practice between teachers and in doing so ensure the best practices are spread throughout the school.

*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

Since the last inspection in 1996 there has been good progress in improving the school. Most of the key issues arising from that inspection have been addressed well and the seriousness weaknesses in curriculum are resolved satisfactorily. The issue about the effective use of curriculum time is not yet fully resolved. There has been decisive leadership in bringing about a broad curriculum and the subject co-ordinators' work has emerged as instrumental and effective in achieving this. This includes religious education, which now meets statutory requirements. In the majority of subjects improvements are reported largely as a consequence of the role of the co-ordinators. The governors and the school's senior staff now oversee the work of teachers more systematically and this has resulted in a marked improvement in the overall quality of teaching. In the nursery, teaching has improved significantly primarily as a consequence of a key appointment. The assessment of nursery children is now good. There has been a good improvement to the ways and means the school provides for the additional special educational needs of pupils. Individual education plans contain good targets that are relevant to pupils' needs and the support pupils receive through a range of therapies and medical services have improved. The training opportunities for all staff are now embedded in the priorities the school has set for its development. The school gained Investors in People Status in May 2000. New accommodation has been added, which has specialist areas for science, technology, music and several other important activities such as multi-sensory work. Pupils are achieving higher standards in English and mathematics brought about by the successful introduction of the literacy and numeracy strategies. There has been a marked improvement in pupils' achievements in information technology, which now plays a major role in pupils' learning. Information technology resources continue to improve well.

## STANDARDS

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

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

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

Children in the nursery are making good progress. By the age of five they are achieving well in language and literacy, in their mathematical understanding and in their physical skills and co-ordination. By the time pupils in the main school reach the age of 16 they have made good progress in much of their work. This good progress is matched by all pupils up to the age of 16 surpassing 10 of the 11 targets set for them in English, mathematics and information technology in 1999, only not reaching the target in mathematics concerning shape, space and measurement. They are achieving well in most subjects and satisfactorily in history, geography and design and technology and personal, social and health education. Progress in English is good overall but pupils between the age of 14 and 16 make less progress. Their reading is held back by limited skills in decoding the sounds of words. Pupils in the autism unit are making very good progress as a consequence of the expertise and particularly good teamwork of their teachers. Students over the age of 16 are making satisfactory progress. But better progress in English is restricted by their lack word recognition skills. They also struggle to read or copy the handwriting of some teachers, which for them is illegible. In some mathematics lessons the slow



pace and low expectations limits the progress students can make.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes to school are good and they enjoy school.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour in lessons and around the school is good.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' personal development is good. The relationship they form with each other and the staff are very good
Attendance	The rate of attendance is good

Pupils are keen and willingly engage in work. They are well managed by all the staff and this leads to them behaving well. The pupils with exceptionally challenging behaviour are expertly and sensitively managed and as a result behave well most of the time.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged up to 5	aged 5-11	aged 11-16	aged over 16
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Good	Good	Satisfactory

*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 in English is good overall. However, for pupils age 14 and above it is satisfactory. Teaching in mathematics is good overall and satisfactory for students over the age of 16. Teachers use the literacy and numeracy strategies effectively and, generally, this promotes good learning. In science, teaching is good. Pupils up to the age of 16 are taught personal, social and health education well although students beyond the age of 16 are taught this satisfactorily. Teachers and the support staff have a good knowledge of individual pupils, which they use well to plan purposeful lessons and to assess what pupils have learned. Lesson planning is good; it leads to a strong focus in the nursery towards developing children's speech and language. Planning is very good in the autism unit where learning opportunities are geared effectively to help pupils concentrate, work systematically and co-operate with each other. Overall, pupils needs are being met effectively. In the best lessons, teachers communicate with all pupils effectively by using speech, signing and symbols. This is not consistently good for all teachers but where it is it generates much enthusiasm and pupils have a much better understanding of what they are doing. There are often imaginative approaches and use of resources to achieve learning objectives. Pupils are managed well generally so that they behave and concentrate on working hard. Support staff work well as part of a team and, using their initiative, aid pupils learning. Teaching was satisfactory or better in 95 per cent of lessons. It was very good or better in 22 per cent of lessons and unsatisfactory in 5 per cent.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The curriculum in the nursery is good. It is good for pupils up to the age of 16 and satisfactory in the further education department.
Provision for pupils'	The school promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural

personal development	development well.
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school cares for all of its pupils well. The protection and welfare afforded them is very good.

The school maintains good links with parents. They are supplied with good quality information on the work of the school, in particular the reports of the progress of their children. Effective planning in most areas of the curriculum has produced a good range of learning opportunities. These are very good in the nursery. Careers and vocational education is good and the links with other schools are good. Curriculum time is not always used well, especially in personal, social and health education. The curriculum for students over the age of 16 is not developed sufficiently to challenge the higher attaining pupils.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The governors, headteacher and senior staff lead and manage the school well. The large majority of subjects are led and managed effectively by their co-ordinators.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governors deal with all of their responsibilities efficiently. They have a good appreciation of the school's strengths and its areas for improvement.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The monitoring and evaluation of the school's work is good. This has led to significant improvements in teaching and whole school target setting.
The strategic use of resources	The school plans its spending carefully and strives well to obtain good value. The resources for information technology are good and still being improved.

The number of teachers is adequate although some teaching groups are large. Any detrimental effects are offset by a generous number of support staff. However, the large number of pupils with exceptionally challenging behaviour requires a high number of adults to provide for their supervision and everybody's safety. The number of support staff facilitates the effective management of challenging behaviour and ensures everyone's safety.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teaching is good</li> <li>They are kept well informed about their children's progress</li> <li>The school is a friendly place</li> <li>It is well led and managed and has improved</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The arrangements for homework</li> <li></li> <li></li> <li></li> </ul>

The parents' perceptions and knowledge of the school are very accurate and reflect largely what inspectors have found to be the school's strengths. They believe, and inspectors agree, that the school has noticeably improved in recent years. They attribute this to the leadership of the headteacher, which inspectors found to be effective. Parents are full of praise for the work of the nursery and inspectors have found its provision to be one of the strengths of the school. A parent is very happy with how the school is improving her sons' behaviour and this reflects how well the school manages sometimes very challenging pupils.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

1. The characteristics of the nursery children, pupils and students for whom the school caters makes it inappropriate to judge the standards they achieve against the age related national expectations. The report judges the standards nursery children pupils and students are achieving and whether they are achieving well enough taking into account all of their special educational needs. The report gives examples of what, nursery children by age five, pupils by the age of seven, 11, 14 and 16, and students beyond the age of 16, know, understand and can do.
2. Achievement is good overall. There is a marked improvement in pupils' achievement overall since the last inspection. In the major subjects of English, mathematics and science, pupils made satisfactory progress overall at the time of the last inspection. Their progress in all three subjects is now good. The National Strategies for literacy and numeracy have been effectively introduced since the last inspection and these account significantly for raising standards, particularly in what pupils are achieving in their reading. Equally, compared with what pupils were achieving at the time of the last inspection, their standards have improved in design and technology, French, and physical education. In information technology and music, pupils' achievements were unacceptably low at the time of the last inspection. Their achievements in both subjects are now good. Teaching has improved and pupils have better opportunities to use information technology in their lessons and take part in learning how to use computers. In music the better standards are a direct result of good and sometimes very good teaching.
3. Children in the nursery and pupils from the age of five and up to the age of 16 are achieving well. Pupils in the autism unit are achieving very well overall as a consequence of the expertise and the very effective teamwork of the teachers there. Students in the further education department are achieving satisfactorily.
4. By the time they reach the age of five, children in the nursery have made good progress towards the Early Learning Goals. Their achievements in language and literacy are good. Children sequence correctly what is happening in the story being read to them and predict well what will happen next. The few higher attaining children speak in short simple sentences while others communicate their responses effectively using a switch to activate a recorded voice or by using symbols. Children make good progress towards early mathematical understanding as they begin to grasp one to one correspondences, for example, while counting bricks. Children match a variety of familiar objects to symbols as well as matching objects of a similar colour. They develop their sense of time such as remembering what day it is and quoting the arrangement of activities through the day. Given support, children find their own way to places throughout the school. They are aware that symbols and objects on doors tell them which room it is. Children extend their physical skills and co-ordination using a range of outdoor play equipment and develop their confidence in water in the school's hydrotherapy pool. They are constantly asked, and describe what they are doing at play, for example, on the trampoline children say they are going 'up' and 'down'. Children take hold of glue sticks and, with encouragement, spread glue. They select leaves and with adult help they stick them down to create the image of a face. Children sit calmly together and greet each other in turn on a daily basis. They link each other's names with the correct photographic portraits. Children take charge of washing their own hands and progress well towards dressing themselves independently.

5. All pupils up to the age of 11 are achieving well in English. By the time pupils reach the age of 14, 16 and beyond this age their achievements are satisfactory. Pupils of all ages in the autism unit are achieving very well. The effective use made of the National Literacy framework is helping most pupils make good progress. Generally, all pupils by the age of 11 have made good progress towards developing communication skills. Their speaking and listening skills are good. Pupils listen eagerly during story time and answer questions on events in the story by using either words or symbols to communicate their views. They recognise full stops, capital letters, author and title. These pupils achieve well in reading. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties look at pictures and objects related to the story being read and predict likely events in the story, communicating this by the use of symbols or switching on recorded messages. Higher attaining pupils match symbols and pictures to objects. They know the sounds letters make and read the short sentences they have written. Their achievement in writing is satisfactory. The youngest pupils start by learning to hold a pencil and a paintbrush and, using these, learn early writing skills by making marks and lines. Lower attaining pupils use word processing to record their work by writing simple sentences. They also use pictures and symbols to record their work.
6. Pupils in the autistic unit listen to each other's contributions to discussions and take turns to speak, confidently answering questions. They read age appropriate material, for example, information on a topic of study.
7. By age 16 pupils are listening carefully to others and taking turns speaking, for example, in discussing the Sydney Olympic Games. Some use complex strings of symbols to communicate their thoughts. Some pupils read newspapers and gain a good understanding, for example, of how British athletes have fared in the Olympics, naming medal winners. Some pupils read aloud with confidence although some others are slower to read because they have not acquired the skills to decipher the sounds of words. Most remember the characters and the plot of 'A Mid-summer Night's Dream'. The majority records their work by various means such as writing annotations in their Record of Achievement.
8. Students over 16 discuss their work confidently and recall events from the past year. They talk about themselves while others listen and, as a group, they show due respect for each other's contribution. However, because questioning was insufficiently challenging, higher attaining students were unable to expand on their ideas sufficiently or look ahead to where their work might be leading. Higher attaining students read the captions annotating their Records of Achievement but other are struggling to read fluently and with comprehension because their skills to recognise words are under-developed. The teachers' irregular style of handwriting they are given to read exacerbates this.
9. As a result of the school's implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy the large majority of pupils is making good progress. Pupils in the autism unit are making very good progress as the consequence of very effective teaching. Up to the age of 7, pupils make satisfactory progress in counting. They count to 5 and will hand over two bears when asked to do so. Their achievement in lessons is sometimes slowed by a lack of pace and stimulation in the activities. Too much help is provided for pupils when they should be attempting to work independently. By the time they reach the age of 11, pupils have progressed well developing their counting skills and matching or sequencing numbers correctly. One pupil blew the correct number of bubbles and another counted on as he jumped from square to square. Higher attaining pupils understand that objects can be added together or taken away. Some 11 year olds count to 10 in steps of 2 and know what a circle, square and triangle are. The good progress is sustained up to the

age of 14. By this time pupils sequence numbers to 10 and many write the numerals. Most name basic shapes but higher attaining pupils know that a line on a circle's diameter divides it in half. By the time pupils are 16 years old they recognise the use of numbers in real-life situations such as dates and time. Higher attaining pupils recognise the number values on dice and add them together using mental calculation. Students over the age of 16 are making satisfactory progress counting money and calculating change from purchases. There is some lack of pace and low expectations in their teaching, which limits what they achieve in lessons. Pupils in the autism unit make very good progress in developing number skills. Higher attaining pupils know their times-tables. Across the school, pupils' numeracy skills are promoted well. Pupils count jumps and steps in physical education, beats in music and they count in art and names shapes. In religious education they count together the 10 gurus of the Sikh religion.

10. In science, all pupils up to the age of 16 are achieving well. By the age of 11, pupils have experience of experimenting scientifically. They grow plants from seeds and test whether objects will float or sink. Beyond the age of 11 pupils have a developing awareness of their bodies, gaining understandings of their senses, organs and the skeleton. Ten-year-old pupils have explored shoulder joints by making a working model. By the age of 14, pupils record their experiments with diagrams, for example, drawings of a crocus bulb growing. They distinguish between that which is living and non-living. Pupils tell the difference between sounds made by different materials such as glass and plastic. From the age of 14 until the age of 16, pupils concentrate upon issues of personal hygiene and health as they follow the syllabus of their vocational course. They discuss various means of skin care and know the importance of maintaining cleanliness. One pupil knew a healthy diet was important for good skin care and the use of screens to prevent sunburn.
11. Overall, pupils of all ages are also achieving well in art, French, information technology, music, physical education and religious education. In art, pupils use some of the techniques and features they observe such as the free brush work of Cezanne and Turner in their paintings. Pupils in the autism unit capture in their paintings the subtle range of blues they find in a Chagall stained glass window. Students over the age of 16 model large clay figure forms in response to seeing a Henry Moore sculpture. In French, pupils start by acquiring a basic vocabulary such as greetings numbers and colours. By the time they are 16 years old they introduce themselves in French and indicate likes or dislikes such as for different foods. By the age of seven pupils know how to operate switched communication devices and respond to information on a computer screen. Pupils, by the age of 11, learn how a mouse can operate computer programmes and begin to use the mouse independently. Pupils in the autism unit open and save files and use a computer to make birthday cards. By the age of 16, pupils use word processing to write and record their work. Higher attaining pupils can shift between lower and upper case type. Students over the age of 16 operate a printer to type out information from a computer screen. They use a scanning device to add information to the computer's memory. All pupils make musical compositions using the sounds from a variety of objects as well as musical instruments. The youngest pupils start making compositions using pictorial symbols; they recognise songs and sing together. Pupils in the autism unit sing and improvise with percussion instruments. Higher attaining pupils in the autism unit have skills for using an electronic keyboard. By the age of 16, most pupils follow the beat and rhythm in a piece of music. In physical education, pupils, by the age of seven, have gained good physical controls through gymnastic work, swimming and play. Most pupils move well in space, sometimes needing walking aids or adults help. By the age of 11, pupils change pace on instruction from quick to slow. In swimming they kick with their legs and know how to float. By the age of 14, pupils ride on a horse. Pupils in the autism unit hold hockey sticks correctly and use them to shoot at goal. By the age of 16, pupils

understand aspects of exercise such as warming-up before strenuous activities. Higher attaining pupils swim 25 metres of the pool. Over time, in religious education, pupils gain an understanding of Christianity and other world religions. They know about birthdays and festivals such as Easter and Christmas.

12. Overall, pupils are making satisfactory progress in history, geography, design and technology and personal, social and health education. However, pupils in the autism unit are achieving very well in history because of the range of their studies and the very good teaching they receive. They extended their knowledge of past and present by investigating photographs and models of old and modern vehicles. In design and technology, pupils, by the time they are six years old build a tower from wooden blocks. They explore the possibilities of constructing with boxes and containers but are not shown how to fix these into an assembly. By the age of 11, most pupils assemble simple axle and wheel vehicles from a construction kit. By the age of 16, pupils know wind makes a kite fly but do not fully understand why its rigid structure is essential to good flight. In personal, social and health education there is inconsistency in the use of the subject's large time allocation. Some pupils make good progress when time is used effectively and teaching is good. Pupils in the autism unit make very good progress in coming to terms with their challenging behaviours and increasingly behave more appropriately.

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

13. The school's ethos encourages and leads to all pupils having good attitudes to school. Pupils like coming to school and they all demonstrate good attitudes to learning. Pupils show they are comfortable and secure within the school. Most lessons are sufficiently challenging and stimulating and pupils concentrate well. In an art lesson, where there were pupils who have particularly challenging behaviour, most remained concentrating on their work.
14. Pupils' behaviour both in and out of class is good and occasionally it reaches the very good. The school caters well for a significant number of pupils with severely challenging behaviour. The manner and success with which this is achieved is a strength of the school. These pupils are very well supported by carefully planning their management and by supplying well-trained support staff to supervise them. As a consequence, while their behaviour remains unpredictable and sometimes volatile, it seldom disrupts others and is quickly brought under control in a sensitive manner. This has a positive effect on these pupils' learning and personal development. The quality of relationships throughout the school is very good and adults are good role models. There are good relationships between pupils in the same class and between pupils of different ages and this contributes to the warm atmosphere of the whole school. In some classes pupils listen to the teacher with attention and respect and they show the same care to each other. However on a few rare occasions when the lesson is insufficiently challenging and behaviour management is less successful, some pupils become restless and not working.
15. Pupils have a positive attitude towards all aspects of school life. Development of their social skills is good and they respond well to praise and encouragement. They visibly mature at school; for example they learn to use a knife and fork and as they progress they learn to shop and use the library and swimming pool. They willingly accept responsibility when it is given for example taking the registers to the office. Opportunities for pupils' personal development are generally good.
16. Attendance, at 90 per cent, is good. There are no exclusions.

## HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

17. The quality of teaching and learning are good overall. Teaching and learning were satisfactory or better in 95 per cent of the lessons observed. In 22 per cent of lessons teaching and learning were very good including a small proportion of lessons that were excellent. Teaching and learning were unsatisfactory in 5 per cent of lessons observed. All of these percentages clearly demonstrate a good improvement in the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection. At that time the bulk of teaching was satisfactory and it is now good. The amount of unsatisfactory teaching has been reduced considerably.
18. The teaching received by children in the nursery and the pupils in the autism unit is very good and the quality of their learning is good. Otherwise, all pupils from the age of five up to the age of 16 are taught well. The teaching and learning of students over the age of 16 in the further education department is satisfactory overall, although some teaching was good. In relation to the teaching and learning in the subjects of the curriculum throughout the school, they are good in English, mathematics, science, personal, social and health education. Teaching and learning are also good in all of the other subjects except in geography and history where, based upon the limited amount of evidence available and the few lessons it was possible to observe, teaching and learning are satisfactory overall. In the autism unit, teaching and learning in history are good.
19. The school has introduced and is now generally making good use of the National Strategies for literacy and numeracy. The subject co-ordinator for English is succeeding largely in adapting the literacy framework to meeting the learning needs of all pupils. The training given to all staff and the opportunities used for sharing good practice have helped teachers to incorporate new teaching approaches. The most effective teachers are framing their questions and comments very carefully so pupils find it easier to sequence and predict a story's events. When there is effective use of signing, symbols and word cards pupils understand more and express themselves more clearly. This is a real strength in the nursery. Throughout the school, rooms and areas are labelled using symbols, objects and printed names, which, as pupils develop their proficiency, enables them to develop independence in finding where they need to go. There is some inconsistent use of these means of communication by teachers. When speaking to pupils some teachers use over-long, complex sentences that pupils find hard to understand fully. Equally, some teachers' handwriting lacks the style, shape and spacing to be a good help when pupils are required to copy or read it.
20. Mathematics teaching is good overall as a consequence of the school's successful implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy. For pupils up to the age of seven, however, teaching is satisfactory. For these pupils, teachers sometimes use a good variety of resources that give pupils many opportunities to consolidate their learning of number, for example, using songs and rhymes to motivate them. However, not all lessons are as exciting and some suffer from too slow a pace. At times support staff give too much help when pupils ought to be trying to work independently. From the age of seven until pupils are 11, teaching is good and this leads to good learning. Teachers are very imaginative in the approaches they choose to teach number. A non-verbal pupil blew bubbles as a member of staff counted. Another pupil counted as he jumped on the squares of the musical pavement in the multi-sensory room. Good teaching remains a feature of pupils learning up to the age of 14 and beyond to the age of 16. A very good lesson involved the teacher drawing a chalk circle in the playground around which pupils had to walk. The teacher encouraged them to make hypotheses and test these, which led to pupils using a range of mathematical vocabulary and them learning about shape

and space. Plenary sessions at the end of lessons were organised well to allow pupils to report on their work, which allowed them to take pride in what they had learned and to celebrate this. In the further education department teaching is satisfactory. The best teaching emerged from effective management of students' behaviour, which led to them participating more. Otherwise, teaching did not achieve the good pace and the high expectations seen in the best lessons.

21. Mathematics teaching is very good in the autism unit. The lessons are planned and prepared meticulously. This results in carefully sequenced activities that lead to good quality learning. Consequently, no time is wasted and pupils' good concentration is successfully maintained. Teachers and the support staff are a cohesive team, particularly in how they expertly manage pupils' challenging behaviour. Inevitably this saves time for learning and pupils make very good progress.
22. Teachers' expertise in the subjects they teach is satisfactory overall. However, their knowledge and understanding of the individual needs of pupils is good. This is shared and supported well by learning support assistants. Their involvement with individual pupils and groups is constructive and purposeful, which adds to the information and assessment continuously gathered during lessons. As a consequence, effective education plans are written for each pupil containing useful targets that build further on each pupil's achievement. In the nursery, where day to day assessment is very good, the staff carries a detailed awareness of each child's language and literacy development, which is used effectively in learning activities to extend the children's skills. Constructive, developmental comments are recorded that say clearly what progress a child has made. Expertise in English is mostly good and reflects the positive impact of recent literacy training. For pupils up to the age of 14, because staff are so aware of their needs they use their subject knowledge imaginatively to devise stimulating approaches to teaching, which result in learning of good quality. Ways of teaching in food technology are understood well and help all pupils learn basic skills in planning, measuring and preparing when making food. It is equally good in promoting pupils' growing independence and consolidating students' self-help skills. On the few occasions when the teachers' subject expertise is insecure it leads to unsatisfactory teaching and pupils do not learn as well as they could do. In a religious education lesson, for example, pupils were given too much new knowledge and vocabulary to contend with. As a result, the lesson's presentation lacked the level of stimulation needed by these pupils to engage fully in learning. Throughout the school there are children, pupils and students presenting extremely challenging behaviour, as a consequence of their complex special educational needs. All staff are trained well and skilled to respond to this appropriately. The management of pupils is generally effective and, as judged in the last inspection, the management of much very challenging behaviour remains very good. Teachers set high expectations for learning and behaviour and generally create good challenges for pupils to contend with in lessons. In the nursery, a child counting a brick at a time is encouraged onto the next one and is delighted when he completes the task. In science a range of sensory challenges are imaginatively devised for pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties by going out to look at trees and then seeing how their wood is used in manufacturing. Year 5 and 6 pupils respond well to the high expectations set in design and technology when they prepared pizzas for their group's lunch.
23. Teachers plan their lessons well and in the nursery, where planning is very good, it ensures children's speech and language targets are used effectively. There is, equally, a high precision in the planning of pupils' work in the Autism unit. It results in approaches to learning about subjects that gives equal weight to developing pupils' concentration and social skills and, as a consequence, all of the dimensions of these pupils' learning needs are addressed very well. In music, good planning helps the teacher make the right



choices of musical instrument to match each pupil's needs, which lead to them learning to play well.

24. The approaches used by teachers to promote pupils' learning are good. The most effective teachers consciously develop good and clear communication with their pupils. The staff establishes a good rapport, which draws pupils into taking a sustained interest in the lesson and setting about their work with enthusiasm. Teachers use their voice well and support this with signing to stimulate a strong response from the class, getting pupils to repeat sentences and signing. Skilful questioning also forms an essential part of building good communication and eventually leads to pupils having a clear understanding of the work intended for the lesson. In the Autism unit teachers listen carefully to pupils' responses to questions and remodels these if necessary so pupils can repeat them, but carrying the correct answer or right information. This skilfully avoids the distress that some pupils experience if they give the wrong answer. The use of short, carefully framed questions by nursery staff enabled children to successfully sequence the events on a story. In art, Year 6 pupils built upon and consolidated their knowledge of colours as a consequence, confidently saying what were or were not autumnal colours. They also increased their dexterity in weaving fabric strips until they achieved work that was regular and tightly woven. Good teaching features the investment of energy and enthusiasm from the start of lessons to get pupils making their best efforts. This happened, again in an art lesson, for Year 2 pupils in which holding a large crayon and controlling the marks and lines were the objectives. The use of lively music and the teachers' strong encouragement enabled the pupils to work by the rhythm and beat and arrive rapidly at working freely as intended.
25. Good use is made of support staff and learning resources. There is a large number of learning support assistants, which reflects the high level of special educational needs children, pupils and students have. They are capable of working effectively as a team and collaborate productively with teachers. Learning support assistants commonly use their initiative wisely and effectively, both in helping pupils learn and managing challenging pupils at difficult moments as and when they arise. They have formed good relationships with pupils and are a constant source of support for them. Some learning resources used with pupils in Key Stage 4 are only appropriate for use with much younger pupils.

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

26. Since the last inspection, when the curriculum offered by the school was identified as having several serious weaknesses, there has been good improvement in the quality and range of learning opportunities. The school now provides the full range of National Curriculum subjects and religious education at all relevant key stages. Curriculum planning has improved through the development of an overall curriculum framework supported by modular plans for termly or half-termly units of study in each subject. These are generally of good quality and incorporate assessment and evaluation opportunities. The enhanced role of subject co-ordinators in monitoring these plans has been effective in ensuring balance across the programmes of study in many curriculum subjects. For example, in mathematics, the monitoring process identified a shortfall in work on shape, space and measure and planning was adjusted accordingly.
27. The curriculum is now good for children under five. Planning addresses all of the areas of learning that promote children achieving the Early Learning Goals. The curriculum is good in for all pupils from the age of five through to the age of 16. In the further education department, although the curriculum for students is appropriately discrete from that of Key Stage 4, it contains too much repetition of the same work between some of the units

of accreditation. For example, students were too frequently looking at themselves in a mirror, looking at their photographs or mounting photographs. Too often, they repeated the same exercise of introducing themselves to each other. Whilst these are at a suitable level for lower attaining students, they do not provide the challenge for higher attaining students to reach their potential in academic terms. Within the accreditation scheme being used there is work set at a higher level, which is not being used and would be suitable for the higher attaining students.

28. Although all subjects are now in place and curriculum planning is good the school has not yet fully addressed the issue identified by the last inspection of the effective use of curriculum time. Some progress has been made and lunch breaks are now held at regular times. However, some classes have very long morning and afternoon breaks that are held at irregular times. For example, on days when pupils go horse riding, one class takes a break just half an hour after pupils arrive. Some transports do not arrive promptly at 9.00am, and the pupils using these may not start lessons until almost 9.30am. Lunch times are a long at 90 minutes. Although a minority of pupils needs extended support for feeding and for dealing with toileting and medical needs, most pupils do not need or benefit from this length of break. In addition, some parents are concerned that school ends early before every half term or end of term holiday. However, this time is accounted for in the total curriculum time and is used for teaming meetings and subject management tasks. While some classes work right to the end of all sessions, others sometimes finish early to prepare pupils for home time, break or lunchtime.
29. The effect of this erosion of curriculum time is felt in the area of provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE). There is inconsistency in time allocations for this from class to class, and different teachers designate different activities as being part of PSHE provision. For example, at Key Stage 4, forty minutes of the lunch period is time-tabled as a PSHE session each day, whereas pupils are actually in the dining hall eating their lunch. Some classes count changing times for physical education as PSHE; others timetable one or even two drink and snack breaks as part of the subject. Where this is supported by high quality focussed individual taught programmes, this may be acceptable but this is not always the case. Consequently, this lack of consistency in the use of curriculum time affects the quality of provision for PSHE, which is reduced to satisfactory overall, and also limits the range of learning opportunities that can be provided for pupils in the school day.
30. Provision for pupils with additional special educational needs has improved significantly since the last inspection and is now good overall. It is very good for pupils in the assessment nursery and is also very good for pupils taught in the Autism unit, where pupils' often very challenging behaviours related to their autism are managed very effectively and pupils learn to behave appropriately in lessons. Provision is good at Key Stages 1 to 4 and satisfactory for students in the further education department. The school has good regard for the Code of Practice guidelines and annual and transition reviews are held at appropriate times. Action plans made at transition reviews, which are the responsibility of the local education authority, are written but these are not very detailed and very general in content.
31. Individual education plans are of good quality and ensure that pupils can work towards specific targets relevant to their individual special educational needs. A range of therapies and medical services is provided on site, including physiotherapy and speech therapy, support for sensory impairment, full-time school nurse support and visiting clinics. Advice is available from a senior educational psychologist, senior clinical psychologist and community team nurses. The headteacher, in his role of special needs co-ordinator, has undertaken a full audit of pupils' needs as identified in their statements and uses the

results of this to strive to gain more time allocations for the school in these areas. The school has its own hydrotherapy pool and a multi-sensory room available to all classes.

32. The effectiveness of strategies for teaching literacy and numeracy skills is good in both cases and the school has implemented both literacy and numeracy frameworks effectively. Teachers reinforce both literacy and numeracy skills in other subjects of the curriculum, and curriculum planning procedures encourage teachers to highlight such cross-curricular links. The implementation of daily literacy and numeracy sessions in Key Stages 1 to 4 has started to have a significant effect on raising standards of teaching and learning in these areas.
33. The school provides a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities to enhance the curriculum. Many classes undertake educational visits to places of interest linked to a range of curriculum subjects, including castles, museums, galleries, churches and other places of worship. Special theme days are held, such as French days, a Viking Day, and a Medieval banquet with a falconry display. The school undertakes dramatic productions and theatre groups, music ensembles and artists visit the school to share their work. Sports days and swimming galas provide opportunities for pupils to compete with pupils from other local special schools. There is an annual residential for pupils in Key Stage 2, giving a mixture of curriculum fieldwork and the chance to experience independent living away from home. However, opportunities are missed to extend this to older pupils and students who would benefit from more experience of living and working away from home. Although a choir meets to practise once per week at lunchtime, there are no other clubs meetings in school at present. As the school has one hour and a half a day for lunch, again this represents missed opportunities. The headteacher is working to improve the provision of out of school activities. He has bid for funding for an after-school learning club that would be partly based at Ridge View and partly elsewhere in the area. It is hoped that funding would also cover transport costs to get pupils home afterwards; often a limiting factor in after-school activities at special schools. Residential experiences for Key Stage 3 pupils have been offered, but unfortunately they have been declined by the parents.
34. Careers and vocational education provided by the school is of good quality. Pupils and their families receive careers advice and guidance on options for after school from a specialist careers officer, starting in Year 9. A programme of careers education lessons also begins at this point so pupils are well prepared to consider their future options. Work experience makes an important contribution to careers and vocational education. Key Stage 4 pupils and students in the further education groups have access to this. Placements currently include those sourced through a local volunteer bureau, some more sheltered in-school work, Hadlow College and Spadework, a local charity where students can undertake gardening and horticulture. The range of work experience placement opportunities will soon be broadened by buying in to the network available through the Kent Business Education Partnership. There are also opportunities for some older pupils and students to undertake college placements.
35. The community makes a good contribution to pupils' learning. Many companies and organisations have sponsored equipment or made donations to the school for specific projects, most notably for the recent extension to the school buildings to give additional teaching and therapy areas, a library and specialist subject rooms. A variety of community links gives rise to work experience placements for the further education students and these will be extended by a recently established link with the local Business Education Partnership. A high-street bank and a department store contribute banking facilities and business advice to students in the further education groups who take part in a Team Enterprise scheme as part of their three-year course. Several members of the

local community act as voluntary helpers in the school and others participate in fundraising events. Pupils also benefit from a range of opportunities to help others including raising money or collecting goods for various charities and worthy causes on a local, national and international scale. Pupils use various community facilities such as local shops, cafes, and sports and leisure centres in the course of their studies. In particular, further education students benefit from community-based education as part of their accredited units of study.

36. The school has good relationships with partner institutions, including several local schools. Pupils at a mainstream primary school made sensory books for Ridge View pupils. A Tonbridge independent school provides use of sports and leisure facilities and their pupils work alongside Ridge View pupils on sports day. In turn, Ridge View School shares its multi-sensory room with a primary autism unit and offers work experience placements to many secondary school pupils. Some pupils from the autism unit spend time at a local secondary school, and there are joint music projects with this and other schools. Ridge View staff often work with other special schools on a consortium basis. Older pupils and students at Ridge View benefit from the school's links with local colleges, where they can undertake taster courses in preparation for moving on to college after leaving school. Increasing opportunities for pupil inclusion into mainstream schools is a stated priority of the headteacher, who is particularly keen to extend links in the primary sector.

#### **How good are the opportunities for pupils' personal development?**

37. The school makes good provision for the development of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, which represents satisfactory progress since the last inspection. This is due to the increase in the number and range of opportunities now available for promoting spiritual and cultural development, and the improved curricular planning that ensures all aspects are promoted formally as well as through the school's ethos.
38. The school's planned provision for promoting pupils' spiritual development is good. Religious education lessons and daily acts of collective worship provide many opportunities to do this. The whole school comes together for an act of collective worship for one day each week, but there are acts of collective worship on all the other days as class activities. Teachers use these activities particularly well to produce periods of calm and silence. Pupils were seen listening to relaxing background music as the teacher read a poem in an atmosphere of calm, encouraged by the lighting of a candle. A teacher of pupils with autism was able to combine a discussion of autumn with the spiritual experience of pupils reflecting on the changing seasons. They were in awe at the colours of the autumn leaves that the teacher brought into the classroom. Other pupils considered a basket of fruit as they listened to music and were all given a piece of apple to eat as they sat quietly and thought about their day. One pupil felt confident enough to volunteer to say his own short prayer. The school uses all opportunities to support pupils in their learning through a multi-sensory approach that enables them to explore their world by tasting food, smelling the candle and listening to music.
39. Pupils' moral development is encouraged throughout the day through pupils' interactions with adults, and staff provides good role models. The school's overall ethos and the ongoing contributions of staff mean that the school provides good opportunities for moral development. Many patient one to one explanations of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour were observed and some pupils are able to apologise for doing things wrongly and thus modify their behaviour accordingly. In the further education department staff are particularly effective in talking to students about what might be the consequences of unacceptable behaviour.

40. There are good school-based and off-site activities that encourage social development. Lunchtime was an ordered and pleasant occasion, with pupils encouraged to show good manners and to behave appropriately. They were courteous during break times, taking it in turns to serve drinks and developing social skills such as sharing and consideration for the needs of others. Staff encourage social behaviour by simple, but effective, acts such as welcoming older pupils in the morning by shaking hands and encouraging socialisation with themselves and between pupils. A number of visits to local places of interest and amenities, such as the swimming pool and a horse-riding centre, presents many opportunities to reinforce social behaviour and encourage an understanding of living in a community.
41. The school has made good improvement in increasing the range of opportunities that expose pupils to aspects of their own culture. There are many school visits to historical places. A visit to the National Gallery resulted in pupils producing some very good large paintings. Modern culture is promoted. There was an interesting display of the 1960's in the Key Stage 4 classroom. The school also provides opportunities for pupils to increase their experiences of other cultures. There were very good displays of African masks and pupils had made flags in the style of Mexican textiles. Pupils had visited a Sikh temple and younger children developed understanding of Islam by weaving prayer mats in an art lesson.

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

42. The school's procedures to ensure pupils welfare, health and safety, including arrangements for child protection are, collectively, very good. They contribute well to pupils' ability to make progress. Child protection procedures are understood by the staff and they are trained in child protection matters on a regular basis. Staff are kept well-informed, with updates posted in the staff room. Procedures for promoting the health, safety and well being of pupils are very good. Regular health and safety audits and risk assessments take place. The school is staffed well with qualified nurses.
43. Procedures for monitoring the personal development of pupils are good. There are good procedures for supporting pupils as they join the school, either in the nursery or at a later stage and also when they have one day per week at college during their last two years at school. Parents appreciate these procedures. Staff know pupils very well and demonstrate a genuine concern for their care, support and guidance. Multi-disciplinary work is effective. The school has good contact with a range of professionals who provide support for these pupils. These include physiotherapists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists and an educational psychologist as well as a clinical psychologist and nurses from the community team for learning disabilities.
44. Procedures for monitoring and improving attendance are satisfactory. Registers are marked both morning and afternoon but for some teachers there is inconsistency in how they use the procedures. Some teachers are formal and mark the register with their class when it has assembled; some teachers mark the register informally as pupils arrive. There is inconsistency also in how pupils' absences is recorded and although this is followed up with parents for reasons, not all registers are then updated to show this. So they present an inaccurate record. Most pupils arrive by school bus and taxi. Some are delivered in the car by their parents. The school does not open its doors until almost 9.00am when teachers and learning support assistants meet pupils and take them to their respective classes. Most of the transport for pupils arrives near to 9.00am but some pupils arrive as late as 9.30am. Pupils are settled to work as soon as they arrive. While the school monitors arrival times and exerts pressure on transport contractors to keep to

times some pupils arrive late and this eats into their teaching time.

45. Procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are good. Staff apply the behaviour policy consistently. It emphasises positive reinforcement of good behaviour and attitudes as the preferred means of improving behaviour and pupils generally are well aware of what is expected of them. The significant number of pupils with very challenging behaviour are very effectively managed by teachers and support staff. The staff apply their training in managing these pupils well. This ensures everyone's safety as well as their opportunities for learning. The school has effective procedures in place to deal with any instances of harassment and bullying and none were seen during the week of inspection. The ethos of the school, in particular the very good relationships, promotes good behaviour.

#### **How effective is the assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic performance?**

46. Procedures for assessing pupils' attainment and progress are good. The school has worked hard since the last inspection to improve procedures for assessing and monitoring pupils' progress. A well-written assessment and monitoring policy defines procedures for staff to follow. There is a good quality baseline assessment when pupils enter school. This initial information is used by all teachers to inform planning. In some classes across Key Stage 1 to Key Stage 4 teachers' subsequent entries can be inconsistent. This results in an incomplete record of pupils' progress. There is a positive partnership with the specialist support services that visit the school. Advice from assessments and ideas for improving the quality of the pupils' curriculum is incorporated into the individual education plans.
47. Annual review reports are thoughtfully written and give a detailed account of the pupil's progress and achievements throughout the year. The majority of parents attend and contribute to the annual review of their child's statement and individual education plan. The requirements of the Code of Practice are effectively met.
48. The school's innovative practice on target setting has resulted in sharper challenge for the school community to provide learning opportunities that enable pupils to increase their achievement. The monitoring of these targets within six months of being set has seen pupils' make progress in each area, with the exception of one aspect of mathematics, shape and space and measure. The reasons for this underachievement, now it is clear, are being investigated by the school. The newly appointed assessment co-ordinator plans to research methods to investigate ways of assessing pupils' attainment and progress for subjects across the curriculum. Schemes of work and termly planning modules are audited to ensure pupils are covering the curriculum.
49. Records of achievement are kept for every pupil though the quality and quantity of entries are inconsistent. In the autism unit and in the nursery excellent examples of sequential observations, clearly annotated photographs and age appropriate samples of work give an excellent portrait of the child's attainment and rate of progress. In the further education department, Records of Achievement show good examples of the range of activities that the young people undertake. However, the annotation of entries is inconsistent and it is not always clear as to the pupils' rate of progress and attainment. For pupils from the age of five to the age of 16, the quality of entries is inconsistent. In the best examples there is sufficient quantity of work with some examples annotated by the pupil. Symbols are also used by teachers and pupils to record achievement. In the less satisfactory examples entries are erratic and poorly annotated leaving the rate of progress over time and achievement unclear. This is despite the guidance on the function and process of recording achievement and the annotation of work stated in school policy. The school is

aware that more stringent monitoring is needed to bring consistency to some teachers.

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

50. The school's partnership and links with parents, guardians and carers is good and much appreciated by parents. Parents are very happy with the school. They have seen improvements in their children's ability to mix with others, in their confidence and self-esteem. Most important they believe is that the school encourages their child to reach their full potential.
51. The quality of information for parents, guardians and carers is good. There is a clear prospectus and regular newsletters, which keep parents well informed about school events. There are numerous telephone calls to and from parents and parents feel able to telephone the school when they have a particular problem. The headteacher makes time to reassure any parent or guardian with a problem and willingly does what he can to alleviate it. The school operates an open door policy and parents, guardians and carers clearly feel that the headteacher and staff are approachable, welcoming and prepared to discuss their children and any related problems. Parents are actively encouraged to communicate with the school, and the school is committed to partnership with them.
52. Parents, carers and guardians receive a copy of pupils' individual education plans and are encouraged to approach the school with any difficulties or concerns. At the end of each term they receive another copy with targets achieved and where pupils have reached on other targets. Parents are happy with this and believe they have a very full picture of the targets set for their child and how well they have done in achieving them.
53. The contribution of parents to their children's learning at school and at home is good. The school communicates effectively about the work pupils are doing in school and this enables parents to carry this work on at home. An appropriate home school agreement is in place and there are home school liaison books and links with escorts who assist in bringing messages from home to school and vice versa. Good efforts are made to encourage attendance at annual reviews and there are regular parents meetings.
54. The transition process from primary to secondary is well handled. Good links are established with West Kent College where the further education department's students attend for day release on a variety of topics including cookery, dance and drama and hair and beauty.

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

55. The leadership of the headteacher, the senior managers and subject co-ordinators is good. They are supported well in running the school by a very effective and involved governing body. In the last inspection it was identified that while signs of effective management were beginning to be apparent, the school lacked the decisive leadership to drive the school forward. Serious weaknesses in the curriculum were found and the monitoring of what was on offer to pupils was inadequate. The serious weaknesses in the curriculum have been addressed and it is now satisfactory. The monitoring the school's provision has improved well and is now good. The headteacher along with other senior staff have regularly observed teaching for some time and their approach to this has become increasingly sharp. The management of subject co-ordinators too has been established well and they provide an additional level of regular monitoring in the classroom focused on the effective delivery of their subjects. All of this has had a very noticeable effect upon the quality of teaching, the bulk of which is now good and very little that is unsatisfactory. This is a good improvement from the time of the last inspection

when teaching was largely satisfactory with a sizeable proportion unsatisfactory. As a consequence the progress pupils are making today is better than at the time of the last inspection. Parents have a high regard for the headteacher and are very strongly of the opinion that the school is well led and managed. Inspectors agree with parents and consider that the good improvements come from the headteachers' clear and determined leadership. The work of the senior management team is effective. The recent departures of two key staff and a delay in appointing a new deputy headteacher has necessitated a provisional management structure whose members are settling to new roles. However, staff morale is high; they are confident in their capacity to maintain a good school and their shared commitment to doing so is good.

56. The school benefits from having a strong and supportive governing body. They play a very good role in shaping the direction of the school and fulfil their statutory responsibilities well. The governors have for some time provided stability and assurance as the headteacher and his staff moved the school forward. They feel this is their school and that they are part of the team. Their commitment to seeing the action plan from the last inspection completed successfully is very patent in the records of their meetings. They work strategically by getting reports from subject co-ordinators on curriculum developments and by regularly visiting the school to check the educational provision for themselves. They work from a strong position, effectively evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of the school and, in close collaboration with the headteacher, find the effective actions for improvement. They play an active role in setting priorities for development and set targets for the headteacher. Currently, inclusion is the major thrust targeted and, as a consequence, the school is now developing and consolidating good links with other schools.
57. There is a good reflection of the school's aims and values in its work because there is a well shared commitment to the welfare and progress of all pupils. This is evident in how pupils are cared for, in particular the concern to manage the very challenging behaviour presented by a significant number of the pupils. This is achieved skilfully in a sensitive manner that allows those pupils to achieve well despite their difficulties. Equally, aims and values are reflected well in the attention given to meeting pupils special educational needs, especially those attending the Autism unit and nursery.
58. The school produces good priorities for development as a consequence of an effective school improvement planning process. There is wide consultation before agreeing the priorities and these are translated into good and detailed action plans that state clearly what steps are to be taken to deliver the targets. The evaluation and summarising of the progress towards targets provides a clear picture of the school and sets an equally clear direction for the future. It is written and set out in a manner that is accessible to all staff and others involved with the school. Individual subject development planning is good mostly, although there is some inconsistency in practice. This results in some subjects producing development plans that are unsatisfactory.

#### **How good is the strategic use of the school's resources?**

59. The school has not been externally audited since 1996, when its financial control systems were judged to be satisfactory. Since then it has carried out self-assessments using the local authority financial control format. Budgeting and financial control systems are good. Mechanisms are in place that enable the school to respond quickly and effectively once it receives firm details on the figures it is able to carry forward and its allocation for the forthcoming year. The headteacher, bursar and Chair of the finance committee jointly produce draft budgets towards the end of the financial year taking careful account of the priorities contained in the school's improvement plan. When income details are known



early in the financial year the school is able to proceed with its planned spending secure in the knowledge that budgets have been set in line with the priorities for development that have been identified. Careful planning meant that last year the school was able to carry forward approximately £73,000. Much of this has now been spent on targeted needs relating to the curriculum, in particular books and information and technology equipment, and refurbishment and teachers' salaries. Grants that the school receives for specific purposes are spent wisely in accordance with their intended purpose. When grants are not linked to a specific purpose, governors restrict its spending until the school has identified clear priorities linked to its overall strategic direction.

60. The school follows the principles of best value well. This is evident in its approach towards tenders and quotations. These are always obtained before orders are placed but governors examine them carefully to ensure that the whole package represents best value to the school, even though that might not be the cheapest. This approach is manifest in its current review of the administration of the school payroll, where it is seeking consultation with a number of prospective companies before deciding whether or not to move out of the local authority system. The school uses new technologies effectively and efficiently. Routine tasks such as annual reviews, individual education plans and annual reports are all produced electronically and computerised systems are used for bookkeeping and accounting procedures.

#### **How adequate are the school's staffing, accommodation and learning resources?**

61. The school has sufficient teachers to meet the demands of the curriculum, including areas of learning for children under five. The teaching staff is deployed effectively to meet the needs of pupils and students. Staff development and training opportunities are good and all staff are included in these. The school is preparing its strategy well for implementing the national initiative on performance management for all teachers. The senior staff have received training and performance management has been addressed with all staff during a training day in school. The current school improvement plan has a priority for the immediate finalisation of a policy and the implementation of a system of performance management. All teachers have had training relevant to the literacy and numeracy strategies. This has contributed to the effectiveness of these strategies in the school and the improvements in pupils' progress. The training provided in the use of information technology accounts for the sharp improvement in standards in this area of the curriculum. The support that is provided by the information technology technician has assisted this improvement. Educational support staff are well trained and appraised. They are very committed and work in harmony with class teachers in the best interests of pupils and students. Teamwork in classes is good and this leads to good learning for all and makes a significant contribution to the standards achieved.
62. The school's accommodation is satisfactory overall, although there has been some new building since the last inspection providing good accommodation. There are now specialist classrooms rooms for design and technology, food technology and music. There are designated rooms for soft-play, physiotherapy, the multi-sensory curriculum and a hydrotherapy pool. The library is pleasant and airy, providing Internet access as well as books. However, there are problems with storing essential equipment. Corridors are used to store wheelchairs and the large equipment needed by pupils. The school hall is also used for storing chairs. In the case of the hall, this adversely effects the teaching of physical education here and presents a safety hazard when pupils are doing gymnastics. Some of the toilets and showers are in an unsatisfactory condition and do not protect pupils' privacy and dignity effectively. The headteacher and governors have identified the need to improve these areas in the school improvement plan. The autism unit's accommodation is good. All of the outside areas are satisfactory; play areas and sensory garden are good. Displays around the school are lively, interesting and bright

and illustrate the life of the school very well.

63. Learning resources are good, overall. In the nursery there are very good, well-organised and age appropriate resources that help children independently choose activities. Resources in English are very good. The new library is stocked well with books that complement the curriculum and contribute to the progress pupils make with literacy. However, there are not enough books about teenage culture to increase the interest of secondary age pupils and students. Information technology resources have improved since the last inspection and remain a focus of school improvement. Digital equipment, access to the Internet, and the purchase of well-matched software has benefited pupils' learning. Resources are good in all subjects except in history, geography and music where they are satisfactory. The school has a commitment to improving resources in line with its improvement plan.

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

In order to continue the the good improvement already achieved the governors and the headteacher need to:

- (1) Improve the teaching and planning of the curriculum for students in the further education department in order to raise the academic standards of higher attaining students. Do this by:
  - planning lessons and courses that will better challenge the higher attaining students.

See paragraphs: 20, 27 and 90.

- (2) ensure that all teachers make the most efficient use of teaching time throughout the school day by:
  - seeing that the time allocated to each area of the curriculum is adhered to consistently by all teachers.
  - all of the times allocated for personal, social and health education are carefully planned and approached by teachers in an effective and efficient manner.

See paragraphs: 12, 28, 29, 33, 44 and 153.

- (3) ensure through careful monitoring, support and training that all teachers, when they are speaking, signing, using symbols or writing are communicating effectively with all pupils so that all pupils have good access to learning.

See paragraphs: 19, 77, 79, 82 and 113.

The governors and the headteacher should also consider:

Extending the good monitoring of the school's work into identifying and remedying inconsistencies with the school's policies in the practice of teachers and by doing so ensure that the best practices are made widespread.

See paragraphs: 44, 46, 49, and 89.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	86
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	31

### Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3.5	18.6	46.5	26.7	4.6	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	91
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	23

#### English as an additional language

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	3

#### Pupil mobility in the last school year

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	2
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

### Attendance

#### Authorised absence

	%
School data	7.77

#### Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	3.42

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

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

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	1
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	2
Chinese	0
White	87
Any other minority ethnic group	1

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

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

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

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

#### **Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y6**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	12.7
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	7.3
Average class size	11.1

#### **Education support staff: YR – Y6**

Total number of education support staff	43
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1144

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### ***Financial information***

Financial year	2000
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	£
Total income	794847
Total expenditure	802149
Expenditure per pupil	8814
Balance brought forward from previous year	80621
Balance carried forward to next year	73319

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	91
Number of questionnaires returned	37

### Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	84	11	3	0	3
My child is making good progress in school.	78	16	0	3	3
Behaviour in the school is good.	62	27	0	3	5
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	24	11	14	5	16
The teaching is good.	89	8	0	3	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	86	11	0	3	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	84	14	0	3	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	73	24	0	3	0
The school works closely with parents.	73	24	0	3	0
The school is well led and managed.	95	3	0	3	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	68	22	0	3	5
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	49	19	11	3	11

### Summary of parents' and carers' responses

The very large majority of parents hold positive views about the school and how well it provides for their children. Parents see the school as a friendly and approachable. Inspectors agree with this, having found the school pays good attention to parents' views and takes the trouble to keep them well-informed about the key areas of their children's development. Parents are less equivocal on the issue of the work their children are given to do at home and the school needs to ensure parents are fully consulted and aware of the school's policy on homework.

## **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**

64. The nursery is good and improving. The issues raised in the last inspection relating to improving the quality of assessment for pupils under the age of five have been addressed. The quality of education provided is good and children make good progress in all areas of the Early Years curriculum towards their individual targets. The nursery admits children from the age of two until the end of their reception year. Children have a wide range of special educational needs.

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

65. Children's achievements in language and literacy are good. All the staff work as a well co-ordinated team and use consistent communication strategies which prompt children to complete their tasks as independently as possible. This good practice is consistently used throughout the curriculum. Through careful questioning, using simple sentence structures, signs and symbols, all children are encouraged to sequence. They learn very well what is happening during story time and predict what they think will happen next. The higher attaining children complete the sentence whilst the other members of the group choose a symbol or press a communication device. Very good lesson planning ensures that speech and language targets for each child are skilfully woven into the flow of the lesson. An excellent example of this was seen as children said goodbye to each other. A candle was lit. One child was asked look at the candle as the teacher blew it out. By watching the teacher demonstrate the activity the next reticent child achieved the task independently. Children's concentration and attention was maintained by the use of questions, "whose turn is it now? "Are you looking?" During structured play children say, or select a symbol to choose their choice of activity. The provision of appropriate activities motivates children to experiment with paint, glue and draw freely, which helps develop their early writing skills.

#### **Mathematical development.**

66. Children make good progress through the early stages of mathematical understanding. During structured play staff extend children's mathematical thinking, by engaging them in conversation. Their learning about number is very good. As one child counted bricks staff challenged him to count the next. The child jumped with delight as he achieved the task. During soft play activities children are encouraged to name and match the objects to symbols, colour match balls from the ball pool, experiment with shapes and respond to instructions including up and down. Through a well structured start to lessons children develop their sense of time by remembering the name of the day and the sequence of their day's activities. Computers are effectively used to reinforce and develop counting and matching skills.

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

67. Children's achievements are good as they are guided to independently find their way around their school environment. On arrival at school they identify their coat peg and hang up their coat. They proceed to find their own way to their classrooms. Throughout the school day staff give children a clear understanding of when it is time to change an activity. When children were going to the food technology room to cook pasta, the teacher explained where they were going by showing children the symbol and a wooden spoon. The children were challenged to find the spoon and symbol on the door when they reached the room. As they walked to the room staff discussed which way to go and encouraged children to remember the route. The tremendous excitement as children spotted the wooden spoon stuck to the food technology door illustrated that they had learn

this lesson very well.

### **Physical development.**

68. Children make good progress in this area of the curriculum. Careful planning ensures that children have full access to play equipment and the hydrotherapy pool. This enables children to independently choose where to play in the soft play area, play as a group and develop their water confidence skills. All children use a range of outdoor play equipment and experiment with sand, and water play. Physiotherapy advice is skilfully woven into the class activities enabling all pupils to display confidence, dexterity and enjoyment whilst moving around their environment. During physical activities children are prompted to use words to describe their activities. Children using the trampoline said the word trampoline and described up and down. Several children have physical difficulties, which require specialist equipment. This equipment is used effectively and unobtrusively to ensure that these children are able to fully participate in the classroom activities.

### **Creative development.**

69. Planning includes activities that enable children to make satisfactory progress. During art activities children work individually and are encouraged to use glue sticks independently. However, the teacher decided to work with pairs of children at a time on the art activity while the support staff engaged the remainder of the group for most of the time in other work. As a consequence the amount of time children had for art was very little. As children prepared to cook they compared the size, shape and texture of pasta with imaginative and enthusiastic language and signing. The staff's detailed understanding of each child's language and literacy development enabled them to reinforce and extend children's language as they investigated the pasta patterns.

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

70. The provision for children's personal, social and emotional development is good and leads to achievement that is good. The nursery creates a warm, caring environment, which is permeated with respect for individual achievement and a great deal of fun. Teachers have high expectations of behaviour and adopt a positive approach to emphasising children's good behaviour and enhancing children's self image. The timely use of phrases such as, "good looking " ensure that calm, appropriate praise is given when children achieve their task. Registration is used as a rich learning opportunity. All children sit together and take turns to individually greet each other. They select photographs and names of both children and staff. At break-time pupils play happily and staff encourage co-operative play. Children wash their hands and dress as independently as they can. Where a child is learning a new skill in dressing there is consistent expectation that the child will do as much as he can for himself, without prompting. Children put some of their activities away at the end of sessions. Excellent portfolios of children's achievement reflect the quality and quantity of work that the children complete. The portfolios record unique glimpses of their progress.
71. The teaching of children who are under five is very good and overall, the quality of their learning is very good. The planning, recording and assessment records are thorough and reflect the staffs very detailed knowledge of individual abilities, learning styles and attitudes. Individual education plans are good. They cover the six areas of the early learning curriculum and they are regularly reviewed. Assessment records are annotated by constructive developmental comments, which illuminate the child's rate of progress. Children quickly develop a very good range of knowledge and skills. Well-organised age appropriate resources enable children to independently choose activities. However resources for children with significant sensory impairment require further development in order to encourage them to develop their choice of activity and to join in activities with other children. Overall, children very keen learners and as they become increasingly

engrossed in the nursery they behave and cope with being independent very well.

72. Leadership and management in the nursery are very good. The strategic use of resources is also very good. Planning for the future includes the continued development of computer facilities and the development of inclusion opportunities with other nurseries. A real strength of the nursery is the consistent use by the teacher and support staff of simple language, symbols and signing for all children. This enables children to understand and express themselves according to their ability.

## **ENGLISH**

73. The standards pupils achieve in English have improved since the last inspection and are good overall in relation to pupils' special educational needs. This is due to the excellent leadership of the subject co-ordinator. The introduction of the National Literacy Strategy has had a significant impact on the good progress that pupils make with their literacy skills.
74. Pupils from the age of five and up to the age of 11 are achieving well. From the age of 11 to beyond the age of 16 pupils and students are achieving satisfactorily. However, pupils of all ages in the Autism unit make very good progress. The majority of pupils enter the school with poor communication skills and by the age of 11 they have made good progress towards individual targets. Through careful teacher assessment, which incorporates ideas from the speech therapists and physiotherapists, pupils follow a well-planned induction to the school. Pupils learn to sit correctly, listen within a group and develop skills to communicate and understand their school day. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties eye point and vocalise to symbols, pictures and objects from their stories. They vocalise and gesture their pleasure in being part of the 'big book' story group. One pupil spontaneously beamed with delight as he independently realised that he had correctly sequenced and predicted the end of a story. When used consistently, this detailed understanding of how to meet the pupils communication needs within the school community enables the pupils to gain confidence and self esteem as they establish friendships and communicate their own achievements.
75. By the time pupils reach 11 years of age their achievements in their speaking and listening skills are good. In the literacy session, pupils listen with eager anticipation. The most able pupils respond to carefully planned questions which encourage them to sequence and predict what is going to happen next in their 'big book. They place words and symbols to demonstrate their understanding of the text and use the vocabulary of capital letter, full stop, title and author. Within group work for pupils at the age of 14 and at the age of 16 they listen carefully to each other and wait their turn to speak. During shared writing sessions they speak about their knowledge of current affairs and are challenged to remember how many gold medals the Great Britain team won in the Sydney Olympics. Some pupils use complex pictorial symbols effectively to communicate their answers, queries and understanding. Pupils over the age of 16 willingly discuss their portfolios and recall the events they have undertaken throughout the year. During a weighing and measuring session pupils talk about themselves. Each contribution is respected within the listening group. However, questions are insufficiently challenging for higher attaining pupils who do not therefore develop their ideas and hypothesise independently as well as they could about outcomes of their learning.
76. Pupils in the autism unit make good progress with their speaking and listening. Meticulous planning informed by a detailed knowledge of pupil's individual needs and the consistent use of teaching strategies within a calm, predictable environment enable pupils to work individually on challenging teaching targets. Pupils are learning to be taught



collaboratively within small teaching groups. During a discussion of timetables the majority of pupils were listening to each other's contribution, waiting their turn to speak and answering direct questions. They correctly recalled the day of the week, predicted the sequence of their day and one pupil hypothesised on what would happen during their story. This was with minimal prompting from staff.

77. Pupils up to the age of 11 make good progress with reading. High expectations along with age appropriate resources enable pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties to look at the objects and the well chosen large pictures in the books during big book time. They predict the end of stories by pressing communication devices or selecting objects and symbols. Higher attaining pupils match symbols and pictures to objects. They name letter sounds and words and read sentences they have constructed. Early reading books are read with pleasure, excitement and known achievement. Up to the age of 14 and then to 16, teachers challenge pupils to read about current affairs. As a result of this pupils have a good understanding of the progress of our Olympic athletes and were able to name some of the medal holders. Pupils independently look at and willingly read the jokes from their magazines. However the progress some pupils make in reading is held back by the underdeveloped skill in decoding phonetically regular words. As they study autumn, pupils read poems that they had produced independently in symbols and words. Pupils had consolidated their understanding of the characters and plot of Shakespeare's 'A Mid Summer Night's Dream', through a school production. This production was accurately recalled by pupils as they studied photographs and read captions. In the further education department, students' work towards achieving externally accredited qualifications. They read the captions from their Records of Achievement and describe past events. The progress some students make towards reading familiar words was restricted due to underdeveloped word recognition skills and the irregular style of the handwriting that they were being asked to read. Pupils from the Autism unit read age appropriate material, which reflects interests from across the curriculum. They complete work sheets to consolidate their understanding of the topic they are studying.
78. Achievement in writing is satisfactory. In the early stages pupils develop their ability to hold pencils and paint brushes. Higher attaining pupils draw letter formations. The best practice is seen among 11 year old pupils where there is a firm expectation that they will record what they have learnt from a session. Lower attaining pupils use a computer to produce simple sentences about the local environment and progress in the Olympic Games. They also record their geography account in pictures made from hop leaves, sand, pictures and symbols. Every pupil finishes the task. The plenary involves pupils in evaluating the quality and quantity of their written work. Well-understood marking procedures enable the teacher to annotate the work with a valued comment. The pupils' collection of work evidences the good quantity of work that they have produced. By the time they reach 16, pupils record their work in a variety of media; annotated displays of their Shakespeare production, poetry about autumn, collective diaries of current affairs and two and three-dimensional drawings. In the further education department, students contribute in writing to their Records of Achievement. In the autism unit clear expectations and individually prepared writing tasks enabled pupils to record their work. Once recorded, pupils were asked questions to recap on prior learning and determine if they had consolidated the ideas developed during the lesson.
79. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. It is good for all pupils up to the age of 11 and satisfactory for all pupils and students beyond that age. All lessons were at least satisfactory and sometimes they were very good. The best lessons were marked by teachers having an intuitive understanding of their pupils and planning imaginatively to meet their wide range of individual needs. A sound knowledge of individual pupil's levels of understanding and expression ensures that signing and the use of symbols are used consistently. Advice from the speech and language therapist and the physiotherapy

service are skilfully woven into the structure of the lesson. At the end of each session, through questioning, pupils are asked to recall their learning, say what they have enjoyed and misunderstandings are clarified. However, in some lessons mainly for pupils beyond the age of eleven, there are teaching points which require consideration. These are the occasional inconsistent use of signing and symbols within the classroom and as pupils moved around the school community. This limits the pupils understanding of what they are being asked to do. Sometimes teachers speak using sentences that are too long and complex for the pupils who have severely limited comprehension skills. Occasionally, insufficient time is devoted to explaining the new vocabulary and concepts being introduced. The writing exemplars given to pupils to copy write and the teachers' written annotations on pupils' records of achievement lack consistency in style shape and spacing. This impedes pupils ability to copy write successfully and in some cases understand what the written letters represent. The absence of a plenary at the end of some teaching sessions means the opportunity to consolidate learning and celebrate what pupils have achieved is missed. There is not enough homework set to consolidate pupils learning.

80. The curriculum co-ordinator for English is a reflective, dynamic practitioner whose leadership and management skills are excellent. Each area of the Literacy Strategy and Curriculum 2000 is being thoroughly researched and adapted to ensure that changes to the curriculum meet the complex needs of the pupils. Since the last inspection the schools development planning has focused strategically on establishing the National Literacy Strategy and is now turning to Curriculum 2000. Through training for all staff, innovative practice and modelling excellent practice, most teachers have been empowered to incorporate appropriately the Literacy Strategy into their teaching. The impact of this training was seen in many lesson observations. Future developments in English are based on the outcomes from the school's monitoring procedures and the development of national initiatives.
81. Classrooms and learning resources are very good. The provision of a new library has enriched pupils access to literacy resources. Books complement the curriculum, are attractively displayed and accessible to all groups of pupils within the school. Planned research has gone into providing opportunities for learning about the richness and diversity of other cultures and all the major festivals. Books made by the local primary school have focussed on providing 'feely' books. There are an insufficient number of contemporary books about teenage culture to provide additional motivation to the older pupils.
82. The importance of teaching literacy skills across the curriculum is recognised in all teaching situations within the school community. Staff are encouraged to incorporate the targets from pupils' individual education plans into their modular and daily planning. There needs to be increased monitoring to ensure that simplified language, signing and symbols are used consistently to improve the access of all groups of pupils to understanding the new ideas being introduced in all subjects. Pupils are warmly greeted by staff as they enter school and are asked about their journey and feelings. The provision of constantly changing literacy displays in the entrance hall, capture pupils' attention and create a rich literacy learning environment. Pupils talk with pride about their displays around school, which celebrate pupils' achievement. Specialist rooms around the school are labelled by objects, symbols and words. This enables many pupils to independently identify and find rooms.

## **MATHEMATICS**

83. The school has made a very good improvement in mathematics since the last inspection,

due in great part to the very effective implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy. This is due to the effective leadership of the subject co-ordinator. Teaching is now good overall, compared to being satisfactory at the time of the last report, and the unsatisfactory teaching found at that time has been eliminated. Teaching is very good in the nursery and in the autism unit. It is good for pupils between the ages of seven and 16 and satisfactory for pupils up to the age of seven and in the further education groups for students over the age of 16. Pupils now make good progress overall, with some groups of pupils starting to make very good progress towards their targets in lessons, for example children under five and those pupils taught in the autism unit. The curriculum for mathematics is now good overall, and all pupils from the age of five upward now have a daily numeracy session. This is a significant improvement from the last inspection, when insufficient time was spent on the subject and statutory requirements were not met.

84. By the age of seven pupils make satisfactory progress towards learning to count up to five. They start to sequence the early numbers and many can hand over the right number of objects, for example if they are asked for two bears. The teaching they receive is satisfactory. Teachers use a good variety of resources, including commercially produced number cards and counters supplemented by teacher-made resources and real-life objects, to ensure that pupils have a wide range of opportunities to consolidate their understanding of number, and songs and rhymes that help to motivate pupils. By the time pupils reach 11 years of age they have made good progress. They continue to practise basic counting skills and learn to match and sequence numbers. Higher attaining pupils start to understand that numbers of items can be added together or taken away in practical situations such as when acting out the song *Ten Green Bottles*. By the age of eleven, some pupils know the number bonds to ten and can name a range of basic two-dimensional shapes, including square, circle and triangle. The Numeracy Strategy has been implemented effectively, and teachers use a range of innovative strategies to help pupils at all ability levels to participate and thereby to make good progress. For example, one non-verbal pupil was motivated to learn by blowing the correct number of bubbles as a member of staff counted. Another pupil who was finding it hard to concentrate on traditional methods of working was inspired to count along by jumping on the squares of the musical pavement in the multi-sensory room.
85. Pupils continue to make good progress up to the age of 14. They use a number line to sequence numbers to ten, and many learn to write the numerals independently. They can name basic shapes such as a circle and by the end of the key stage higher attaining pupils know that drawing a line across the diameter of a circle divides it into two halves. Some pupils can relate this to their knowledge of time and equate the cutting in two with half-past the hour. In a very good lesson pupils undertook practical fieldwork in the school playground. The teacher's planning of a practical activity of drawing a chalk circle and then asking pupils to walk round the circumference gave very good opportunities for the application of pupils' number skills. Because the teacher encouraged pupils to make and test hypotheses, pupils had to use a range of mathematical vocabulary in their predictions and this had the impact of extending their knowledge of shape and space and also their thinking skills. The Numeracy Strategy has been effectively implemented and this has had the effect of enlivening lessons. Pupils look forward to their maths sessions and are thereby motivated to make progress. By the time pupils are 16 years old, many elements of the Numeracy Strategy have been incorporated into their daily maths sessions and they achieve well as a consequence. Pupils can recognise the use of numbers in real-life applications such as the date and time and higher attaining pupils can add numbers randomly, for example to find their combined score from throwing two dice, and understand place value of numbers to 100. Pupils enjoy the mental maths activities done in the class group and are able to consolidate their basic skills through a well-planned range of reinforcement activities such as counting balloons out for a birthday party.

86. Students over the age of 16 in the further education groups make satisfactory progress. They undertake maths work related to the units of accreditation that they follow and learn about counting money and making simple change in their shopping trips. Pupils in the autism unit make very good progress. They acquire a very good grasp of basic number skills and some go on to learn their times tables. Numeracy skills are reinforced in other subjects too. For example, in an excellent literacy session based in the big book *Jasper and the Beanstalk*, the teacher ensured that mathematical concepts and key vocabulary used in the numeracy session before it were referred back to and this had the effect of consolidating what pupils had learned.
87. Overall, teaching and learning are good. The teaching of basic maths skills is good. There are many examples of numeracy skills being consolidated in other subjects across the school. For example, pupils are encouraged to count steps and jumps in physical education; in art they count, sequence and name the shapes of the objects they are working with; and in music they count the beats as they stamp or clap a rhythm.
88. Teaching and learning for pupils up to the age of seven is satisfactory. Mathematics lessons are not always made exciting enough to keep them interested throughout each session. The pace of lessons is slow and sometimes support staff do too much of the learning activity for the pupils when the planning is for independent work. An example of this was seen in a lesson where six adults and six pupils were crammed closely together round a small table and there was insufficient room for the pupils to work independently at sticking the right number of elephants onto a sheet of paper. Some staff did too much of the task instead of moving to another area of the class to give pupils sufficient room to do the work themselves. These factors result in progress remaining at a satisfactory level where pupils using their own initiative may have led to good learning occurring.
89. The teaching received by pupils between the age of seven and eleven is good. Lessons have a good pace and no time is wasted. Teachers manage pupils well and good assessment procedures allow them to know each pupil's level of achievement. Together with planning for differentiated outcomes, the impact of these features is that pupils of all abilities make good progress towards their identified targets. For pupils up to the age of 16, teaching is good, with some lessons being very good. However, teaching uses a mixture of teacher-made and commercially produced resources, though some are not age appropriate. For example, some counting cards have ducks and babies' blocks depicted on them. Plenary sessions at the end of lessons are well organised for pupils to report back to their peers what they have worked on, and pupils are proud of their achievements, especially when they celebrate them with other pupils and with adults, including the headteacher when a target has been achieved.
90. Teaching is satisfactory overall for students over the age of 16, with some examples of good teaching where good behaviour management ensures that all students participate as much as they can. Where teaching is satisfactory, lack of pace and lower expectations of what students can achieve result in students making progress that is just satisfactory. More effective teaching has work that is well matched to students' needs and consequently they are challenged more effectively and achieve more.
91. Teaching in the autism unit is very good and is closely linked to the Numeracy Strategy. Work is well planned and meticulously prepared and sequenced so that no time is wasted between activities and therefore pupils have no chance to lose their concentration. Teachers and their support staff work well as a team and manage pupils consistently. This has the impact of diffusing many of the potentially difficult situations caused by pupils' challenging behaviours deriving from their autism and ensuring that

pupils make progress towards their identified targets.

92. The subject co-ordinator gives very good leadership and management to mathematics. She has ensured effective implementation of the National Numeracy Strategy across the school, and this is starting to have a significant impact on raising standards of pupils' achievements. Through her, the school participated in piloting for a national initiative the extension of the Numeracy Strategy into Key Stage 3 and teachers have been enthused by the training that was shared with colleagues in mainstream schools. In consequence, teachers' knowledge and understanding has grown and with it their confidence. This has resulted in pupils being motivated to learn by stimulating lessons. Monitoring of progress towards school-wide targets is good. It has identified the need to focus more on the shape, space and measures area of mathematics and this is starting to show in pupils' recent work, but currently there is also too little work on handling data. Information and communications technology is rightly identified as being under-used at present, and the subject plan also covers the need for more age-appropriate resources for older pupils and students.

## SCIENCE

93. Pupils study science up to the age of 16 and by the end of each of the key stages until then they all have achieved well. Pupils show interest in science and have a positive attitude towards it. Pupils have taken part in simple scientific investigation by the age of eleven. They grow seeds and learn that they need watering, and some pupils predict whether objects will sink or float. All pupils take part in work on changing the properties of materials by heating, cooling and mixing them while making a cake or mixing colours. They study the effects of gravity and know that it causes objects to fall to the ground. They also know 'push' and 'pull' are forces from experimenting with a buggy on a ramp. Pupils know some of properties of magnets such as they attract metal and that electricity makes a hair dryer operate. Pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties reacted well to the feeling of warm air from the dryer. Pupils develop a growing awareness of their own bodies by examining their different senses and find out about their internal organs and skeleton. A group of nine and ten year olds were absorbed in trying to make models of their shoulder joints and some were able to succeed working independently or with limited assistance. Pupils achieve well and make good progress because of good quality learning opportunities such as this, which match their needs and present challenges for higher attaining pupils. These are delivered with enthusiasm and pace by teachers, which contributes effectively to pupils learning well.
94. By the time pupils are 14 years old they have extended their understanding of themselves and the world around them and they achieve well because tasks are appropriate and careful attention is paid to pupils' individual education plans. They are beginning to record what they have seen and done, such as drawing the crocus bulbs they planted. Activities such as this are used to help pupils appreciate the differences between living and non-living things. Pupils' observational and listening skills are also encouraged through studying physical processes such as sound and light. They are able to hear and indicate the difference in sound when glass and plastic glass bottles are hit with a stick and also the different sounds when bottles containing different amounts of water are hit similarly. Teachers use opportunities well in lessons such as this to develop pupils' basic numeracy and literacy skills, as when the teacher took advantage of moments to reinforce the concept of more and less and the vocabulary of personal hygiene.
95. Much of science for pupils between the age of 14 and 16 is devoted to issues such as personal hygiene and healthy living, which contribute to accreditation in their vocational course. Pupils enjoy and are interested in science to a good extent. By the time pupils

are 16 they make very relevant contributions in discussion about skin care and skin care products. Questions are used well by the teacher to help pupils learn well why it is important to wash. An experiment involving pupils using soap and a range of cleansing lotions contributed well. This sensory experience, provided by the teacher using simple but effective resources, enables all pupils to participate in the lesson. One pupil extends the point about washing in order to prevent spots appearing by volunteering the information that diet is important too, and another knew that sun cream prevents the skin burning. Pupils make good progress because they are managed well and are involved and included by effective teaching.

96. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. A significant feature of science is the teachers' determination that pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties should still have opportunities to experience many of the delights associated with finding out about things and the world around them. They are able to do this because teachers are creative and employ learning support assistants well in arranging a range of sensory activities and experiences. Many examples of this were evident. During a topic on exploring the properties of wood, pupils were taken to various community locations to see trees and to examine wood materials used in manufacturing. They were enabled to explore the material through observation, smell and touch. Others learned well about the qualities of different fabrics through touching and the sounds they make when examining these materials and their properties. Pupils extended their understanding of living things through the smell of flowers in the raised flower garden and there was enormous joy for a seven year old as he was able to follow the light from a torch moving over a black piece of paper. Pupils with autistic spectrum disorders also have learning opportunities which enable them to discover things about the natural world. Science lessons increase pupils' scientific knowledge and understanding of the variety of living things, but they are equally important in developing listening and observation skills. This was demonstrated well in a lesson that required pupils to listen to recordings of animal sounds, identify pictures and then match the picture and the sound.
97. The subject has made good improvement since the last inspection and this has been helped by the appointment of an experienced co-ordinator. Although the co-ordinator is part-time she has nevertheless been effective. The subject is now well managed with clear planning documents for the whole school. In addition, teachers' plans and lessons are monitored regularly and well. This ensures largely that all pupils receive a good quality and range of learning opportunities as they move through the school and there is a positive impact on the quality of teaching and learning in the subject. A recently built specialist classroom catering for science and technology provides good accommodation. It is recognised by the school that at present the room is under used. Its role as a resource for all pupils is still under development, as reflected in the school improvement plan. Science has good resources, although they now need to be catalogued so that all staff are fully aware of what is available. In addition, the subject policy is under review and the development plan for science lacks clear success criteria.

## **ART**

98. Pupils throughout the school are achieving well in art. Pupils in the autism unit are achieving very well. The strengths found in subject at the last inspection remain and, currently, art activities and pupils' art have a particular importance to the life of the school. The work of artists is effectively integrated into what pupils make and as they get older pupils engage in large-scale collaborative projects responding, for instance, a Cezanne landscape.
99. By the time pupils reach the age of seven, most are confidently handling brushes and other utensils and, with a reasonable amount of independence, make marks and spread paint on paper. Using paints and a wide variety of other materials such as coloured

papers and fabrics, pupils experience the visual effects created in colour, texture and pattern. Higher attaining pupils experiment and achieve more elaborate results by flicking paint and controlling the marks made as they progress towards drawing. Pupils observe daffodils and with a paintbrush draw a good representation of the stalks and flower forms.

100. By the time they are eleven, pupils have gathered facts about art, for example, they know what are typically autumnal colours. Most sort through fabrics and select a range of appropriate colours for a weaving task. Over several weeks of work on weaving, pupils have made very good progress refining the over and under technique, gradually achieving a tighter weave through practice. Pupils a year or two younger are beginning to show an interest in weaving materials but require much adult help to complete the over and under threading of material.
101. By the time pupils are 14 years old, higher attaining pupils confidently name colours and are familiar with using paintbrushes to apply colour in a variety of ways. With these skills and knowledge pupils respond imaginatively to a Turner seascape by using to good effect the colours and brush techniques Turner is famous for. Pupils attending the Autism unit are achieving very well. They know about harmonious colours and the higher attaining pupils discuss the nuances of different shades. As a consequence they observe the various blues in a Chagall stained glass window and use these in their own work. Autistic pupils use sketchbooks effectively for exploring and refining their drawing. By the age of 16 pupils know how to make repeat prints, exercising control in placing the print to achieve regular sequencing. Higher attaining pupils work independently and are skilled enough to vary the pressure applied in printing with a sponge or a wooden block. They know this will produce a sharper print. Students in the further education department observe and interpret a work of art and use this to refine their ideas and work using autumnal colours and textures. Their good response to a Henry Moore sculpture sited locally led to well-modelled clay figures reflecting the monumental forms in Moore's work.
102. Teaching and learning are good overall. For pupils up to the age of seven, teaching is very good and their quality of learning is very good. In all of the good or very good lessons teachers often presented the activity with the energy and enthusiasm that led to pupils quickly becoming involved and interested. In a primary class, for example, pupils' concentration and effort reached a high level as a consequence. The teacher used the rhythm and beat of music to help pupils draw freely with crayons and they did so energetically. The linear and circular lines they made in response were a good step forward in acquiring the control to begin learning to write. While teachers' expertise in art is satisfactory their use of the good plans for art means that as pupils get older they steadily build their knowledge and skills. These plans also allow for a much wider acquisition of skills such as holding and using tools, taking an increasing interest in their environment and in particular, the world of art. Good teaching was also a consequence of achieving clear communications with pupils, particularly as many have speech and communications difficulties. In the one unsatisfactory lesson the ideas about art and the intentions for pupils work were not relayed well. Pupils were not clear on what they were aiming for and did not learn as well as they might. Where care was taken in speaking, signing and getting responses from pupils it built very good relationships leading to pupils engaging and enjoying the lesson and hence, good learning. This was done well in the lesson of a newly qualified teacher and in those of some more experienced teachers. Teachers and their assistants praised and celebrated pupils' work. The good progress Year 5 and 6 pupils made with weaving, for example, arose from the opportunities for them to express what they knew about weaving and colours. The teacher was able to help them clarify and expand on this leading to them improving the quality of their weaving. Support assistants are often plentiful in supply and very capable of supporting pupils learning. They know pupils well and, as they follow the teachers' plan, use

considerable initiative to ensure pupils reach the high expectations placed on them. All teachers and their assistants manage pupils behaviour very well and make it possible nearly all of the time for the most challenging of pupils to participate constructively in lessons and also not detract from other pupils learning.

103. The management of the subject across the school continues to be good and the high standards reported in the last inspection have been maintained. A good programme of visits to art galleries and exhibitions continues and the opportunities for staff training in art are equally good. Co-operation with the neighbouring comprehensive school has led to one pupil starting a GCSE art course. Sixth form students from that school are now embarking on a mural project in the autism unit.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

104. Pupils of all ages are achieving satisfactorily in design and technology. However, pupils' achievements are better when working with food because the opportunities for learning are currently better than they are working with such materials as wood and plastics in the workshop. At present, while there is some good work in lessons using wood and plastics it is not planned over the longer term to build up pupils' knowledge and skills effectively. The complete course of study for design and technology has been revised recently by a new subject co-ordinator and is now being introduced. This, together with the development of a new workshop should raise standards in line with those found in food technology. This is a satisfactory improvement since the last inspection when there was little evidence of the teaching of the wider aspects of the subject.
105. By the time pupils are seven years old, most have the physical co-ordination to build a tower of blocks or spools without it collapsing. They observe how wheeled objects move. When given a variety of materials to explore they play with construction and use structures imaginatively. However, the development of their joining and construction skills are limited by a lack of clear direction in teaching on the basic means of assembly. Pupils mix the ingredients for pastry and use a pastry cutter to make shaped biscuits. By the age of 11, pupils assemble simple axle and wheel vehicles from construction kits. Most have the basic skills for cutting and joining materials, for example, shaping coloured tissue for a stained glass window. Higher attaining pupils make a good hinge mechanism using card and pins. This however, does not lead onto further investigations and developments. Most pupils prepare food by combining ingredients, cracking an egg and adding decorative toppings to their biscuits. Most cut vegetables and they take proper care of kitchen utensils. They go out to shop for ingredients and recognise familiar foods to the extent they can often name the foods used in a pizza topping.
106. By the age of 14, pupils in the autism unit know how to make ice-lollipops and that they need to be stored in a freezer. Pupils are careful in pouring the right measure of liquid into a mould and co-operate in taking turns filling moulds. Higher attaining pupils understand that the mould shapes the ice-lollipop. With the teachers' support pupils describe what they did. Pupils cut with scissors and join pieces of fabric using simple stitches. This leads onto them designing and making a pair of slippers. By 16, pupils know that the wind affects a kite and makes it fly. They have not fully understood that the kite's rigid structure helps its flight because there was less opportunity to investigate that than getting a kite to fly. A higher attaining pupil read aloud the definition of a kite from a book and another used word-processing to record his work. Pupils make dough for bread, which leads onto them making sandwiches. Students in the further education department make a choice of a meal to make; they list the ingredients they require and organise a shopping trip to buy them and following a recipe, prepare the food. They are



familiar with kitchen utensils and use them safely.

107. Teaching and learning are good overall. For pupils up to the age of seven, teaching and learning are satisfactory. Teachers have a good knowledge of food technology and are confident in teaching this to their pupils. While expertise in other aspects of design and technology is satisfactory, teachers on occasions do not formulate clear learning objectives for pupils. As a consequence they can miss good opportunities for pupils to develop their knowledge and learn new skills. For example, by showing younger pupils ways of joining materials or allowing older ones to discover that rigidity improves a kite's performance. Nevertheless, teachers mostly plan lessons so that they are stimulating and challenging. This leads often to pupils making good efforts and achieving good results, for example, when Year 5 and 6 pupils made pizzas for lunch having chosen the ingredients and shopped for them. Effective planning of lessons for autistic pupils, results in carefully ordered small steps in making ice-lollipops. This enables these pupils to follow the process but also have the benefit, needed by autistic pupils, of sharing in the making, taking turns with others and describing what they have made. Explaining and demonstrating are usually thought out in ways that unfolds knowledge and understanding effectively for pupils with severe learning difficulties. In the Year 10 and 11 class the teacher used a variety of resources to show how wind acts on objects. This led to pupils gaining a clear understanding the relationship between their kite flying and the wind. Pupils are managed expertly by teachers and their classroom assistants. Those pupils presenting challenging behaviour are kept calm and work as well as other pupils. This is a particular strength of teaching in the autism unit and leads to good quality of learning taking place.

108. The improvement in the subject overall since the last inspection is satisfactory although the improvement in accommodation and resources is good. In a short time the school's co-ordinator for design and technology has made good progress in developing a wider course of study for pupils. While there is a need to fully establish well-linked activities in design and technology beyond food technology the work already completed by the co-ordinator should achieve this. The means to review how well the subject is taught are in place and staff are beginning to get the support to build their expertise and confidence. The new workshop is very good for this purpose and good resources have been developed to match the aims of the design and technology curriculum.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

109. There were few opportunities during the week of inspection to observe the direct teaching of geography lessons. Additional evidence is taken from the scrutiny of pupil's work, their Records of Achievement, photographic displays, teachers' plans and discussions with teachers and pupils.

110. Since the last inspection the school has improved the provision for geography to a satisfactory standard although the current geography policy is still in a draft form. The areas that pupils will study over the years they will be in school have been made relevant to their learning needs and cover satisfactorily the requirements of the National Curriculum. There is now an appropriate amount of time for teaching geography. However, the school grounds are still underdeveloped teaching resource. Playground equipment has been upgraded but the outside environment requires further developments to provide a teaching and learning resource, which enables pupils to observe and communicate with each other about the changing seasons and take pride in their school grounds.

111. Achievement and progress in geography is satisfactory for pupils of all ages. For pupils up to the age of seven, teachers' planning covers the need for pupils to learn to explore their school environment as an early step in understanding the world. They learn, for instance, to recognise areas of their school from photographs, recall and discuss the activities undertaken in each of these areas. Pupils match objects, symbols and pictures and relate these to photographs of areas within the school. The higher attaining pupils recall from memory the activities they undertake in different areas of the school, without the aid of pictures or symbols. This is because as pupils move round school, the staff asks them about where they are going and encourage pupils to name or point to symbols of different areas and rooms. This amplifies the schools aim to contribute to pupils sense of identity by developing awareness and understanding of the environment. By the age of 11, pupils, through their study of contrasting environments, correctly recognise and name features in their local town and countryside; an achievement that gives them considerable pride. Pupils planning a trip to Tonbridge correctly identified the castle, river and the bridge from pictures and photographs. They discuss changes in the countryside environment at harvest time such as the presence of hops; that the oast houses are busy and that apple and pears are being picked.
112. By the time pupils reach the age of 14 and then on to 16, they are developing a sense of citizenship. With the help of photographs and accounts written by the pupils two recalled with accuracy their trips to Hastings and the local library. They reflected on the fun they had experienced whilst participating in America Day and handling Chinese artefacts. Further education students recorded the need to wear the right clothes and safety equipment and to follow instructions for their outdoor activities. In the autism unit pupils hypothesised about and clarified their understanding of the dangers inherent in a volcanic environment.
113. Because of timetable arrangements only a few lessons were observed in which the quality of teaching and learning were satisfactory. Teachers have a satisfactory and sometimes good knowledge and understanding of their subject. Where teaching was most successful teachers placed a high expectation on pupils to calmly enter class and prepare to start work by listening, and attending, which they achieved effectively. As a consequence pupils' attitudes are good. They are enthusiastic about the subject and, when learning, move around their school environment with care and respect for others. Teachers use questioning in a skilful way to establish the pupils' level of understanding and to clarify and develop their thinking. A good example was when pupils had to decide when and where to use pictures and symbols to mark places around Tonbridge. They thought carefully and exchanged views about the task and eventually gave their reasons for choosing a picture or symbol. Teachers demonstrated a firm understanding of their pupil's abilities and activities were well planned to meet individual pupil's requirements. Work is displayed with thought and imagination, respecting each pupil's contribution. Where teaching was less successful pupils were not communicated effectively either by using the correct level of language, signing or symbols. This restricted the understanding of lower attaining pupils especially. They were unclear as to how to complete matching pictures and symbols to places within their school environment. The planning to develop higher attaining pupils' knowledge of the layout of the school lacked pace and challenge. The pupils lost interest and concentration in the lesson and subsequent tasks did not extend their learning. There were too few examples of pupils using information technology to research their work. Pupils are skilfully managed by staff. Relationships between staff and pupils are very good. Pupils work co-operatively and where individual pupils are experiencing problems in continuing their work they are often helped by other peers.
114. The development of the geography curriculum has benefited the quality of teaching in the subject. Pupils are following a curriculum, which covers topics appropriate to their age. The subject co-ordinator has collaborated with the co-ordinator for English to

develop the symbol picture system for identifying rooms. In its strategic planning the school has targeted time for the subject co-ordinator to work along side other colleagues to monitor and evaluate the teaching and children's learning. The outcomes of this monitoring are insufficiently shared with teachers or translated into guidance and training in order to develop teachers geographical skills, knowledge and strategies.

115. The resources for geography are just adequate. Visual and auditory resources such as pictures of the local environment and videos of active volcanoes are used effectively to develop pupils understanding of the ideas being introduced during geography lessons. However additional photographs, videos, pictures, computerised maps and a planned sequence of visits out into the local area, to develop pupils' geographical understanding of their local environment, need to be developed.

## **HISTORY**

116. History is part of the curriculum for all pupils, from the age of 5 up to the age of 14, although pupils in the autism unit study history beyond 14 as part of their five-year curriculum cycle. The quality and range of learning opportunities are good. Due to current timetable arrangements it was only possible for two lessons to be seen during the inspection. Based upon the two lessons observed, the analysis of pupils' work and the subject records, pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall and pupils in the autism unit achieve very well. Overall, activities are well chosen to capture the interest of pupils, and teachers and learning support assistants assess and record pupils' achievements well during lessons.
117. There has been a satisfactory improvement following the last inspection. The subject is now being co-ordinated across the school and the co-ordinator is very active in the School History Special Interest Group, for schools with pupils having severe learning difficulties. The management is unsatisfactory and requires further development. The subject policy is still in draft form and although classroom monitoring takes place it is not obvious that it works to stimulate positive developments. The use of information and communication technology is not part of subject planning and the subject development plan is a list of items such as a visit rather than a statement of the priorities for development.
118. By the age of seven, pupils are beginning to develop a sense of time as they study aspects of history that are familiar to them and to which they can relate. Work is focused on developing in pupils a sense of time and progression through examination of photographs of themselves as babies and other well understood objects and items of reference. During this stage pupils begin to develop the idea of the sequencing of events and are beginning to understand changes in their own lives and those of their family. By the age of 11, pupils are learning about some periods of British history such as the Tudors and the Victorians and the study of Ancient Egypt introduces them to aspects of world history. Local places of interest are used well to reinforce aspects of Tudor life, for example, a visit to Hever Castle. Pupils experience the feeling of the Second World War with a visit to the Britain at War Experience in London when they were able to role-play by dressing up as soldiers.
119. By the age of 14, pupils continue to develop their historical knowledge through features of twentieth century history. By simulating a visit to the cinema they were able to experience the sequence of events from buying a ticket, to sitting in their seats and the lights going out. The next stage of this sequence was for pupils to watch a video that showed the opening frames from a number of films made by different companies. Pupils were encouraged to observe the title sequences and to note the different trademark symbols such as the roaring lion. These were recalled later and one boy was able to say that he thought one was the Statue of Liberty. As a result pupils were able to increase

their knowledge of modern history as they examined photographs of the early days of cinema, but the opportunity was also taken to reinforce the basic concepts of time and sequence.

120. Teaching is good in the autism unit as very suitable methods and materials are used to give pupils a sense of chronology and a vocabulary of time. A group of Year 10 boys developed an awareness of 'old' and 'new' and differences between the past and present day through an activity comparing photographs and models of old and modern vehicles, which they then made with a construction kit.
121. Trips to local sites of historical interest and school-based events are used well and they are very important in bringing the subject alive for pupils. These include visits to a number of castles, Dover Gaol to experience Victorian prison life, and Lullingstone Roman Villa. Visitors to school have included an actor in the role of a Victorian chimney sweep, and a falconer who attended the school's 'In Days of Olde' production in July. This event incorporated a study of Tudor life with a production of A Midsummer Night's Dream and involved a number of pupils taking part in the play.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGE

122. Since the last inspection, the school has made a good improvement to its provision for the teaching of a modern foreign language. Appropriate schemes of work are now available that provide coverage of the National Curriculum programmes of study and enable teachers to record and evaluate pupils' progress. French is taught to secondary aged pupils in the main school but in the autism unit it is also taught to pupils over the age of 16.
123. Pupils between the age of 11 and 16 in the main school are making satisfactory progress and all pupils taught in the autism unit, are making very good progress. Pupils start off by learning basic vocabulary and phrases, including standard greetings, numbers, colours, the months of the year and foods. By the time pupils reach the age of 16, most can introduce themselves to a partner or member of staff using the phrase *Je m'appelle...*, and can indicate their likes and dislikes, for example in relation to foods. Higher attaining pupils can express their preferences in complete sentences using *J'aime..* or *Je n'aime pas...*, and can incorporate please and thank you where relevant, for example *Je voudrais des chips, s'il vous plait*.
124. Teaching is good overall. In the main school, it is satisfactory; in the autism unit, it is very good. Where teaching is satisfactory, knowledge and understanding of the subject is satisfactory. An emphasis is placed on the use of real objects and foods to reinforce the teaching of basic vocabulary. This has the effect of motivating pupils to take part in lessons. The teacher's good use of signing to support key questions and phrases is effective in ensuring that all pupils can participate, including those who use alternative and augmentative communication systems. Consequently, pupils of all levels of ability enjoy their lessons and are proud to be able to speak in a different language.
125. Where teaching is very good, the teacher has very good knowledge and understanding of the subject and of the needs of the pupils and there are high expectations of what pupils will achieve both academically and behaviourally. This leads to pupils, often with very challenging behaviours related to their autism, concentrating hard and remaining seated for the full session, ensuring that they make very good progress in acquiring and retaining new vocabulary and skills. For example, they develop good pronunciation and most have sufficient confidence to take part in short role-play exercises and conversational exchanges with the teacher and with each other in front of

the rest of the group. Literacy skills are enhanced by the regular comparing and contrasting of French and English vocabulary and grammar.

126. At the moment, there is no permanent co-ordinator of the subject, but satisfactory management is being provided by the temporary co-ordinator until a successor is appointed. The school concentrates appropriately on the speaking, listening and responding elements of learning in the target language. All pupils are expected to do some writing to record new vocabulary, and higher attaining pupils enjoy word processing this or reading and copying words and phrases from the video clips used to support the teaching of French. Evidence of pupils' work in writing French is kept, but as yet the school does not use audiotape to record their progress in speaking the language. Higher attaining pupils do not yet have an opportunity to gain recognition of their success through participating in an accredited course, for example the certificate of achievement.
127. Special French theme days are held regularly for the whole school, giving pupils of all ages a chance to participate in events such as a French cafe role-play or to learn about the work of French artists. This makes a good contribution to pupils' cultural development through introducing the European dimension to the curriculum. The development plan for the subject lists the introduction of a one-day or residential trip to France, but this has not yet been put into action.

## **INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY**

128. Pupils' achievements in information technology lessons throughout the school are good; many make good progress in lessons and over time. Children who are under five also make good progress. The subject has developed well in the period following the last inspection. Teaching and learning are now good. The resources for information technology have improved greatly since the last inspection.
129. By the time they are seven, most pupils have taken part in using computers or simple switch devices and are achieving well. They know how to operate switches and what they will make happen, for example, pupils use them to indicate their food preferences. Over time, pupils grow in confidence operating switches and pay greater attention to what is on a computer screen. Lower attaining pupils improve the time they can maintain their eye contact. Others use equipment to point and ask for things such as more music.
130. By the age of 11, pupils are achieving well. Most pupils improve their word processing skills. The lower attaining pupils are given individual help, which enables them to develop their knowledge. The hand over hand help given by staff, for example, improves how these pupils use the mouse to work a computer. They complete a simple programme involving dragging items on the screen to dress a Teddy Bear. The higher attaining pupils are beginning to operate computers independently but they need help to find programmes. They use the computer for recording events at home for their teachers.
131. By the age of 14, pupils with autism are making good progress in many areas. Higher attaining pupils access computers independently and know how to save, download and work effectively at printing and word processing. Other 14 year-old pupils are able to produce cards for birthdays by drawing and printing with help. The lower attaining pupils need help to produce symbols; they use these symbols to describe activities and events such as visits to holidays. By the age of 16, pupils have developed many skills. Higher attaining pupils can change from lower case to capital letters correctly and use information technology equipment independently. They select patterns and use the 'paint' facilities in an art software programme. They use the Internet to contact other schools and college. Lower attaining pupils operate a computer by the use of touch screens. They

also use two switches to declare preferences for an orange or blackcurrant drink or biscuits. Students over 16 continue to achieve well. Higher attaining pupils acquire independence in word processing and basic keyboard skills. They recognise their own pictures on screen and know what to do in order to print the information from the computer screen. Pupils transfer information to a computer by operating a scanner and they compare each other's results. Others use switches in Circle Time to announce names. Higher attaining autistic pupils understand how to store and retrieve their own work. They gather information from a wide range of sources and use this in projects in school or when they are attending a mainstream school. Lower attaining autistic pupils make word and symbol cards and some type the information themselves.

132. The teaching of information technology and the quality of pupils learning are good. Information technology is taught separately and effectively through the other subjects in the curriculum. Teachers use lively pace in lessons and they have lots of good examples and models of good practice which enable pupils to develop concentration and listening skills. Pupils' individual education plans relate well to their complex needs and teachers use these very effectively to match activities to pupils' abilities. This ensures that they learn to develop skills in all areas. Teachers and support staff have a good knowledge of the subject, providing individual and small group help, for instance in the autism unit the higher attaining pupils work on individual programmes whilst the support staff provide individual help for those pupils who rely on symbols. Training is good and the subject is monitored closely by the co-ordinator. Planning is good and teachers' expectations are high. Pupils are encouraged to do their best. The effects of these strengths in teaching are seen in the quality of learning for all pupils. All develop basic skills in reading as well as computing. The pupils work at a good pace and their special educational targets are met well. Relationships are good and this promotes learning because it creates a very supportive environment. When teaching is less than good it is because teachers do not have a secure knowledge of pupils' abilities. In a small number of lessons the teachers' planning did not include enough opportunities for higher attaining pupils, as the teacher did not have a secure knowledge of their attainments. Pupils are not managed as well as they usually are. These are not serious weaknesses but they mean that in a small number of lessons all pupils are not being challenged in their learning. When teaching is good pupils learn well.
133. Many improvements have been made since the last inspection and information technology now plays a major role in the life of the school. All the staff has had training and resources are good and improving. The senior management team has made good use of funding and all pupils are able to access computers in every subject. Digital equipment, access to the Internet, contacts with local schools and colleges, and the purchase of well-matched software has already developed benefits to learning. The school's planning is good and ensures that the National Curriculum requirements are met. The employment of a technician has been as crucial to the continuing successes in information technology. His contribution has been to build teachers confidence in using computers and ensuring that the equipment is always functioning well. Monitoring of teaching is having a positive impact on learning, especially in the autism unit. Expertise is widely shared and specialist resources such laptops, digital cameras and scanners are well used. The breadth of delivery is best illustrated in the links with other schools and colleges and the forthcoming visit of an artist who uses digital imagery.
134. Policy documents are very thorough and the scheme of work is good. The senior staff has organised the subject very well and it is now a strength. Cross-curricular work is evident across all ages and subjects. Particular strengths are evident in mathematics, in the production of labels for history, and the use of software in art. Further good use is seen in the use of switches in science and programmes to aid composing in music.

## MUSIC

135. Since the last inspection there has been a good improvement in music. Pupils make good gains in learning in music as a direct result of good and at times, very good teaching. They are achieving well, enjoy music and work hard in lessons. All pupils respond to music well and behave well. They all become actively involved in their lessons and make music using a variety of objects and instruments. Pupils of primary age begin to compose using happy and sad symbols. Secondary age pupils listen carefully to a range of music and express their feelings about it. Some of them are able to distinguish between groups such as the Beatles and Rolling Stones.
136. By the time pupils are seven, they experience African and European music, they are able to identify songs through pictures, and sing in lessons. The adults, teachers and assistants join in with songs and perform music together. By the time they are 11 years old, pupils enjoy music lotto games, they get to understand the rules. The higher attaining pupils can identify instruments. In the choir there is much celebration when pupils come in at the right time singing the right part.
137. By the age of 14, pupils are widening their horizons. They listen to country music and take part in line dancing; support assistants are vital to this exercise. Pupils know that instruments produce music and want to use them. They are beginning to use modern technology to compose their own music. Pupils in the autism unit are learning to sing with guitars and are able to improvise using percussion instruments. By the age of 16, pupils are making choices of compact discs; their responses in class are good. They take part in festivals and the choir, as well as in school productions. Pupils in the autism unit find listening to and making music a calming influence. The higher attaining autistic pupils are developing keyboard skills. Most groups keep to the beat of a simple rhythm, some with more help than others. Secondary age pupils really enjoy country music; they get very involved in choice of dance music and were delighted to be able to dress up as cowboys in order to participate. Many pupils remember songs and choruses they had sung. They all joined in willingly with enjoyment.
138. Teaching is good. In a very good lesson the teacher had a very wide range of activity and artefacts to add interest to a well-planned programme. In every lesson pupils are engaged in music, singing, playing or listening. They have many opportunities to listen to a variety of music, sometimes following a beat or conducting of a rhythm. Planning is good for every lesson and the expectations, which are also good, mean that pupils respond well to music, making good progress overall. Teachers know their pupils well and plan accordingly, making choices of instruments for pupils to play.
139. The management of the subject is good. Staff are trained and they share their expertise. A support assistant provides skilled help with piano playing. Planning is thorough and good. The plans for the future include music therapy, more interesting instruments and visits to and from mainstream schools. Some adaptations to instruments have been made to make it possible for all pupils to access the subject. Monitoring and assessment are in place. Links with local schools are in place. Resources are good and the specialist music room is an asset.
140. Much has been done since the last inspection. The curriculum is good, plans are very good, and one initiative is to be an audit of sound in the school in order to check how sound is perceived by all. Music forms a vital part of school life, in lessons, in the choir, in pantomime and a production of 'A Midsummers Night's Dream'.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

141. Physical education continues, since the last inspection, to provide enriching experiences leading to good progress. This ensures that pupils and students are sufficiently challenged to improve their skills in all areas of physical education.
142. The achievements of all pupils in physical education are good as a consequence of good opportunities developed by the subject co-ordinator and the staff. Pupils of all ages are encouraged in their physical development through good access to gymnastic activities, for example, given good support they perform in dance and they enjoy moving to music. Pupils also gain the confidence to walk and to be happy in water when they take part in swimming lessons. They move well around the hall if necessary using aids, such as walking frames, chairs or with the help of staff. Those pupils with physical conditions that prevent them from participating in whole class activities have individual help in which they follow well-planned programmes to enhance their skills in bending and stretching. Others take part in individual rebound therapy, in which they take part in relaxation exercises with a key worker. A good range of outdoor toys encourages good movement as pupils play at break times. Pupils are beginning to gain confidence in rolling, swinging, sliding to a sequence or circuit in the hall. The ball pool, the soft play zone and the hydrotherapy pool are good resources where pupils relax and develop confidence in new surroundings where they can safely test skills. They develop confidence in water and enjoy splashing and trying to float. Planned movement programmes are carried out with help from support staff and pupils achieve their individual targets in moving, looking and listening.
143. By the time pupils are at the age of 11, they are learning to change pace, higher attaining pupils follow instructions with help. They know about under and over, playing games on apparatus to reinforce the learning. In the hydrotherapy pool they improve basic skills such as kicking and floating, and having great fun. The higher attaining pupils visit local baths where they gain swimming awards. They also visit athletics tracks and compete in meetings in running, throwing and catching.
144. By the age of 14, higher attaining pupils continue their rebound therapy work and make progress in relaxation and in gaining trust. Higher attaining pupils make progress in horse riding and learning to swim. They learn how to hang on to the bridle when riding. In the water, pupils learn to kick and to float. They begin to understand rules of tennis. They take turns and try to hit the ball over the net. Higher attaining pupils belonging to the autism unit are confident to attempt rock climbing. They manage to complete simple climbs as part of a team. This group is beginning to understand the need for health and fitness. They know that they should eat the right food and take exercise in order to take part in games. The highest attainers are aware of pulse rates. By the age of 16, pupils are aware of the parts of their body, they understand the need for warm-up exercises and the higher attaining pupils swim a length of twenty-five metres. Pupils with autism recognise hockey sticks and know that using two hands on the stick is better than one. They discover they are better co-ordinated and that the puck goes more quickly towards the net. They bully off at the start of a game and shoot when there is a goal scoring opportunity. These pupils understand that turning and rolling is good exercise. They follow instructions to twist and turn around the hall. They say that they feel tired after exercise and that they get hot. Students over the age of 16 develop many skills, such as taking turns; they understand rules and use hand to eye co-ordination to good effect in games involving sticks, bean bags, balls and targets.
145. All pupils and students know about a range of activities and awards ranging from swimming, riding and gymnastics. They take awards in kayaks and leisure pursuits. All develop an understanding of the need for health and fitness.



146. Teaching and the quality of learning are good. This leads to pupils developing positive attitudes in lessons and to behaving well. Learning occurs in a good atmosphere. Pupils volunteer to put equipment away, and are happy developing basic skills in all areas. Social skills are seen in every activity, for example, in paired work, co-operation and reflection. Teachers' planning is comprehensive; lesson plans reflect a clear understanding of pupil needs. Co-ordination of ideas and activities is good. There is a definite progression in every aspect of the subject. Classroom organisation and pupil management is vital to the success of lessons. The quality of teaching enhances learning through setting high standards that are matched to needs. Activities motivate pupils and their interest reinforces learning.
147. The subject is well managed by a co-ordinator qualified to teach physical education who monitors and evaluates teaching. Expertise is shared well amongst all staff. The range of activities, resources and insight of the staff ensures that good learning takes place. Schemes of work are complete. Assessment is good. It follows the school policies well, as well as the local authority schemes. Every pupil has the opportunity to succeed. They are able to compete, to take part in individual programmes. They have access to very good sensory curricular opportunities. The resources in school are good; these are enhanced by use of those in the community, in neighbouring schools, colleges and leisure centres.
148. The school hall provides unsatisfactory accommodation for gymnastics. Chairs are stacked around the floor and reduce floor space. They also prevent access to the wall bars and because they are loosely stacked there is a safety hazard when pupils are moving around the hall.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

149. The school has responded effectively to the comments made at the time of the previous inspection. The good improvement in the subject is particularly noticeable in the time available for teaching the subject, the curriculum, planning the schemes of work and monitoring classroom practice. This is because the co-ordinator manages the subject very well and has ensured that its importance in contributing to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is recognised throughout the school. Pupils up to the age of 16 now achieve well overall. They receive a broad and balanced religious education, which devotes sufficient time to world religions. Students in the further education department are included in this. No lessons could be observed in the further education department so no judgements on students' achievements and on the quality of teaching and learning are possible. An end-of-day assembly on harvest fruits showed how religious education is used by the school to develop the students' sense of spirituality during periods of calm and reflection. This is evident from the very good wall displays in classrooms and corridors.
150. Overall, teaching and learning is satisfactory for pupils up to the age of eleven. There is much evidence from photographs, pupils' work and wall displays to show that overall these pupils make good progress. This is because teachers set good expectations for a wide range of learning to occur. They for example, use opportunities to teach and reinforce basic skills, as in a lesson when all the pupils counted together the ten gurus associated with the Sikh faith. Teachers use a range of activities to stimulate pupils' interest leading to them responding positively and showing interest in their work. As pupils move through the primary department they study a range of topics that stimulate their interest and begin to increase their knowledge and understanding of religious beliefs and practices. Birthdays provide a sense of celebration and belonging to groups such as

the family, while festivals such as Easter, harvest and Christmas, including an excursion out to see donkeys, emphasise the importance of special occasions and events. Special places are recognised by holding the Harvest Festival in the local church and through visits to other places of worship. A group of 10 and 11 year olds, including pupils in wheelchairs, visited a Sikh temple. They were able to experience wearing a turban and also experience some rituals such as removing shoes before entering the temple.

151. Pupils, including those with autistic spectrum disorders, achieve well and make good progress in up to the age of 16 because teaching is good and pupils are well managed. This leads to good quality learning. Teachers use a range of methods and strategies to stimulate pupils' interest, using questions well to encourage pupils to participate in discussion and to respond orally. This leads to good quality learning. Praise and encouragement are used well and activities are presented that are suitable but challenging to pupils with a variety of different needs. Some pupils between the ages of 14 and 16 were able to work independently on a task about a harvest poem, and two pupils with autistic spectrum disorders needed minimum levels of assistance when decorating a paper plate with Arabic letters while learning about Islam. This activity maintained the pupils' enthusiasm but was also used to reinforce their literacy skills and stimulate their interest.

152. Resources are good with religious artefacts available for pupils to see and handle. The subject co-ordinator has organised the resources well and has produced a comprehensive catalogue of what is available, including a list of appropriate web sites.

#### **PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION**

153. The school has made some good improvements to the provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) since the last inspection. Curriculum planning has improved and schemes of work now include appropriate health education, sex education and drugs awareness. There are now links with other subjects of the curriculum, for example science, and work done in PSHE lessons supports the teaching of basic skills, especially literacy skills. However, the overall provision for PSHE remains satisfactory, showing no improvement, due to the inconsistency with which the subject's large time allocation is used, and the fact that monitoring has been insufficiently rigorous to pick this up.

154. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall, with some pupils and groups making good progress in sessions where time is well used and where the teaching is good. Primary age pupils begin to learn to dress and undress themselves, for example for physical education lessons and sessions in the hydrotherapy pool. In drink and snack breaks, they start to make choices between given options, for example choosing between different flavours of squash. In more formal lessons, they learn to identify parts of the body. Secondary age pupils learn about health-related issues such as the value of regular exercise and which foods are healthy, and have designated sessions where they review what has happened during the day and think about their progress towards meeting their individual targets. Students in the further education groups learn about self-advocacy and about how to work together in a group as part of their preparation for life after school, and gain accreditation in a range of units through the Towards Independence scheme. Pupils in the autism unit make very good progress in coming to terms with their challenging behaviours related to their autism, and learn to behave appropriately in class, concentrate on their work for increasing periods of time and start to interact socially with their peers.

155. Teaching of PSHE is good overall. More effective teaching takes place when teachers have high expectations of what pupils will learn, and where time is used well to enable pupils to make good progress towards meeting their individual targets. Conversely, pupils make less progress when too much of the PSHE time allocation is used for overlong

drink/snack breaks or when some time is given over to extending break-time activities.

156. There is currently no permanent subject co-ordinator in post. The headteacher is managing the subject satisfactorily on a temporary basis, on top of his already heavy workload. Good subject development plans are in place to audit the PSHE provision to establish how the school can best implement the new guidelines on the teaching of citizenship and relationships education. This could usefully be extended to include an audit of the current use of subject allocation times, in order to establish consistency across the school.