

INSPECTION REPORT

DOWNNS VIEW SCHOOL

Woodingdean, Brighton

LEA area: Brighton and Hove

Unique reference number: 114680

Headteacher: Jane Reed

Reporting inspector: Sue Aldridge
8810

Dates of inspection: 18th – 22nd September 2000

Inspection number: 223688

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	4 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Warren Road Woodingdean Brighton
Postcode:	BN2 6BB
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	David Smith
Date of previous inspection:	June 1996

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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Gill Hoggard 14066	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Attitudes, behaviour and personal development; Partnership with parents.
Gordon Gentry 17855	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science; Art and Design.	
Geoff Kitchen 21140	<i>Team inspector</i>	Music; Physical education.	Curricular and other opportunities.
Denise Morris 18498	<i>Team inspector</i>	Under fives; English; Religious education.	
Roger Parry 20247	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography; History.	
David Walker 10668	<i>Team inspector</i>	Information technology; Design and technology.	Care for pupils and students.
Bob Thompson 10781	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics; French.	
Graham Todd 1224	<i>Team inspector</i>	Support.	Support.

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Downs View is a mixed, community special school catering for 107 pupils and students aged from four to nineteen with severe learning difficulties, autism and profound and multiple learning difficulties. All pupils and students have statements of special educational need. Most pupils are white, and numbers eligible for free school meals are below average. Students over 16 include some with moderate learning difficulties. Since the last inspection the school has admitted more pupils with autism and challenging behaviour, and some who are blind.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a highly effective school, where there has been considerable improvement since the last inspection. Pupils make a very good start in the early years class. There is a high proportion of good, very good or excellent teaching. The school is very well led, governed and managed, and highly developed teamwork by a large, well trained and experienced staff ensures that pupils and students achieve well. The school provides very good value for money.

WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL

- The youngest pupils make the best progress; all other pupils and students make good progress. They thoroughly enjoy school, and their behaviour is very good.
- Pupils' and students' personal development is promoted very effectively by the excellent arrangements to encourage their social and moral development, and by the very good provision for their spiritual and cultural development. Harmonious relationships throughout the school contribute strongly to high standards.
- Teamwork is highly effective; support staff and other professionals make a valuable contribution to the teaching and support of pupils. Arrangements for induction and professional development are very effective.
- The headteacher and senior management team lead very effectively. The school is very well governed. Governors are very supportive and share a strong commitment to success and improvement.
- Parents value the school, and are themselves valued as partners in their children's education.
- A wide range of extra curricular activities helps to enrich the curriculum, as do links with the community. Mutually beneficial links with other schools and a college provide very good opportunities for inclusion.

WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- There are no specialist rooms for older pupils, and this limits progress in science and design technology. There is no dedicated medical room.
- Schemes of work are not all written to the same format, nor do they all contain the same information.
- Some Individual Education Plans contain too many targets.
- Guidance about time allocations on timetables is not linked to the school's curriculum policy.
- The music policy is out of date and needs reviewing.

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

There has been very good improvement since the last inspection. Standards of achievement have improved, largely as a result of improvements in curriculum breadth and teaching. Punctuality has improved. The school day has lengthened and the Literacy and Numeracy strategies have been implemented well. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development has improved. Shortfalls in resources for learning have been remedied, and the school has further developed its arrangements for child protection, behaviour management, and assessment. The senior management team is now larger, and all staff with management responsibilities have been empowered to carry out their roles. As a result monitoring, evaluation and support are well developed and there is a strong culture of improvement in the school. Financial control has improved and a best value scheme has been implemented. The governors have further developed their roles as critical friends, and established a quality assurance committee. The school has done all it possibly can to improve the accommodation.

STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by age	by age	by age	by age	<i>Key</i>
	7	11	16	19	
speaking and listening	A	B	B	B	<i>very good</i> A
reading	A	B	B	B	<i>good</i> B
writing	A	B	B	B	<i>satisfactory</i> C
mathematics	A	B	B	B	<i>unsatisfactory</i> D
personal, social and health education	B	B	B	B	<i>poor</i> E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B	B	B	

* IEPs are Individual Education Plans for pupils with special educational needs.

The setting of whole-school targets is developing well. Pupils in the early years class make the best progress. At the key stages, progress is good in English, mathematics, history, geography, art, and personal, social and health education. At Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils make very good progress in music and physical education. Students over 16 make good progress. At Key Stages 3 and 4, the lack of specialist accommodation limits progress in science and design and technology.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils and students enjoy school and are keen to succeed.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils and students behave very well in class, around school, and when in the community.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Harmonious relationships contribute to a positive atmosphere. Pupils and students willingly take responsibility and steadily develop independence and maturity.
Attendance	Good. Punctuality has improved since the last inspection.

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	Good

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

Teaching is good overall, with a high proportion of very good and excellent teaching. Of the 121 lessons seen, 67 were good (55.4 per cent), 28 were very good (23.1 per cent), and 9 (7.4 per cent) were excellent. With one exception, the remaining lessons were satisfactory. Teaching in the Early Years class is very good overall, and so is the teaching of physical education.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	A very broad range of learning experiences is provided at the Foundation Stage and POST - 16. At Key Stages 1 and 2 the curriculum is good; at Key Stages 3 and 4 it is satisfactory. Extra curricular activities, visits, visitors and residentials widen the curriculum. Inclusion within and beyond the school is a strength.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Arrangements for promoting moral and social development are excellent; those for encouraging spiritual and cultural awareness are very good. A good programme of personal, social and health education makes a strong contribution to personal development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Assessment is good; teachers identify pupils' and students' skills and abilities well, and they use this information effectively to plan the next steps. There are excellent procedures for encouraging good behaviour, and very good arrangements for encouraging attendance and punctuality. Pupils and students, particularly those with additional special needs, receive high quality support and guidance from school staff and a wide range of other professionals.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. There is a clear, shared vision and staff are empowered to carry out their responsibilities. There is a strong commitment to school improvement, and highly developed teamwork.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Very well. Governors are very well informed, supportive, and committed to quality assurance and improvement through governance.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Monitoring and evaluation are very well developed and they have a positive impact on standards and provision.
The strategic use of resources	The school makes very effective use of all its resources to improve the curriculum and facilities for pupils and staff. Training for staff is a particular strength.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

The Parents Meeting was attended by 11 parents and carers representing 11 pupils. Almost half of the questionnaires sent out were completed and returned.

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school is well led and managed; • Their children like school; • Parents are comfortable approaching the school with questions or a problem; • Children are expected to work hard and achieve their best; • The school works closely with parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few would like their children to have more homework; • A few felt they would like more information on a daily basis about what children had been doing in school; • A few felt that there should be more staff training on pupils with Down's Syndrome.

Inspectors support parents' and carers' very positive views of the school. They find that the school is implementing its fairly recent homework policy well, that information to parents is very good, and that most staff are very knowledgeable about the disabilities that pupils have.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

- 1. The characteristics of the pupils and students for whom the school caters make it inappropriate to judge the standards they achieve against age related expectations or averages. In this report, therefore, judgements about achievement take account of information contained in pupils' annual reviews and their progress towards the targets set for them. The report also gives examples of what pupils and students know, understand and can do.*
2. In general, pupils and students make good progress. Those in the early years class, who are at the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, make very good progress. Here, the quality of teaching and planning is very good. Pupils at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4 make good progress overall, and students also make good progress. There are no differences in the progress made by boys and girls, pupils and students of different levels of attainment, or groups with different special educational needs.
3. Whole-school target setting is developing well. Governors have set targets for swimming, residential experiences, and for success in achieving external accreditation. However, it is too soon to say whether these targets are having an impact on standards. The school also ran a pilot scheme for pupils at the end of Key Stages 2 and 4, last academic year. These pupils were assessed using the 'P' scales (Pre-level 1, National Curriculum), targets were set for achievement at the end of the academic year, and pupils re-assessed at that time. The samples were relatively small, and the results somewhat inconclusive, but staff found this a useful exercise. Targets set for individual pupils were mostly challenging, but for some lower attaining pupils the P scales do not offer small enough steps to demonstrate progress in a year. For these pupils, progress is better demonstrated through the IEP (Individual Education Plan) targets they achieve.
4. The pupils in the early years class make very good progress in English; at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4, and at POST - 16, progress is good. The youngest pupils quickly develop communication skills through the use of language, signs and symbols. By 11 many pupils can express choices and preferences, and by 14 higher attaining pupils will take messages and answer the telephone. By the time they reach 16, pupils are more confident; they can talk about themselves and their families, for example. Students over 16 extend their communication skills in a very wide range of social settings, when shopping or at college, for instance.
5. Pupils with autism, and those with profound learning difficulties make good progress in developing communication skills. They begin to use switches at an early age, and individuals steadily develop skills using either electronic communication aids, symbols or pictures to communicate. Pupils use 'talkers' to convey messages, or indicate choices, by selecting symbols, for example. For some individual pupils with autism, progress in communication skills is very good. They successfully make the transition from using photographs and symbols to a picture exchange communication system.

6. The youngest pupils enjoy stories and sharing books. They begin to recognise pictures, of animals, for example. Higher attaining pupils can match pictures. Pupils begin to make marks on paper. At Key Stage 2, pupils are taught in groups of similar ability for literacy sessions, and this works well. By the time they are 11, higher attaining pupils can read simple words in text, and some can almost write their names. A few write simple stories. By 14, higher attaining pupils read simple text well, and have developed strategies to decode words that are not familiar. At this stage pupils make good progress in letter formation, and higher attainers write simple accounts and make lists. By the time they are 16, many pupils can write simple sentences independently, some using a pencil, others using a keyboard. Where it is appropriate, they use software to generate symbols and text. POST - 16 students consolidate reading and writing skills in social contexts, and some write for a range of purposes. For example, those who have work experience write an account of their time in the placement. Some students can write extended news, and most write a daily review, using whatever method is most suited to their needs. Higher attaining students write sentences in print, with accurate punctuation and spelling. Students become more confident in reading, and use strategies to help them understand unfamiliar text, such as thinking about the context. They also increase their ability to read social signs. Across the school, communication and literacy skills are reinforced very effectively in other subjects and in school life. For example, displays are well annotated, with both symbols and text, and this assists pupils' and students' understanding.

7. Throughout the school, pupils and students make good progress in mathematics. Numeracy skills are used in many lessons other than mathematics, and this helps to promote progress. The organisation of pupils into groups of similar ability at Key Stage 2 works well. By the time they are seven, pupils recognise numbers from zero to five; they count back from five to zero, and can say which number is missing from an incomplete sequence of numbers, zero to five. Pupils at Key Stage 2 extend their understanding of money; they sort, order and begin to know the value of different coins. They also extend their understanding of weight, developing the ability to distinguish between heavy and light objects, for example. By the time they are 11, higher attaining pupils can carry out mathematical investigations and record their findings. Lower attaining pupils explore objects that are heavy and light, and some can match coins. At Key Stage 3, pupils extend their number skills to operations such as subtraction. For example, they count backwards from a given number to subtract. By the age of 14, higher attainers have a good vocabulary of mathematical terms, such as 'subtract', 'equals', 'less than', and 'more than'. Lower attainers can match cards, on which prices are written, to the relevant coins. By the time they reach 16, higher attaining pupils solve money problems up to £2; lower attaining pupils make good progress against the targets on their Individual Education Plans, extending their counting skills, knowledge of shapes and money, for example.

8. Students over 16 make good progress; many successfully achieve external accreditation for their gains in numeracy skills. Higher attaining students can shop with confidence, recognise all coins, and check that they have been given the correct change. Lower attaining students sort, match and recognise different coins, but do not yet understand the different values of coins. Students with autism continue to develop counting skills, and can shop with some adult support. They understand that money has to be exchanged for goods.

9. Across the school, pupils and students make good progress against their targets for personal and social development. They make gains in their interactions with others, for example. They also increase their ability to function independently. All pupils have targets that they work on at lunchtimes. For example, younger pupils work on targets to enable them to feed themselves. As they progress through the school, pupils also learn to dress and undress, to cook simple snacks and meals, to plan and shop for meals and other items. Those with additional difficulties, such as visual impairment, increase their mobility skills. By the time they leave school, many students have achieved a good level of independence and they are well prepared for adult life.

10. In the subjects of art, history, geography, music, personal social and health education and physical education, pupils make good progress overall. At Key Stages 3 and 4, progress in music and physical education is very good. Here, pupils benefit from the subject expertise of teachers. In both subjects, teachers make extensive use of facilities, personnel and opportunities outside the school to give pupils a rich variety of experiences.

11. In science and design and technology, progress is better for pupils at Key Stages 1 and 2, than it is for secondary aged pupils. In both of these subjects, the lack of specialist rooms at Key Stages 3 and 4 narrows the curriculum. Pupils are not able to use a sufficiently wide range of resistant materials in design technology. In science, opportunities to carry out investigative work are limited. Nonetheless, progress in these two subjects is satisfactory overall. In religious education, progress is satisfactory. There is a broad curriculum, but insufficient detail in the scheme of work to ensure that all pupils continue to build on their knowledge, skills and understanding. Similarly, progress in information and communication technology is satisfactory across the key stages. The subject is developing well, but more detail in schemes of work would help teachers to focus on cross-curricular links, and enable pupils to practise their skills across the curriculum. At Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils make satisfactory progress in French.

12. The great majority of parents who expressed a view were pleased with the progress that their children make at school. At the parents' meeting, several gave examples of particular successes. These included gains in speech and language, increased confidence and maturity, and progress in acquiring independence skills, such as travelling on public transport.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

13. Pupils' and students' attitudes and behaviour are generally very good and a strength of the school. The high standards found at the time of the last inspection have been maintained. Inspection findings confirm parental reports that pupils and students are keen and eager to come to school and interested in its activities. In the vast majority of lessons observed, pupils and students showed great enthusiasm for learning. For example, in a Key Stage 3 science lesson dealing with waterproof and absorbent materials, they concentrated well and sustained interest in the topic. Pupils and students coming into school in the mornings are cheerful and enthusiastic.

14. Behaviour in and around school is very good. In most lessons pupils and students are attentive, respectful, and fully engaged with their learning. In the rare cases where they are not, this is linked to insufficiently challenging teaching or, as in the case of a Key Stage 2 class with restless behaviour, a recent change in class members and daily routine. At break, and lunchtimes, pupils and students behave very well, communicating socially with their peers and helping those less able than themselves. In a religious education lesson dealing with aspects of Judaism, the class treated Jewish artefacts with respect. On out of school trips, such as the POST - 16 group's visit to a local college, behaviour is exemplary.

15. Pupils and students form constructive relationships with each other and the staff, as seen in many lessons. They work well with their peers and enjoy helping each other. For example, in the early years class, one pupil held a toy while a classmate with more profound learning difficulties was settled in his chair; in a Key Stage 3 literacy lesson, pupils listened respectfully to each others' news. The school is notably free from any form of harassment or oppressive behaviour. For example, when the POST - 16 students travelled in the minibus to the local swimming pool, there was much good-humoured laughing and joking, and when in the pool, their behaviour was thoroughly socially acceptable. Pupils and students with autism, and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties, are well integrated into school life and fully accepted by their peers.

16. Pupils and students are given opportunities to reflect on their time at school in the daily acts of collective worship, and they frequently show respect for each other. For example, in a Key Stage 2 science lesson, they listened well to each other in group discussion; in a design technology lesson, Year 6 pupils making wind chimes showed respect for each other's work .

17. Pupils and students willingly take the initiative and assume small responsibilities when asked. Even early years pupils have a pair of named helpers each day (a more and less able pupil together) who do small jobs such as taking the registers to the office, or blowing out the daily candle. Each day a more responsible pupil visits the classrooms with a clipboard to inform everyone about lunchtime menus. POST - 16 students are encouraged to behave responsibly, by tidying up after themselves and remembering their own kit and pocket money on swimming days.

18. Attendance is good at 93.76 per cent, with unauthorised absence at 0.28 per cent. This compares favourably with similar schools nationally. Punctuality has improved since the school was last inspected, largely as a result of close monitoring and intervention by the school. There were no exclusions in the last school year.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

19. Teaching is good overall. Altogether inspectors saw 121 lessons; of these 16 were satisfactory, 67 were good, 28 were very good and 9 were excellent. Only one lesson was unsatisfactory. Teaching is best at the Foundation Stage and Key Stage 1, where half of the lessons seen were very good or excellent, and the remainder were good. At Key Stages 2, 3 and 4, and at POST - 16, teaching is good.

20. Children at the Foundation Stage are assessed on entry to school, and programmes are then planned to meet their individual needs. There is a broad, balanced and relevant range of learning experiences provided. Staff quickly build up good relationships with children, who soon settle in the class. There are strong links with parents, who are confident about the school's provision for these young children. The classroom is an attractive, stimulating and secure environment where children are safe to explore, and staff use excellent resources to promote communication and understanding. Children soon start to make clear progress against the targets set for them.

21. In English, mathematics, science, art, design and technology, history, geography, music and personal, social and health education, teaching is good overall. In physical education and music, teaching of older pupils is very good. In both these subjects, older pupils are taught by subject specialists. Teaching of information and communication technology is satisfactory overall. In religious education, teaching is good at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3, and satisfactory at Key Stage 4 and POST - 16. Only one French lesson, at Key Stage 3, was timetabled during the inspection period, and in this teaching was very good.

22. The important skills of communication, literacy and numeracy are taught well. The encouragement of pupils' and students' communication skills is a high priority for all staff and they seize every opportunity to reinforce them. Literacy and numeracy are taught well across other subjects. For example, pupils read and write in other subjects, and displays have prominent symbol and text captions; pupils count in physical education and measure in science.

23. An outstanding feature of almost all lessons is the highly effective teamwork between teachers and other staff. Large numbers of support staff in classes ensure that pupils and students are well supported, and they make good progress in most lessons as a result. Many examples were seen of excellent communication and understanding between adults in the room, all of which ensured that pupils and students were suitably challenged, well supported, included with their peers, and that time was used well. For example, in a physical education lesson, sensitive support from a classroom assistant enabled a pupil with autism to participate in activities alongside his peers. In the same lesson physiotherapy staff carried out a personal exercise programme with a pupil who had more complex physical needs. At one point, the teacher was holding the hand of a less confident pupil, leading him around the apparatus circuit; they were hotly pursued by a large, enthusiastic pupil. A member of the physiotherapy staff noticed this and intervened sensitively, thus ensuring safety without dampening pupils' enthusiasm or destroying their confidence. Similarly, very effective teamwork was demonstrated in a music lesson for pupils with autism, some of whom had challenging behaviour. The teacher was playing the guitar and singing when one of the pupils next to him grasped him firmly around the collar. The teacher nodded to a classroom assistant who moved across, carried out what was clearly an agreed and practised procedure to release the pupil from the teacher's collar, and then exchanged places with him. All of this occurred without a moment's interruption to the lesson or any distress to pupils. Teamwork is strongly supported by the quality of relationships amongst staff, and the thorough understanding that they all have of pupils' learning difficulties, individual needs, personalities and idiosyncrasies.

24. Teachers' planning and organisation also support teamwork. Adult roles are made clear, and so are tasks to be approached, resources to be used, and the learning intentions. A particular strength is the planning of tasks that are well matched to pupils' abilities and needs, offering a suitable challenge, but with opportunities for success. Consequently, pupils expect to have to work hard, yet they know that there will be support, encouragement and help from staff when necessary. They respond well, and in most lessons they work hard at tasks for relatively long periods, some older pupils work independently. Similarly, staff are well trained to manage pupils and students with challenging behaviour, and they are skilled and confident when doing so. As a result, there is very little disruption to lessons, and pupils and students with challenging behaviour are engaged in tasks for a good proportion of the time.

25. Staff have high expectations of pupils' productivity. For example, they always insist that a task is tackled before a favourite activity can be started. They move pupils and students on from one task to another with a sense of purpose, and most lessons proceed at a good pace, with no time wasted. They generally give pupils the chance to learn from others and from their own mistakes. In one physical education lesson, pupils were encouraged to experiment with ways of travelling over apparatus. After a short time it was apparent that, left to their own devices, pupils were copying one another, and were praised by the teacher for their learning. Older pupils and students are encouraged to reflect on their performance in lessons, and at Ash Cottage, each day ends with a review session when students reflect on and record their activities and achievements during the day. At Key Stage 4 and POST - 16, pupils and students plan and review each challenge they approach within an accredited course, and thus develop a growing awareness of their learning and achievements. Younger pupils build up a portfolio of their achievements, often in the form of photographs.

26. Staff use a good range of teaching methods, well suited to the particular needs of pupils and students with different disabilities. Good use is made of photographs, symbols and objects to help those with more profound learning difficulties understand the sequence of activities during the day. For pupils with autism, this also helps them to make the transition from one activity to another. A particular success was seen when an older pupil with autism was persuaded to leave the sausage rolls he was baking, to carry out an art activity. Staff successfully combine a number of different strategies to engage pupils with autism. There is effective use of calm, firm encouragement, and repetition of simple instructions. Within classes, areas of low stimulation are used well to engage pupils in tasks, and side rooms are used sensibly to allow pupils supervised time out of the group so that learning for others is not disturbed. Staff make very good use of communication books in an age appropriate format. For example, one older pupil has a filofax, with symbol and text cards that have velcro strips on the back. They can be unzipped from the book and zipped onto the cover to communicate or record. This enabled him to record the distance a water rocket travelled in a science lesson.

27. The school has a good range of other resources for pupils with additional needs, and these are used effectively in lessons. For example one totally blind student uses a machine for writing Braille; other pupils and students use a variety of communication aids, and objects are used well to promote understanding. Parents and staff have produced story sacks, in which objects representing characters or events can be placed, along with the relevant book. As a text is shared with pupils, objects are revealed from the sack at the appropriate time. These hold pupils' interest and support their understanding of the story.

28. A draft policy on homework has recently been developed. This promotes the notion of parents supporting learning at home, and teachers are implementing this well. The school is aware of the need to develop further this very good contribution to pupils' and students' learning out of school.

29. Few weaknesses of teaching were seen. Where they did exist, they included tasks that presented little challenge for some pupils and students, and lessons that lacked pace. Occasionally, support staff did not allow sufficient time for a response, and answered questions themselves.

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

30. Since the last inspection the school has made very good progress in developing its curriculum. All National Curriculum subjects are taught, as well as religious education, personal social and health education, sex education and drugs education. Religious education is based on the locally Agreed Syllabus and meets statutory requirements. The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been introduced and are having a good effect on pupils' and students' achievements. The length of the teaching day has been extended, giving added breadth for all pupils and students. Schemes of work have been developed for all subjects, and most of these are of good quality.

31. The curriculum at the Foundation Stage is very good. It is very well planned and takes a very good account of early learning goals and individual children's needs. For pupils five to eleven, there is a good, broad and varied curriculum. For secondary aged pupils, the curriculum is satisfactory. The lack of specialist subject accommodation results in a narrow range in some subjects, notably work with resistant materials in design and technology, and access to some relevant programmes of study within National Curriculum science. In music, art and physical education, the use of facilities, experiences and expertise outside school ensures a wide range of opportunities.

32. The curriculum for students POST - 16 is very good; it provides a very rich range of highly relevant experiences, and prepares students very effectively for their next stage. Experiences are well selected to promote further development of key skills and there is an extensive range of vocational courses, work related experiences, and work experience for those who can benefit from this. A suitable range of accreditation, including the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, Towards Independence, Open College Network (OCN) modules and Accreditation for Life and Living (ALL) modules, ensures all students leave school with an acknowledgement of their achievements.

33. All pupils have statements of special educational need, and an extensive range of targets is set in Individual Education Plans. There are too many targets in some plans, making review and recording burdensome for teachers. A key strength of the curriculum is that it is carefully adjusted to meet the varied needs of each individual pupil whilst ensuring that all pupils receive their full curriculum entitlement.

34. Inclusion, both within and beyond school, is a strength. Pupils and students with exceptional needs benefit from inclusion in other classes within the school. Some younger pupils attend an integrated after school club with their mainstream peers. While most pupils and students have good equality of opportunity and are able to enjoy access to everything the curriculum offers, disabled access to Ash Cottage, where most students over 16 are taught, is very limited.

35. Links with the community were a strength of the school at the time of the last inspection and the school has continued to develop these. The high quality of links was formally recognised when the school received the School's Curriculum Award. Improvements include increased inclusion with local mainstream schools and community arts groups. The very well established link with a local college has been successfully maintained and the range of opportunities offered has increased. The school is instrumental in developing some of these very good initiatives.

36. Most subjects have good schemes of work. However, they lack a common layout which would make them easier for teachers to work with across all subjects. The school is aware of the need to establish which format and content best supports teachers in their planning, and plans to adopt this across all subjects. Staff are currently awaiting further guidance from the Department for Education and Employment on lower attaining pupils before fully implementing National Curriculum 2000.

37. The provision for personal, social and health education is very good. For example, when developing the drugs awareness policy, the school worked with the local authority adviser to determine what drug awareness might mean to pupils and students at Downs View, and how a common-sense policy would result in appropriate activities within the school's personal social and health education programme. Targets in pupils' and students' Individual Education Plans include many related to personal social and health education.

38. Pupils and students are given very good opportunities to take part in an impressive range of extra-curricular activities as an extension to the school day, including sports, music, creative and visual arts. During the inspection, a visiting music group, with an international reputation for its drumming workshops, presented achievement certificates to students who have successfully worked with the group over the last two years. Through the school, pupils and their families are involved in the Brighton Festival, as well as local carnivals. Good use has been made of the Arts Centre at Sussex University. Pupils also participate in residential journeys. The school has set the challenging target of ensuring 85 per cent of pupils and students will benefit from a residential experience during the 2000 - 2001 school year. Adventure residential activities include archery, rock walling and go-karting. It is to their credit that staff give so freely of their time to enable very positive pupil and student involvement in arts, sports and businesses within the community.

39. The provision for careers education and guidance is good. Older students gain self-knowledge by using video to film themselves. This knowledge is applied in discussion of the likely requirements and skills needed for opportunities beyond school. This sensitively helps them to recognise their own skills and limitations. With the support of the local careers service, career action plans are drawn up with students and their families.

40. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is a significant strength. An unusually detailed policy is fully implemented. Parents rightly recognise this and are fulsome in their praise.

41. Provision for spiritual development is very good, with numerous opportunities throughout the school, both planned and spontaneous. Religious education lessons, such as those focussing on special places, and Church visits for festivals such as Christmas and Harvest, play an important part. Each class also has an act of collective worship every day, and lighting a candle at the beginning and end of each day helps pupils and students to reflect and focus on what they have done that day. Pupils with autism and those with profound and multiple difficulties are fully included. Pupils and students have participated in moving and spiritual experiences such as the Millennium Angel's Wing project and the visit of the Glyndebourne singers and musicians. There are also smaller, more spontaneous spiritual moments, such as one in the POST - 16 art class when students showed astonishment and pleasure at their own reflections.

42. Arrangements to promote moral and social development are excellent. A high quality formal program for personal, social and health education permeates every aspect of the school. There is a constant but unobtrusive emphasis on appropriate behaviour, taking turns and thinking of others' needs. Pupils and students demonstrate that they know what is required. For example, in a Key Stage 3 physical education lesson, pupils applauded when their peers managed a difficult feat of co-ordination and all were sympathetic when some could not achieve it. Staff also provide excellent role models, both in their dealings with each other and in their treatment of the children in their care. Pupils and students are encouraged to think of others beyond the school. They collect for charities such as Children in Need and the St. Patrick's Trust for the homeless.

43. Social development is an equally important part of the school's programme. Communication is encouraged and assisted in all lessons, and also in other activities such as lunchtimes and out of school trips. Responsibilities and small jobs are offered to those pupils and students who can handle them, thus visibly increasing their sense of pride and self-worth. A tremendous range of visits and visitors notably includes: the weekly link day at a local college for the POST - 16 students, residential trips to Knowles' Tooth and Calshot for outdoor pursuits, and the Duke of Edinburgh's award scheme. Visitors regularly coming in to school include local mainstream primary children, musicians, speakers, and artists. A number of volunteers also work in school periodically, and extra curricular experiences give additional opportunities to socialise with peers. All of these encourage pupils and students to communicate and interact with a variety of different people. The result is a strong feeling of pride and a sense of belonging in the school community.

44. Cultural development is very good. Downs View school is regularly involved in several community arts initiatives. For example, pupils and students participate in several aspects of the Brighton festival each year. One particular source of pride and wonder was the Project Craig light box, an outdoor installation showing a film made of Downs View pupils and students participating in an art week at school. The public were able to see this in the centre of Brighton as part of the festival.

45. Pupils and students frequently go out, to local events such as concerts or carnivals, or further afield, to see the Nutcracker Ballet at Covent Garden. They are exposed to the work of artists, such as pictures in the style of Matisse and Andy Warhol. Other cultures are not forgotten. Pupils celebrate Diwali with Indian clothes and food; they also dress up and eat like the Italians or the Spanish for a day. Speaking French is encouraged when visiting a French café and cheese shop in Rottingdean, and speaking basic French with Dieppe stallholders in Brighton market. Some pupils have visited a synagogue, and all learn about different religions in religious education. During the inspection, a Key Stage 3 physical education lesson used lively zydeco music to get pupils active and moving. The school's ethos was judged good at the time of the last inspection. Since then it has striven conscientiously to improve it, and achieved the current very high standard.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

46. The school has made good improvement in this aspect and now makes very good provision for the welfare, support and guidance of all pupils and students, in a caring and supportive environment. A high priority is given to the welfare of pupils and students and this has a beneficial effect upon their learning. Relationships are consistently very good throughout, ensuring pupils and students feel confident, secure and valued. The school attaches great importance to the personal dignity of pupils and students. Parents are pleased with the level of support in the school. They see it as a caring community where staff are approachable, and in which their children feel happy and safe. Inspection findings support these views.

47. Very good arrangements are made to ensure pupils' and students' health, safety, well-being and protection. The designated people responsible for child protection are suitably trained. The headteacher was a member of the group that has recently reviewed and revised the Local Authority procedures and guidelines. All staff receive regular training and briefing on the procedures to be followed, supported by a suitable policy and guidelines. All members of staff are vigilant in their care. Emergency evacuation procedures are practised with sufficient frequency. Members of staff are aware of safety issues relating to lessons and take the necessary steps to ensure that the correct procedures are followed. For example, in a design and technology lesson the teacher explained the correct and safe way to use a hammer.

48. The school has very good relationships with a wide range of support services and makes very effective use of them where needed. The provision for first aid is generally good, but there is no designated medical room. Visiting medical professionals are very willing to talk with staff, so that they have a good understanding of the medical needs of pupils and students. The designated governor, headteacher and caretaker make regular inspections of the site. These are supplemented by the day-to-day observations of staff to ensure a safe environment for the pupils and students.

49. The school has excellent procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour. Clear routines and high expectations are consistently reinforced by all staff, helping pupils and students to understand and meet expectations. All staff refer to behaviour in lessons, in assemblies and on other occasions if the need arises. There are effective behaviour management plans, generally drawn up in consultation with parents, for pupils and students who have specific difficulties. These are used successfully to support improvement, and are

regularly reviewed and updated as needed. As a result of this, and very effective classroom management, the school maintains a very positive learning environment that is rarely disrupted. Pupils and students who were asked could not recall any instances of bullying; they are clear that, on the rare occasions when there are difficulties, they all have an adult in whom they can confide and that the school takes speedy and appropriate action.

50. The educational and personal support and guidance given to pupils and students are very effective in raising the achievements throughout the school. Since the time of the last inspection, the school has reviewed its procedures, and these now promote very good practice and a high level of consistency. The support provided to pupils and students with more complex learning difficulties is very good; the school works very closely with all agencies and specialist teachers. Regular meetings with a full spectrum of support specialists set realistic targets and monitor progress against these. This liaison results in a coherent approach to the support and guidance given.

51. The monitoring of progress and personal development is good, and is assisted by the good arrangements for assessment. 'Equals' baseline assessment is carried out on entry and repeated after six months. Individual education plans (IEPs) have improved and now have a consistent format across the school. Targets are informally reviewed each half term and again at the end of the term, with appropriate comments recorded. New targets are set for the next term. These clearly show the progress pupils have made towards their individual targets. However, although IEP targets set are specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and timed (SMART), some IEPs contain over thirty targets. This is excessive and makes assessment less manageable.

52. Good practice is seen at POST - 16, where there are roughly eight targets set each term. Information from IEPs is used well in annual review reports, which serve also as annual progress reports. These are of good quality; they clearly indicate what pupils know, can do and understand, in all National Curriculum subjects and in personal, social and health education. The use of assessment across the school is good and helps staff to plan what pupils will learn next. Accreditation at Key Stage 4 and POST - 16 provides a structured framework to plan what pupils and students will learn next, and is used well.

53. The recent introduction of assessment profiles for all pupils and students improves significantly the quality of the data that can be used in the monitoring of progress in both educational and personal development. The school has recently completed a pilot year which will enable the present individual records of progress to be developed into group and whole school targets based on 'Equals', 'P' levels (Pre-Level 1 National Curriculum), and National Curriculum Attainment levels as appropriate. Since the last inspection, suitable accredited courses have been introduced for pupils and students at Key Stage 4 and POST - 16. For example, pupils at Key Stage 4 work towards the ASDAN Transition Challenge, the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, and ALL (Accreditation for Life and Living).

54. Records of pupils' and students' achievements are well maintained and presented and show considerable effort to keep them easily accessible and up-to-date. Achievements are well annotated in text and symbols, making them meaningful to pupils, and annotations show the context and degree of support given during the assessment, which is useful information for teachers.

55. Attendance procedures are now very good and significantly improved since the last inspection. The school monitors attendance and the late arrival of transport, and takes appropriate action. Registers are filled in according to statutory guidelines.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

56. Partnership with parents and carers is very good and a strength of the school. Parents' and carers' views of the school are very positive. They are unanimous in praising good teaching, high expectations, very good behaviour and the information they get about progress. They feel the school is well led and managed, and that staff are open to their suggestions. Above all, they feel that their children are happy at school. A few have concerns about the use of the home-school books and the extent of homework that pupils are given. However, these are not supported by the findings of the inspection.

57. The school provides a very good range of information for parents and carers. This is an aspect that has improved since the last inspection. There is a well-presented prospectus and Governors' report to parents. Annual reports are extremely detailed and complement the annual review materials very well; they describe exactly what pupils and students have experienced and can do. Annual review meetings are very well attended by parents and carers and provide a good range of information about the child.

58. Pupils all have home-school books, which are used to tell parents and carers about their time at school, and are also used by escorts and drivers of school transport. Teachers sometimes telephone parents and carers at home if they feel it necessary. For those pupils whose parents speak English as an additional language, the school has translated simple messages between home and school, to be used in the daily books. Some classes also have a weekly newsletter to tell parents and carers about class activities. The headteacher sends out a monthly newsletter too about whole-school news. Students at POST - 16 have a daily record sheet on which they can record their activities; parents and carers may add comments if they wish. The school does everything it can to involve and inform parents and carers. Home visits are made to children coming into the early years class and to those new in POST - 16. Parents and carers' views have been sought on the proposed changes in school transport arrangements, and their returns to a questionnaire were used to inform school development planning.

59. Parents and carers are involved with the work of the school in many different ways. The home-school agreement is detailed and sensitive, reflecting the consultation process with parents and carers, staff and governors. The Friends of Downs View is an active association, running both fundraising and social events such as the school's anniversary celebrations. Parents and carers help on trips and outings and fully support their children's work at home, whether through reading, or the implementation of behaviour and physiotherapy programs. In dealing with the challenging behaviour displayed by an autistic pupil at home, the school has invited one parent into school to participate in a swimming session and thus improve relationships. Parents have been involved in training sessions, and in making story sacks. The parents' and carers' counselling service, while in its infancy, appears to be a successful and valued service in helping resolve difficulties. What started out as an initiative for parents of Downs View pupils has become a wider service for parents of pupils at other establishments.

60. A few parents were concerned that pupils and students do not get sufficient homework. As part of the consultation process that preceded the drafting of the home / school agreement, the school identified similar concerns, and responded by developing a policy on homework. This is based on the idea that parents can support children's learning in a number of ways. It is now being implemented, and teachers are working hard to improve their practice in this respect.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

61. The headteacher and senior management team provide very effective leadership. Since the school was last inspected, there have been a number of key appointments, and the headteacher has built up a larger senior management team. Under her leadership, this team successfully drives development in the school. The creation of four departments in the school, each with a distinct identity, has been a positive step. Good communication throughout the school, and strong teamwork, ensure that staff work to common goals, share good practice, and are committed to school improvement at every level. This commitment is evident in the extensive monitoring and evaluation of all aspects of the school's work, and the positive attitudes that staff have to the monitoring process.

62. Monitoring of teaching is very well established, and carried out by subject co-ordinators, members of the senior management team, the headteacher and personnel from outside the school. A significant improvement in the quality of teaching since the school was last inspected testifies to the success of monitoring.

63. The governors are a skilled and supportive group who carry out their responsibilities very effectively. They are strongly committed to school improvement through governance, and frequently visit the school, to attend functions or carry out checks. Every time a governor visits, a concise report is written, which contributes to governors' thorough knowledge of the school, its strengths, and areas for improvement. This good practice has recently been extended by establishing a working party that is responsible for quality assurance. A teacher governor chairs this.

64. In general, the school's aims, values and policies are very well reflected in practice. In most instances, staff know what is expected of them and what criteria will be used in evaluating their work. For example, a plan to review every subject in the curriculum over a three year period is well established, and staff and governors view this as a commitment to continuing improvement of the school's curriculum. Evaluation and review within this three-year cycle is well managed by the deputy headteacher and well understood by everyone. However, two minor weaknesses need to be rectified. Firstly, the policy for music needs reviewing; it was not included in the last three-year cycle and is consequently out of date. Secondly, to secure balance on timetables, staff have been issued with guidance from the DfEE about time allocations. This does not reflect the school's curriculum policy, and should be customised to do so. Timetables could then be audited against this guidance.

65. Staffing is very good. The combination of an adequate number of well qualified and experienced teachers, and a very good number of high quality support staff ,contributes to high standards in the school. Very good relationships between teachers and support staff, combined with first rate teamwork, are key factors in the school's success. Support staff feel highly valued. They are involved in staff meetings and planning individual programmes for pupils, and are regarded as professional equals in the classroom situation. Ancillary staff are valued for their contribution to the well-being of the pupils. High staff morale is a strength of the school.

66. Induction for new staff is excellent. All of them receive a basic initial training in areas such as first aid, behaviour management , crisis intervention and prevention, lifting and handling, and the administration of medication. They have a 'buddy' who is an experienced staff member in a similar post. Induction is then extended to training in tasks more specific to their appointment. Newly qualified teachers have an experienced teacher as a mentor and are given weekly non-teaching time to join experienced staff in other classes. All newly appointed support staff have a weekly meeting with the deputy headteacher to support their induction. Professional development is also excellent. All staff appreciate the support they receive from senior management in attending appropriate courses and other training. The school itself is beginning to be a provider of training workshops in areas such as inclusion and working with pupils with an Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The current excellence in staff induction and development is an improvement since the last inspection.

67. The effectiveness of the staff team is further enhanced by good monitoring procedures. In addition to the thorough monitoring carried out by the senior management team in a number of areas, subject coordinators are given one day every term to enable them to observe teaching of their subject. The governors' personnel sub-committee is also very active in staffing matters. These governors have a high profile in the school. Staff welcome their very positive approach, and the school benefits from their commitment and expertise.

68. The school is very bright and welcoming. The caretaker and cleaning staff take a great pride in their work. The overall appearance is much enhanced by good displays of artwork and other artefacts in communal areas as well as in classrooms. It is a very pleasant environment in which to learn and work.

69. Improvements in the accommodation since the previous inspection include the addition of two further classrooms, and the addition of two classes to the accommodation for pupils with autism. Refurbishment has created a literacy resources room, a light room, a bathroom, a good food technology area, and a small kitchen where pupils can practise independence skills. Recently, outdoor leisure areas have been greatly enhanced. The hard play area has been resurfaced and marked out for games, and an excellent cycling track has been constructed. There is also a much improved adventure playground, and a sensory garden has been created.

70. However, accommodation remains an area for concern, as there are still serious shortcomings. There are no specialist facilities for the teaching of science, design technology, art or music. This restricts the learning opportunities at Key Stages 3 and 4, where pupils' progress in science and design technology is limited. The lack of sound proofing between classrooms results in the disruption of nearby classes during music lessons. Whilst the library now has an adequate range of books, the room is too small. There is no dedicated medical room; although the school has a room it can use to isolate pupils who are ill, there is not enough room for a bed, and no running water. The POST - 16 building, Ash

Cottage, has no wheelchair access and presents difficulties for students who have mobility difficulties. Art is a strength in the school in spite of the absence of an art room, but a dedicated room for art would promote greater efficiency as resources would not need to be duplicated across all classes.

71. There has been a good improvement in learning resources since the last inspection. These are now at least satisfactory in all subjects. They are good in science, art, history, geography and music. They are very good in English, maths, personal, social and health education and at POST - 16. This considerable investment has given added breadth to the curriculum. Resources are well cared for and staff are generally conscientious about returning them to storage facilities.

72. The school manages its financial and other resources very well. It allocates a high proportion of the budget to teaching and support staff as at the time of the previous inspection, and the inspection finds that high staffing levels are extremely beneficial.

73. The school development plan successfully supports development. It is formulated following wide consultation and reflects local and national priorities as well as areas the school has identified for further improvement. It is fully costed. Identified personnel, the senior management team and governors monitor closely the implementation of the plan.

74. The school applies best value principles very well. For example, it compares its performance with that of similar schools. Governors and staff evaluate what the school offers within the LEA and identify how they might develop the school further. Action is taken to help senior staff become more knowledgeable about school finances so that money is spent wisely. As a result of the work of the governors' quality assurance working party, co-ordinators are charged with ensuring that resources are not duplicated unnecessarily across classes. Governors plan building improvements to support the curriculum. For example, last year a small budget surplus came from staff changes and other savings, and this has been used to good effect to refurbish parts of the accommodation. Governors actively seek addition to the basic budget from other sources where possible. The Standards Fund is spent appropriately to extend the management and teaching skills of staff. Parents' contributions to the School Fund assist with extra-curricular activities. For example, they have funded a visit to a pantomime, and class holidays.

75. The secretarial and administrative team gives very good support to the governors, head teacher and teachers. The latest auditor's report (1999) recommended some improvements to financial procedures, and these have been implemented. Very good use is made of new technology for financial accounting and planning. Currently the school is piloting a new version of financial management software for the LEA.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

76. The headteacher, governors and staff should:

- continue to liaise with the Local Education Authority to address the weaknesses in accommodation that are mentioned in the report.
(paragraph 70)

77. The following minor points should be included in the action plan:

- identify a model of best practice for schemes of work, to be adopted for all subjects;
(paragraph 36)
- ensure that all Individual Education Plans have a manageable number of targets;
(paragraph 51)
- develop guidance for teachers about time allocations for subjects, and use this to audit timetables;
(paragraph 64)
- review and update the music policy.
(paragraph 64)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	121
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	46

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
7.4	23.1	55.4	13.2	0.8	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	107
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	30

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	6

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	1
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	93.76

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.28

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

End of key stage assessment

All pupils are disappplied from the tests set at the ends of Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. Teachers assess pupils, but the numbers of pupils eligible for assessment at the end of Key Stages 1 and 2 in July 2000 were below 10, and thus are not reported here.

Key Stage 3 Teacher Assessment July 2000 11 pupils eligible

9 pupils working towards Level 1 in English, mathematics and science
2 pupils at level 1 in English, mathematics and science

Ethnic background of pupils

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

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: Y1 – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	19.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	5.5
Average class size	6.6

Education support staff: Y1 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	41
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1187

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	99/2000
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	£
Total income	1462248.00
Total expenditure	1410171.00
Expenditure per pupil	13826.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	0.00
Balance carried forward to next year	52077.00

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	101
Number of questionnaires returned	44

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	84	16	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	65	33	2	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	44	0	0	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	40	34	9	3	14
The teaching is good.	79	21	0	0	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	77	23	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	84	16	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	81	19	0	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	84	16	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	88	12	0	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	73	24	2	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	65	28	0	0	7

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

78. At the time of the last inspection, the curriculum for children under the age of five was described as providing a good range of early years experience with good links to the programmes of study in Key Stage 1. Children made good progress and teaching was also good. The school has built on these strengths and the provision for children under five in the Early Years class is now very good. It is a considerable strength of the school. Due to the timing of the current inspection there were only three children under five in the class. These children had only been in school for two weeks. Because of this, judgements could not be made about standards in the six areas of learning. However, the breadth of the curriculum, detailed planning and high quality of teaching are likely to promote progress toward the early learning goals very effectively.

79. The quality of teaching for pupils under the age of five is very good. The children are taught in a class with Key Stage 1 pupils, where provision is closely linked to their very individual needs. The quality of the teaching has a very positive impact on children's learning. The Early Years teacher and her team of assistants are skilled in the development of programmes to support the acquisition of basic skills. They plan lessons carefully to ensure that all the areas in the Foundation Stage of learning are covered. Individual behaviour management programmes work well, and children are beginning to understand what is acceptable. During their initial few weeks in the class, children are thoroughly assessed on the school's baseline procedures. Together with information from pre-school, this helps to ensure that specific targets can be set for each child. It also enables their progress to be carefully monitored. The Key Stage 1 classroom provides an attractive and stimulating environment in which children can safely explore their surroundings.

80. The day is structured to provide a broad, balanced and relevant range of opportunities to meet the needs of each individual. Relationships are strong, and children quickly grow in confidence. They settle quickly into the routine of the classroom. The quality of interaction between children and adults in the Early Years class is excellent. Some excellent resources are used to promote communication and understanding. Early literacy and numeracy skills are fostered through short individual sessions. During these times the children under the age of five are beginning to respond and initiate contact. They show enjoyment in learning, as they undertake activities to develop their creative, physical, personal and social skills. They are encouraged to observe and touch different textures as they develop their understanding and knowledge of the world around them. Links with parents are strong, and induction into the school is carefully planned to ensure success. The provision ensures that children have a very good start to their education.

ENGLISH

81. Standards of achievement in English are good at all key stages, and are very good at Key Stage 1. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection. The implementation of the National Literacy Strategy has been successful and has had a positive impact on standards. Progress towards meeting the schools' targets in literacy has been good.

82. The high standards in Key Stage 1 are closely linked to the effective strategies used to promote learning. Children under five, as well as the other pupils in the department, develop their speaking and listening skills through the use of language, signs and symbols. They enjoy listening to stories and many are beginning to answer questions well. Higher attaining pupils use one and two word answers as they follow a shared text. They make their needs known and respond to adults well. Other pupils are beginning to achieve eye contact. They give a ball on request and respond appropriately to adults. They almost all respond well to hearing their own name. The skilful use of a structured language programme, and the good individual literacy support groups, promote speaking and listening skills well. Throughout Key Stage 2 pupils continue to develop their language skills through a range of good experiences. They respond in different ways; some use pictures or symbols, while others sign or use spoken language. They understand the routines of the classroom and express choices and preferences. By the time they are 11, higher attaining pupils use vocabulary well, and are encouraged to discuss their own needs when necessary. They benefit from good quality teaching that fosters communication at all times.

83. Throughout Key Stage 3, pupils' confidence increases. Staff are skilful at encouraging pupils to make choices and to be fully involved in language activities. Higher attaining pupils are able to take messages and answer the telephone, and they use information technology in an independent way, to listen to a talking story, for example. All pupils in the key stage are involved in planning their own activities, and they practise to improve their skills. For example, during a numeracy lesson in year 8, pupils focussed on questions that they might be asked when they went shopping. They talked about the items that they needed to purchase so that, when they eventually went to the shops, they would succeed in their task. By the time they are 14, higher attaining pupils talk knowledgeably about their day and ask appropriate questions of visitors.

84. In Key Stage 4, pupils become more confident. This was evident in a drama session in which pupils were able to talk clearly about themselves and their families. In this lesson, pupils played interactive games, took turns and worked together to take responsibility for improving their own speaking skills. Progress in the use of symbols is evident throughout the key stage. Pupils who use alternative means of communication make good progress as they learn new vocabulary, and this increases the range of interactions that they can achieve. The consistently good adult support ensures that progress in speaking and listening continues to be good.

85. In the POST - 16 department, students are given many opportunities to communicate. They play team-building games, and they take turns very well. They enjoy sharing their news, and are willing to talk about themselves to visitors. They continue to use a wide range of communication aids, which helps to maintain the good progress. They use their speaking skills as they go into the community on a frequent basis. Teachers are skilled in promoting interaction with students who have severe communication difficulties. The good progress is closely linked to the quality of teaching.

86. Pupils with more profound learning difficulties, and those with autism, also make good progress in speaking and listening. A wide range of communication aids is used to support individual needs at the school. These ensure that each pupil achieves their potential, and that they make progress in communicating with others. They begin to use switches in the very earliest class so that they can be included in question and answer sessions. They anticipate their turn and respond very well to the challenges set. As they move through the school, their needs are continually monitored to ensure that they can make the most of their ability. New communication aids are tried whenever possible. Older pupils with profound difficulties begin to show their competence by answering questions using their 'talkers' or using a range of symbols. They listen to messages, and take messages around the school and to their homes. The use of picture exchange communication for pupils with autism is successful in raising standards in communication. These pupils use their pictures to express their needs and choices. They improve their skills through constant adult support and guidance. For example, in one lesson pupils were able to choose which song they wanted to sing by choosing the appropriate symbol.

87. Standards of achievement in literacy are also good across the school. The National Literacy Strategy has been effectively implemented, and modified well to meet the needs of all of the pupils. In Key Stage 1, pupils enjoy listening to stories and sharing text. They benefit from the very good resources that are used to support literacy. For example, in the early years class, pupils joined in with the story called *Walking through the Jungle*. The high quality team approach in the classroom enabled the pupils to move from recognition of animals to recognising pictures of those animals. Higher attaining pupils were able to match pictures and find 'one the same'. Other pupils were able to make a choice and find the correct object on request. Pupils are beginning to make marks on paper, and use paints and glue to make pictures. In Key Stage 2, pupils enjoy singing songs and rhymes as part of their literacy work. They join in vocally or by signing and gesturing wherever possible. Some pupils make actions to the songs while others experience and enjoy the music and rhyme. In one lesson pupils joined in with singing *Ten in the bed*, as they shared the text. The very good use of communication aids ensured that all the pupils in the class were able to join in for at least some part of the text. The high quality resources had a very positive impact on standards. Higher attaining pupils are beginning to read simple words in text, and to make recognisable attempts to write their own names. A few can write simple news stories. All pupils have the opportunity to explore different media with their hands to improve hand function.

88. Throughout Key Stage 3, pupils continue to make good progress in their literacy skills. In one lesson pupils worked closely with an adult to produce a class book that they could all read. They took turns to suggest what should go into the book, and were very proud of their finished work. Higher attaining pupils read simple text well. They recognise many letters and often try to build words that they do not know. They enjoy using books and treat them with care. All pupils in the key stage have access to many books. They share them with an adult, and choose the ones they want to hear. Pupils with more profound difficulties benefit from the very good use of resources and good teaching strategies to support the acquisition of early literacy. For example in one lesson the teacher used a word rail to enhance shared reading. This helped pupils to focus on the words. They showed high levels of enjoyment at the challenge, and succeeded in the task. Pupils' writing continues to improve in Key Stage 3. They consolidate prior knowledge of letter sounds, and practise saying and writing them. Higher attaining pupils write simple accounts, make lists, and use their knowledge of letter

sounds to guide their writing. In Key Stage 4, pupils' reading and writing skills are often linked to their ASDAN studies. They write simple sentences independently, either with a pencil or on the keyboard. Their writing is generally neat and easy to read. All pupils are given high levels of support to achieve their tasks. Good strategies are used to help them succeed. For example, work is broken down into small steps, and adults support them by drawing lines, putting dots where they should begin, and by forming the beginning of words for them. There is also good use of information technology to enable pupils to write in symbols and text. These strategies are very successful in helping pupils to feel proud of their attempts.

89. The quality of teaching in English is good in all key stages, and is very good in Key Stage 1. Of the 26 lessons seen, four were excellent, four were very good, 13 were good, and five were satisfactory. In the best lessons, teachers plan well, and link the learning outcomes to the scheme of work for pupils of that age. Teachers in these lessons are skilled in the use of different strategies to support literacy. They plan work to suit individual needs, and they use resources in an imaginative way. This helps to motivate pupils and they respond by working hard and showing high levels of enjoyment. These effective strategies are supported by good assessment. This ensures that tasks are well matched to ability. Teachers all manage pupils well. They use many different systems, but generally know their pupils very well. Relationships are therefore strong, and play a positive part in the quality of learning in English. Teachers use questions very well to improve speaking and listening skills and to encourage participation. Pupils respond well in lessons, they often share and take turns. This is linked to the good quality of the pupil management skills of all adults. Behaviour in lessons is invariably good.

90. The two English co-ordinators have worked very hard to implement the National Literacy Strategy. They support other teachers very well. Some good monitoring procedures have been introduced, and these are having a very good impact on the quality of teaching and learning. Staff training at the school is very good, and also has a very positive impact. Assessment procedures are good, and help to ensure that each pupil or student works towards appropriate targets. Resources are good, with some very good literacy resources, many of which have been made by parents. There is a well presented though small library. It is too small to be used by a whole class. Pupils are encouraged to use their literacy skills in many other subjects across the school. They use their communication skills at all times. This is a significant strength which contributes well to pupils' social development.

MATHEMATICS

91. Standards of achievement are good across the school. Good improvement has been made since the last inspection. Good progress in numeracy is linked to the recent introduction of a modified numeracy framework across the school. This works particularly well at Key Stage 2, where pupils are grouped by ability for numeracy sessions.

92. By seven, pupils recognise numbers from zero to five, sing and sign number songs up to five. Higher attainers add on one more within this range. They understand that two can represent a *pair*, and use practical resources within and outside the classroom to illustrate their understanding. They identify a single number missing from the sequence of zero to five, and count back from five to zero. Lower attaining pupils use practical resources well to touch, roll and throw as they count.

93. By 11, pupils explore objects and categorise them into heavy and light. In one Year 4 class, pupils quickly solved the problem of, *What must I do to make this box heavier?* They used balance beams to make two containers balance. Higher attainers used their knowledge and understanding to explore in the school and the hall, to find heavy and light objects. Upon returning to the classroom, all work was effectively recorded by the pupils.

94. Throughout Key Stage 2, pupils are taught in groups of similar ability for numeracy sessions. This works very well. Higher attainers extend their knowledge and understanding of money. They recognise, sort, order and know the value of all coins. Lower attainers sort and match coins. At this key stage, pupils with autism work on individual number programmes. They sort by shape, colour and size; they thread beads and blocks to a given number, up to five. They match numerals up to ten on a number board, and give back individual numbers on request. Pupils successfully choose their next number activity from their individual timetable represented by symbols.

95. By 14, pupils stick numbers up to 20 on a velcro number board. They count forwards and backwards, up and down the board. Pupils use their skill of counting back from a given number in order to subtract. They use correct mathematical vocabulary, such as 'subtract', 'take away', 'equals', 'less than', 'more than', and 'same as'. Higher attainers use good shopping vocabulary when working out prices in their class shop, matching coins to the prices, and giving change. Lower attainers match price cards to individual coins using good language as they complete their work.

96. By 16, pupils work on money problems up to £2. They use different combinations to make up various amounts. Lower attaining pupils make good progress against their individual numeracy targets, associated with money, counting, and understanding of shapes, for example. Pupils across all key stages use their number skills well in other subjects. For example, they count steps and jumps in physical education, measure and weigh in food technology, design and technology and science, and they count and clap in music.

97. Overall the quality of teaching and learning is good across the school. It is often very good and occasionally excellent. Out of 15 lessons, one was satisfactory, eight were good, four were very good and two were excellent. Teaching is very good at Key Stage 1, and is good overall at Key Stages 2, 3 and 4. The greatest strengths of mathematics teaching are the consistent use of the range of methods and activities introduced as part of the Numeracy Strategy, and the very good team work between teachers and support staff. These aspects are having a very positive effect. Activities are linked to pupils' individual targets set in their IEPs and mathematics profile plans. Pupils are extremely well managed, resources very well used, and changes of activities very well timed, resulting in well motivated pupils participating fully in their work. Resources have improved since the last inspection, and are now very good across the school. The previous report's recommendation to increase practical equipment has been successfully implemented, and practical activities successfully engage pupils during lessons. Information technology is used well to support pupils' learning in mathematics.

98. Pupils' behaviour in lessons is never less than good, often very good and occasionally excellent. Relationships in and out of class are very good. Pupils relate well to each other and staff. Support staff make a very positive contribution; they know the pupils very well, and often pre-empt situations arising, thus avoiding confrontations or problems in class.

99. The co-ordinator for mathematics has worked successfully since the last inspection to ensure the mathematics policy has been updated and ratified by the governing body. An effective scheme of work has been implemented across the school. She has worked closely with staff to implement the National Numeracy Strategy. This is helping to raise standards in the school.

100. Clear short and long term targets are set for the subject, and the school has successfully run a pilot scheme at Key Stages 2 and 4 to measure progress against these targets, using 'P' scales. At Key Stage 1, the school has introduced Equals baselines to set targets and track pupils' progress as they move through the school. As a result, teachers know pupils' skills and abilities well, and use assessment information successfully to plan the next steps. Pupils' progress in mathematics is reported clearly to parents in pupils' annual reviews, which show what pupils can do, understand and know. As part of the implementation of a homework policy, staff keep the parents up to date with the work their children are doing and give them ideas about how they can support mathematics work at home. This is a very successful way of encouraging pupils to carry out homework, and is very much appreciated by parents.

101. Through the good role models of staff, and the many activities which demand taking turns, working together, co-operating, collaborating, and thinking about the needs of others, mathematics contributes well to the moral and social development of pupils.

SCIENCE

102. Standards of achievement are good at Key Stages 1 and 2, and satisfactory at Key Stages 3 and 4. The lack of a specialist science room restricts the range of work that secondary age pupils can safely carry out. Investigative skills develop very well at Key Stages 1 and 2, but they become restricted at Key Stages 3 and 4. The science curriculum is generally broad and balanced. It includes a much wider range of relevant Programmes of Study of the National Curriculum than at the time of the last inspection. This has helped to promote progress. However, a lack of clarity in the scheme of work resulted in all classes across the four key stages studying materials during the inspection week. This led to unnecessary strains on existing resources.

103. At Key Stage 1, pupils build on their scientific knowledge and understanding in a variety of practical investigations. For example, they explore and feel a variety of objects, including a feather duster, a studded ball and cold and hot objects. They then investigate what happens when the feather duster is placed in the wind and the studded ball is rolled. By the time they are seven, they know about basic properties of materials. They understand the senses of taste, touch, hearing, smell and sight. They cover Key Stage 1 objectives by having a termly focus such as 'motion'. They know about electric switches and relate them to safety. Information and communication technology (ICT) supports their learning and stimulates their interest in acquiring knowledge and understanding of the world around them.

104. At Key Stage 2, pupils continue their investigation of materials. They classify these into categories such as 'rough and smooth', 'transparent and opaque', 'hot and cold', 'hard and soft'. Investigative skills develop well and some pupils begin to predict. Discussion is used effectively in the majority of lessons and communication skills are enhanced at every opportunity. Higher attaining pupils are able to record simple results in tables. Photographs provide evidence of the progress of all pupils. By 11, pupils have a sound knowledge of materials, have covered an extended study of living things and are extending their understanding of light and sound.

105. At Key Stage 3, pupils investigate the absorbency of a range of materials and learn about waterproofing. Whilst blindfolded, they taste a range of foods which they then name. One group feels materials in the light and then attempts to identify them in the dark. There is a clear improvement in the understanding of physical processes by the end of this key stage. Pupils have grasped simple concepts relating to forces, heat, light and sound. They have a knowledge of magnets and begin to work on simple electric circuits. They have extended their knowledge and understanding of living things, particularly with reference to the local environment. They can name animals and parts of plants, and also know the requirements to sustain life. Investigative skills continue to improve. Lower attaining pupils are supported in recording their experiences and findings, whereas higher attainers record these independently.

106. At Key Stage 4, one group was involved in a recycling project during the inspection week. A local environmental officer was present at one lesson observed. The pupils displayed considerable knowledge about the subject and entered enthusiastically into the project. They showed a genuine concern for the environment and took part in a wide-ranging discussion. In another session, pupils with autism went to the field and playground to investigate forces. They enjoyed a good range of experiences with a water rocket, a windmill, an umbrella in the wind, bubble blowing and rolling balls on various surfaces and inclines. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils understand about the human body and its development. They relate this to health and hygiene. They have developed their knowledge and understanding of physical processes in light, electricity and sound. They have a good knowledge of the natural environment and link this with animal habitats.

107. Teaching is good across the key stages. Twelve lessons were seen; six of these were good, four were very good, one was excellent and one was satisfactory. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject content. They know the pupils very well and plan lessons well, with different tasks for pupils of different abilities. Support staff are very effectively involved in supporting pupils during lessons, and in teaching individual pupils on occasions. Pupil management is excellent; clear behaviour management plans are carried out successfully, and staff have excellent relationships with pupils. All of these features ensure that pupils are engaged in suitable activities during lessons. Safety issues are very well taught. Good use is made of discussion in circle groups, and pupils' understanding is well supported by good signing and communication.

108. In this subject, staff take every opportunity to reinforce literacy and numeracy skills. Most sentences are written in symbols with the appropriate words beneath. Linking of science with other subjects in topic work is a strong feature of lessons. Lessons have a good pace, and investigative skills are developed through skilful questioning and challenging tasks. In general, science lessons capture the interest of the pupils, who show considerable enthusiasm and quickly

become actively engaged in activities. They are cooperative and develop commendable levels of concentration. In most lessons, pupils have very positive attitudes to learning. They are encouraged to appreciate the wonder of science, which they find very exciting. This brings a spiritual dimension to the subject.

109. The whole school system for recording, recently adopted, shows how pupils progress over longer periods of time. However, detailed teacher records of progress in lessons are not of a standard format and are left to the individual classroom teacher. This was an area for concern at the time of the last inspection. Whilst there has been some improvement, it would be helpful for continuity if the science department adopted a standard system of day-to-day recording for all classes.

110. There have been very considerable improvements in this subject since the last inspection. Resources are now good. The curriculum is sound overall. Assessment and recording have improved. The outstanding issue for improvement is the provision of specialised accommodation in order to improve the breadth of learning experiences that can be offered at Key Stages 3 and 4. The school management is pursuing this rigorously and it remains a priority.

ART AND DESIGN

111. Art is a strength in the school. Standards of achievement are good. Pupils throughout the school show good gains in a range of art skills. Where progress in lessons is good, it is as a result of well-planned and stimulating teaching. For example, pupils at Key Stage 1 grasp the concept of a line. They are seen producing patterns from lines using a number of tools with paint. They also produce patterns using the computer. In their art folio, pupils have samples of hand painting, brushwork and marble work. In the classroom they display colourful kites and a range of mobiles. They use their art to support simple work in numeracy and literacy. In the main entrance of the school, they display colourful rainbow pictures. By the end of this key stage, pupils have practised a good range of techniques, and are gaining a good understanding of colour, shape and pattern.

112. By the end of Key Stage 2, pupils have considerably developed their skills. They concentrate better on tasks and some are able to work alone for more extended periods. Pupils experiment more and are more adventurous. The higher attainers can use more tools to good effect. A more extended range of targets is set and progress against these is good. Three-dimensional work is developed. In the lessons observed, pupils gained an increasing knowledge of colour and texture by making pictures using their hands, brushes and sponges. One class learned to detect familiar items in famous paintings by Lowry. Amongst displays of their artwork are a realistic totem pole, shadow-graphs, colourful windmills, attractive collages and a range of psychedelic handkerchiefs. Again, art is well employed to support work in numeracy, literacy and other subjects.

113. By the end of Key Stage 3, folios and displays show further good gains. There is a particularly striking use of the subject to support topic work in a range of subjects. An outstanding mural in the school hall consists of paintings produced by every pupil at the school. Many windows have been painted as a result of a visit by the Little Theatre Company. Photographic records of work are very good and pupils are able to use photographs to build displays connected with outings in a range of subject areas. At the Brighton Arts Festival, pupils

from Key Stage 3 had video films of their work displayed on large screens in the Pavilion Grounds. Much of the pupils' work has been taken home. They take great pride in their artefacts and this results in good gains in confidence.

114. At Key Stage 4, the pupils make further gains. They consolidate their work and become more creative. They produce excellent self images and are observed making pictures with a range of tones of a single colour. There is an excellent display of three-dimensional masks on the classroom wall. They have made a large book to support a topic on recycling in science. Although the lack of an art room does not significantly restrict the learning experiences offered, it does mean that resources for art are duplicated across classes, and there is no area where work can be left out until completed. The school does have a kiln, which is used well.

115. Teaching in art is good overall. Of the seven lessons seen, one was very good, five were good and one was satisfactory. The good teaching is evident when lessons are well planned around the individual needs of the pupils and the support staff work effectively with the teacher. Teachers plan tasks that appeal to pupils, who make greater gains where there is good encouragement and plenty of opportunities to practise skills. They are involved in discussions in which they willingly participate. There are noticeable gains in confidence. The excellent teamwork between the teacher and support staff ensures that pupils are well supported and no time is wasted. Behaviour management is a strength. This is supported by the very good relationships that exist between staff and pupils.

116. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour are very good at Key Stage 4. In all other lessons, attitudes and behaviour are generally good. Because of the good relationships, pupils cooperate very well, soon become engaged in lessons and thoroughly enjoy the work. Pupils gain in confidence and are able to discuss both their own artwork and that of their peers. Involvement in discussion is a strength. It is cultivated throughout the key stages and communication skills are enhanced. Art makes a sound contribution to the personal development of pupils through extending their creative skills. There is a strong spiritual dimension in art lessons as the pupils enjoy the excitement of producing colourful artefacts that sometimes have a magical effect. There is a valuable contribution to communication through the discussion groups, and to numeracy through a growth in spatial awareness.

117. The co-ordinator is very experienced in art and special education. Leadership and management of the subject are a strength. Time is given to the co-ordinator to monitor the work of other art teachers. There have been a number of improvements since the last inspection. Resources are now good. The curriculum has greater breadth and balance. It is successfully enhanced by an impressive number of links with the community, successful participation in a range of art competitions, numerous visits and visiting experts and a high profile in the Brighton art community. The subject is well co-ordinated across the school. Pupils' art is well assessed and recorded under the whole-school system linked to the annual report. The lack of a specialist base remains an issue, especially for secondary age pupils. The art department is very successful in spite of this.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

118. Overall, standards of achievement and pupils' progress are satisfactory. There is improvement in the subject since the last inspection. There has been an audit of the resources available to the department and there are improved facilities for food studies. However, pupils at Key Stages 3 and 4 miss opportunities to experience a wide range of resistant materials and acquire the associated skills because of the lack of suitable accommodation. There are, however, firm plans for a new specialist room. The good spirit of co-operation between staff has enabled pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2 to achieve well and make good progress over time. However, whilst pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 make good progress in lessons in food technology, they make unsatisfactory progress in resistant materials because they do not have sufficient opportunities to work with these.

119. By the time they are seven pupils are encouraged to think about design. They are able to choose 'beads' and thread them into a necklace, then choose a paint colour and glitter to embellish them. They can recognise and name everyday tools such as scissors and hammer. By 11, pupils have developed a good understanding of safety in the food technology room, and they identify and name ingredients, such as sugar and butter. They also name utensils, such as a bowl and spoon, which they have used in making gingerbread men. They are able to use scissors safely to cut string; they can thread objects, and tie a simple knot to attach the object to a frame when making wind chimes. Lower attaining pupils work to the same objective, with the help of a support assistant.

120. By 14, higher attaining pupils are able to follow simple instructions and make a model from a kit. They can use common household appliances, though some need close supervision when working with hot food or liquid. Some lower attaining pupils will still take things apart rather than construct and, though very keen to work independently, can only use household appliances with support. Pupils with autism have suitable tasks. For example, they collaboratively made a three foot high model of the Brighton Clock Tower. By 16, pupils plan and research their work with appropriate support. For example, they design and prepare a simple cooked dish and evaluate it by taste. They know some of the principles of a healthy diet and use this to design a meal; they shop for the necessary ingredients with only minimal support. Pupils can use an automatic camera and video cassette recorder, and compile a tape of favourite CD tracks. Lower attaining pupils use large construction kits, and choose pizza toppings from a variety of ingredients.

121. Teaching and learning in design and technology are good. Of the eight lessons observed, six were good and two satisfactory. Evidence from teachers' planning and the lessons seen indicates that teachers have sufficient knowledge of the subject and plan carefully to ensure that all pupils can learn at a level suitable to their needs. Tasks are presented in a way that is appropriate to the age of the pupils. Pupils are encouraged to discuss their ideas, which enhances their speaking and listening skills. They also have opportunities to practise numeracy skills, by weighing ingredients during food studies, for example. Teachers manage behaviour well, mainly by the expectation that pupils will do their best. Pupils, in turn, are aware of behaviour that is acceptable in the classroom and try hard to follow classroom routines. Good attention is paid to the management and needs of pupils with more complex learning needs and autism, and this enables these pupils to function co-operatively in the classroom. For example, in one lesson the teacher ensured that a pupil with a hearing impairment could hear the jingle of the wind chimes that had been made. Pupils respond well to the approaches and resources used and their behaviour is

mostly very good. Teachers are skilful at bringing pupils with challenging behaviour back on task, and they make good use of Individual Education Plans and behaviour strategies. At all ages, pupils learn to listen to instructions and follow them carefully, which enables lessons to move on at a good pace and promotes learning. They try hard, and maintain a good work rate even when they find the tasks difficult. In Key Stages 3 and 4, they work very well in groups, value each other's work and are respectful to the teacher. All pupils help clear away carefully after the session and they share materials sensibly. Praise and encouragement are used effectively to give confidence, so pupils are willing to do things for themselves. They are very pleased with their results. Support staff are deployed well to promote the pupils' learning. They help to establish a calm working environment in which skills can be practised and good work celebrated.

122. The curriculum provides relevant experiences for younger pupils and there is an appropriate variety of resources. However, the lack of specialist facilities for resistant materials restricts opportunities to work with a wide enough range of tools and materials at Key Stages 3 and 4. The management of the subject is satisfactory and there has been some improvement since the previous inspection, particularly in the opportunities in food technology. However, the separate schemes of work should be combined to provide clear progression through the key stages. Planning could be further improved by giving greater detail of the opportunities to be provided, and identifying the knowledge and skills to be assessed. The introduction of the individual pupil profile should enable progress to be more securely identified.

GEOGRAPHY

123. Achievement in geography is good at each key stage, and this is an improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils increase their awareness of the characteristics of places, and how features contribute to making places different.

124. Pupils make good progress in geography. By age seven, pupils know the purpose of maps. They use photographs of various parts of the school to hunt for 'rainbows'. Pupils use school plans to show locations with rainbow symbols. By age 11, higher attaining pupils increase their awareness and knowledge of places beyond the school. For example, they recall a visit to the Bluebell Railway and know the word 'tunnel'. Lower attaining pupils consolidate their understanding of places through greater awareness of their own bodies. Pupils of all abilities understand how the wind creates waves. They experience this by blowing through a tube onto a water surface. By 14, pupils select photographic images of different environments. They identify plants and animals found in various climatic regions. By shading different parts of a diagram, higher attaining pupils show that they understand the stages of the 'water cycle'. Lower attaining pupils draw recognisable sketches of desert plants and animals, and label these correctly. By 16, pupils are confident with maps. They use simple co-ordinates to locate places on a Brighton town plan. Pupils plan their own routes to a number of places in Woodingdean. They develop the skill of identifying places using photographs and an Ordnance Survey map. For example, during a walk over the South Downs they located areas with these sources of information.

125. Teaching is good. Four lessons were seen. Two lessons were good, and two were very good. Teaching in Key Stages 3 and 4 could not be seen during the inspection period. Evidence of the impact of teaching also came from examining pupils' recent past work and talking with them. Planning of time and resources is a strength of teaching. Pupils learn effectively because their tasks give interest within an appropriate time-span. For example, a Year Four class was divided into three small groups tackling different tasks related to their needs. The higher group with very limited speech identified elements of weather in photographs by matching symbols and sounds. A pupil with low attainment learned to locate places in the school using reference objects and photographs. This pupil gained much confidence from individual work with an assistant. A pair of pupils worked together with an assistant on the school field to observe the effects of wind. Good, simple resources organised by the teacher contributed to pupils' learning. They created soap bubbles and noted the direction the wind blew using a compass and a windsock. They recorded their observations on a blank wind-rose diagram provided by the teacher. Teachers plan lessons utilising the skills of teaching assistants most effectively. In all lessons, teachers extend pupils' literacy by introducing new subject words. For example, in a Year 3 lesson on deserts, the teacher introduced the names of several desert animals. Pupils reinforced their learning by handling models of animals and repeating their names as they placed them in a sand tray. Teachers are very imaginative in devising resources that appeal to pupils, so they concentrate well. Throughout a lesson, teachers and assistants assess the gains pupils make. At the end of lessons, especially when there is group work, teachers share with the class the learning of each pupil, and all benefit from this consolidation. Staff keep good records of pupils' achievements. Teachers manage pupils skilfully, and in this they are well supported by teaching assistants.

126. Since the last inspection the geography scheme of work has broadened the range of experiences it offers. The co-ordinator is reviewing skills and content in relation to the latest requirements. In order to meet these, some new resources will be introduced. The termly plans produced by class teachers are good. The co-ordinator gives good support and monitors teaching well.

HISTORY

127. Pupils achieve well and make good progress in history, and this is an improvement since the previous inspection. Pupils' sense of time develops and they learn to compare current life styles with those of previous generations.

128. By age seven pupils know how they have changed since they were babies. They identify the clothes they wore then, and observe how much they have grown from photographs of themselves as babies. They begin to have some idea of time passing through important celebrations such as birthdays and Christmas. Higher attaining pupils know these events with greater certainty. Each day, pupils practise placing symbols representing the day's lessons in sequential order. They use words like 'before' and 'after' if they have speech, or use signing. When they reach 11 years, higher attaining pupils know the days of the week and recall activities associated with each day. They retell stories and events seen on film. Lower attaining pupils recall each class member from photographs. By 14, higher attaining pupils know the day and the date, and changes to the day's routine. They do not yet have a clear understanding of historical periods, but they recognise differences in clothing.

For example, they distinguish between those worn by the Victorians and clothes worn today. Lower attaining pupils record historical evidence about the past on prepared sheets, seeing a skeleton at Fishbourne Roman Palace, for example. By age 16, higher attaining pupils compare artefacts to show change over time. For example, they compared today's vacuum cleaner with a carpet beater of the past. Lower attaining pupils experience the difference between true stories and fantasy. They know the words 'before', 'during', and 'after' in story telling.

129. The quality of teaching is good and shows improvement since the previous inspection. Of the four lessons observed, two were good, and two were very good examples of teaching. During the inspection it was not possible to see teaching in Key Stage 4. Further evidence of the quality of teaching and learning came from analysis of pupils' recent past work, and from talking with them. Teachers plan lessons very thoroughly. They select resources carefully to help pupils acquire historical ideas. For example, Year 3 pupils re-told the story of Grace Darling using a tambourine and a rain-stick to make the sounds of a storm, and a model boat to show the means of rescue. Teachers make very effective use of time so pupils remain interested in a variety of activities. For example, in a lesson on Louis Braille, a short film on how he invented his alphabet for the blind successfully secured pupils' attention. Higher attaining pupils learned to punch the letters of their own names with a 'Braille' machine and all pupils experienced touching 'Braille' letters. Teachers assess the effectiveness of learning by carefully phrasing questions to match pupils' abilities. In a lesson looking at famous people, Year 7 pupils were asked, 'Is this a pop group now or a long time ago?' Pupils learn to date the past by analysing photographs. A pupil knew a photograph was old because, 'It is black and white and the people wear old suits (uniforms)'. Activities are presented so that pupils with different abilities have similar experiences using different levels of skill, some handwriting independently, and some copying words and sentences, for example. Teachers use the local area effectively to make the past more actual for pupils. For example, they use Preston Manor to give pupils experience of life in a Victorian household and enable them to learn the differences between 'upstairs' and 'downstairs'. Teachers manage pupils with great skill so pupils remain interested and keen to take part in lessons. Lessons are orderly and pupils learn acceptable ways of behaving from the staff.

130. The co-ordinator has re-written the scheme of work since the previous inspection. It provides pupils with appropriately broad experiences of National Curriculum history. Teachers' termly plans are good and contribute to successful teaching and learning. Assessment profiles are well used. The co-ordinator gives helpful support through the organisation of resources and monitoring of lessons.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

131. Only four lessons were observed during the inspection: one at each of Key Stages 2, 3, 4 and POST - 16. However, conversations with pupils, analysis of their work and teachers' planning and records shows that the achievement and progress of pupils are satisfactory when compared to their prior knowledge and understanding of the subject. There are some examples of good progress. Young pupils learn that operating a switch can affect what happens on the screen. Higher attaining pupils can move the cursor using a mouse and operate simple programmes. They know how to switch on a radio or tape recorder. By age

11, pupils show some word-processing skills. They write text using a programme that displays a symbol above the word and prints what they have composed. They use the mouse skilfully and precisely, and will select an option from a range of programmes. Lower attaining pupils experiment with cause and effect, using switches and a touch screen.

132. By 14, higher attaining pupils are improving their word-processing skills, using shift and return keys, changing font and size. They know how to close down the computer. With support they save and retrieve their own work and begin to access the Internet. Lower attaining pupils begin to use the mouse independently, and with support begin to write with symbols, though use of the keyboard is very slow. By 16, higher attaining pupils can choose and load a CD, and select the correct icons to run and exit a programme. They continue to improve keyboard skills, typing in text, and can competently print their own work. Lower attaining pupils are able to run and close simple programmes, and adjust the volume control. With support they can load a CD and shut down a computer. POST - 16 students have the opportunity to continue their computer studies at a local college.

133. Much of the teaching of ICT occurs with individuals or groups of two or three pupils in short sessions within other lessons. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory. Of the four observations made, teaching was very good in one, good in two and satisfactory in the other. Teachers are confident when teaching ICT, and are secure in their knowledge and understanding of the subject. Pupils enjoy using computers; they respond well to their teachers and work co-operatively. They are able to concentrate for surprisingly long periods of time. Their behaviour is usually very good and they can be trusted to use the computers responsibly. Teachers have sound expectations of behaviour and make satisfactory assessment of the work completed. Lessons are well organised so that pupils have access to machines and know that their turn will come to use them. Teachers have the clear objective of letting pupils work as independently as possible. Teachers plan the work well to include interesting and motivating activities that challenge each pupil. They encourage pupils to think for themselves and to solve problems. Teachers introduce activities clearly so that pupils know what they will do and what they are expected to achieve in the lesson. Tasks are explained very clearly so that pupils understand and have the confidence to work on their own whenever possible. The teaching assistants, who also know the practicalities of the technology well, provide very effective support and understand and manage the needs of the pupils very well.

134. Development of the subject since the previous inspection has been good, and further improvements are planned. ICT has been a major focus for the school and is still a developing subject, with further consideration being given to the training needs of the staff. The leadership of the subject is good, with the co-ordinator working to ensure that staff feel confident and well supported in their planning and use of the technology available. There is a clear policy statement and a skills-based scheme of work, though the opportunities for reinforcing some processes could be improved by greater detail of cross-curricular links. The positioning of computers in the classroom is very effective. Behaviour management skills of the staff allow some pupils to work at ICT skills without distracting the main body of the class from their activity. This ensures that ICT is firmly established as an integral part of the school's curriculum. There is a satisfactory quantity of hardware and a good range of software and other technology.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

135. At the time of the last inspection, French was a developing area of the curriculum, and since then provision has improved. Pupils now make satisfactory progress at Key Stages 3 and 4. The strong emphasis on speaking and listening skills is appropriate. Pupils also record their work in their French work books.

136. During the week of inspection, only one French lesson was seen. However, through analysis of work and examination of teacher and pupil records, it is possible to judge the quality of teaching as good. Pupils start to learn French at the age of 11, when they have very few language skills. As they move through Key Stage 3, they learn to greet each other and staff, which they do enthusiastically. They consolidate their range of vocabulary carefully and respond accurately to simple instructions and commands. They listen to tapes and participate in simple games in French. They are enthusiastic in their singing of French songs. Some of the pupils have visited the French Market in Brighton, and come to school having learnt new phrases, which they repeat to the staff and teach their peers.

137. There is now a clear policy for French, and an appropriate scheme of work has been implemented to support teachers who teach French. The co-ordinator supports staff well and both formal and informal discussions take place.

138. The quality of teaching seen at Key Stage 3 was very good. Planning was very detailed. Management of pupils and timing of changes of activities were very good. Teamwork between the teacher and support staff was impressive and enhanced the progress pupils made. Learning resources have been greatly improved. Many of these are real artefacts brought from France by staff, and include paper money, coins, biscuits, magazines, posters and papers. These are used very effectively to motivate pupils and ensure full participation. There is a great sense of fun in lessons and pupils are not frightened to use their French in other situations, such as at play time, registration, and some counting in French in their number sessions. Parents greatly support French through the implementation of the school's homework policy. It is obvious that many parents respond to requests by taking their children to the French market, and sending various artefacts into school. A weekly French café is held for Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils. The school has visited a local French café and cheese shop, where the children were so well behaved that many complimentary comments were made. French makes a very positive contribution to the pupils' social, moral and cultural development.

MUSIC

139. Pupils' achievements in music are consistently good overall. For pupils and students in the senior department, who benefit from specialist teaching, they are very good.

140. Across the school, music is used very effectively in other subjects to support learning. Whole-school productions on the theme of the Victorians, Harvest Festival and Christmas Pantomimes give pupils excellent opportunities to perform in front of an audience. These productions are well supported by pupils' and students' families. Exciting varied musical groups such as the Red Zebra Community Percussion Group and the Glyndebourne Opera Company have worked with school staff, pupils and students. Public performances resulting from these collaborations greatly enrich the pupils' musical experiences.

141. No music teaching was seen at Key Stage 1. By age 11, the most able pupils can keep a simple rhythm using rhythm sticks. Most pupils can sing a simple song and tap out a rhythm based on their name. Some very good achievements were seen during a joint lesson with a local primary school, when the mainstream pupils provided very good encouragement for Downs View pupils to sing up and join in. This inclusive activity contributed well to personal and social development.

142. By age 14, some pupils and students can play untuned instruments under the direction of the teacher. Most pupils can sing or hum songs in unison with others. All pupils have opportunities to perform in front of an audience during whole-school musical productions. By age 16, students can listen very well to instructions and can follow simple musical notation. Most pupils can classify instruments into groups such as shakers, tambourines and drums. Pupils and students make very good progress in singing and playing instruments.

143. Pupils enjoy their music and are keen to participate. They behave well, and are enthusiastic about using their skills. For example, in a history lesson about Grace Darling they used tambourines and rain-sticks to provide dramatic storm effects.

144. Teaching and learning throughout the school are good due to the determination of the staff, led by the music co-ordinator, to give every pupil access to good quality opportunities to make music. Lessons are presented in a very enthusiastic way. The specialist teacher provides very good support to non-specialists across the school.

145. After weaknesses in in-service training were identified in the previous inspection of the subject, the co-ordinator has undertaken a range of training and development activities with the whole staff team and individual teachers. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The co-ordinator is given time to monitor music, and clear records are kept of these sessions and of support to colleagues. The co-ordinator is aware that the policy for music is out of date and has clear ideas on improvement. The scheme of work provides a good schedule of skills for non-specialists, but lacks ideas for making the content age appropriate.

146. The school is aware that an area for improvement is the development of new technologies, such as using computers for sound mixing. Evidence of the use of a sound beam was seen in pupils' Records of Achievement.

147. Very good improvement has been made to the learning resources for music. Over £1800 has been spent in the last two years and this has had a very positive effect on pupils' achievements. The storage of most of the new resources in a corridor is far from ideal but does ensure easy access. Provision for music has improved very well since the last inspection. This is due mainly to staff training, the acquisition of good resources and the high quality of teaching by most staff.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

148. Pupils' achievements in physical education are good up to age 11, and very good beyond 11 to POST - 16. Older pupils benefit from specialist teaching and an increased range of activities using facilities in the community. Movement and dance are strong features of the physical education curriculum. Pupils and students enjoy their physical education lessons.

149. By age seven, the most able pupils can use low apparatus independently and work unsupported along a bench. Less able pupils co-operate with learning assistants and a physiotherapist to maintain and increase the range of their physical movement. All pupils explore ways of moving, such as rolling on a mat. Pupils enjoy exercises that provide appropriate physical challenges.

150. By age 11, most pupils understand it is necessary to warm up before exercise. The most able are aware of the effect that exercise has on their bodies. They can complete a forward roll when dismounting from an apparatus horse. Pupils with autism are able to complete a circuit of apparatus after having observed what is required of them. They are included well in physical education sessions and they are able to wait for their turn. Pupils with more profound difficulties benefit from programmes of stretching as part of an individual personal exercise programme. In swimming, the most able pupils are independent in the water. All pupils show good levels of confidence in the water.

151. By age 14, pupils can complete warm up exercises in a circle, and most are able to bounce a range of different sports balls for other pupils to catch. Even with three balls in circulation, pupils achieve success. Pupils have learnt to take responsibility for their own physical education kit. Less able pupils work very successfully on a more limited range of goals related to concepts of 'over' and 'under'. Carefully constructed dance and movement sessions enable pupils with autism to anticipate and successfully participate in sequences of movements with a minimum of musical and verbal prompts.

152. By 16, pupils are using a local leisure centre to exercise and improve their physical skills. They show good progress with catching, throwing and striking a ball. They are able to use full size trampolines. They have a good awareness of safety. The most able students can shoot a goal in basketball. Students participate in and experience athletics, dance, gymnastics, games and swimming. Students show very good progress over time, progressing from Two to Four Star British Trampolining Federation Awards. Many students gain distance swimming awards of 10 metres, 25 metres and more.

153. By the time they leave school, students have experienced an impressive range of sports, including go-karting, rock walling, archery and ten pin bowling, through their involvement in the Duke of Edinburgh's Awards at Bronze and Silver levels.

154. Pupils and students work hard at their lessons in physical education. They listen well to instructions and show good levels of independence. They are very enthusiastic and very well behaved. Pupils with autism are able to be independent within very skilfully structured sessions in the school hall and pool. The learning environments created by staff provide appropriate structure to ensure pupils and students can participate with minimum anxiety about what is expected of them. They remain well focussed on various tasks presented throughout a session.

155. Twelve lessons of physical education were seen during the inspection. Of the five lessons seen in the primary department, teaching and learning were very good in one, good in three and satisfactory in one. The less successful lesson did not provide adequate challenge to some pupils. Of the seven lessons seen in the senior and POST - 16 departments, teaching and learning were excellent in two, very good in three and good in two.

156. Lessons are well planned and organised, so that no time is wasted. The best teaching is linked to clear learning outcomes. Very good staff teamwork promotes effective learning. Inclusion of pupils with autism and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties is achieved through high levels of support staff working effectively together. Learning objectives are met very effectively. Lessons are presented enthusiastically and all staff have high expectations of the pupils. In some lessons, good use is made of cues to help pupils with autism make the transition from one activity to another. This is effective practice. Good use is made of photographs, certificates and other visual records to help pupils and students fully celebrate their sporting successes.

157. The subject is very well managed and co-ordinated. The curriculum is broad and balanced, and it is greatly enriched by activities outside school. Schemes of work link with the National Curriculum 2000 and a useful policy document and subject action plan help to guide the good development of physical education.

158. Learning resources have improved considerably since the last inspection and initiatives such as 'Top Play' have supplemented equipment well. Very good use is made of the excellent hydrotherapy pool. The re-developed playground encourages age-appropriate activities, with the senior pupils and students having a separate area with a bicycle and roller-skating track. This is an improvement since the last inspection. The wide range of after school activities, residential outdoor pursuits trips and competitive sporting events makes a very important contribution to pupils' physical, social and moral development. Pupils' achievements are significantly enhanced by the way in which staff give up their free time to support them in their ventures. Overall there has been very good improvement since the last inspection in physical education.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

159. Standards in religious education are satisfactory in each key stage. Pupils in Key Stage 1 are developing a curiosity about stories from the Bible. They learn about the life of Jesus, and know that the Bible is a special book. They have many opportunities to share in special times and they enjoy birthdays, Christmas and Easter celebrations. They experience times of quiet and reflection in the classroom. They have many opportunities to see and touch Christian symbols, and are beginning to understand that these are special. Throughout Key

Stage 2, pupils begin to understand the meaning of some of the stories that they hear. In one lesson, higher attaining pupils clearly understood the moral of stories, and linked it to their own lives. By the age of 11, pupils increasingly participate in the celebration of religious festivals. They learn about the traditions of Christianity as well as Judaism. Many can recall facts about previous work. Higher attaining pupils know the significance of some Jewish traditions. All pupils are helped to touch and look at artefacts, hear stories, and explore the sights and sounds of different faiths.

160. During Key Stage 3, pupils study a wider range of religions. They are involved in many visits to local places of worship, and they benefit from the many visitors from different faiths who come to the school. For example, on a visit to the church, they learn about the significance of the robes of the vicar. Higher attaining pupils use their literacy skills well to write about a visit to a synagogue. All pupils hear stories about some of the important religious figures, and have experience of festivals such as Harvest, Diwali, Eid and the Jewish festival of Hanukkah. They begin to understand about people who help them, and to be aware of people and places that are important to them. During Key Stage 4, pupils learn about the importance of rules in society. They make their own classroom rules and discuss how to improve them. Almost all pupils are aware of the difference between good and bad behaviour. They continue to study different world faiths. By the time they are 16, higher attaining pupils undertake some extended writing using print or symbols. They write about some of the important people within different religions. For example, one pupil wrote an extended account of the birth of Jesus. Another used symbols to explain her feelings about Hinduism. All pupils have experience of 'quiet time' in which they share and explore their own feelings.

161. Teaching is satisfactory overall. This has been maintained since the last inspection. Of the seven lessons seen, four were good and three were satisfactory. Where teaching is good, adults have good knowledge of the curriculum, and of the needs and abilities of the pupils. They encourage the use of communication skills as they ask questions and encourage discussion. In the best lessons, planning clearly reflects the scheme of work for the age group; the use of multi-sensory resources is imaginative and lessons are well organised. A very positive feature of good teaching is the strong team approach. All staff are aware of the desired outcomes of the lessons and work together to enable success. This good teaching has a positive impact on the quality of learning, and ensures that pupils enjoy their work. Some less successful teaching occurs when teachers are unsure of the content of the curriculum. In these lessons too little time is given to teaching the skills and knowledge of religious education. Lessons are not well prepared, and pupils have to wait while resources are gathered. This reduces the time for learning and sometimes means that pupils become restless. Consequently learning is reduced. Pupils' attitudes and behaviour in lessons are satisfactory. They are generally interested and respond appropriately. Many are able to work together and help each other.

162. Provision for religious education has improved since the last inspection. There is now a policy and a comprehensive scheme of work. However, the content and the activities for each key stage are similar, which means that pupils may be studying the same stories in different key stages. This reduces the amount of progress that pupils make over time. Assessment is still underdeveloped and focuses mainly on an evaluation of each pupil's response to lessons, rather than on what they know and understand. Resources have improved and are satisfactory overall.

POST - 16

163. There is well established provision for students over 16, taking pupils from Downs View and some from other SLD and MLD schools. Transition to the provision at Ash Cottage is well managed, and students soon settle into their new environment. Students with autism have most of their lessons at the main school, although there are good opportunities for them to integrate with their peers at Ash Cottage for a variety of activities. There are firm plans to move provision for students over 16 to the site of a local college of further education, and links with this college are well developed.

164. All students over 16 make good progress across a wide range of subjects and courses. The curriculum is very rich, and relevant to students' needs; it also offers a suitable range of externally accredited courses that students can build on when they leave.

165. At POST - 16, students' literacy skills continue to improve. They use their skills to plan their work and to undertake reviews each day. Many write extended versions of their own news, and a few are able to write for a range of different purposes. For example they use sheets of symbols to choose from as they assess how they have achieved each day, and complete reports about their work-experience placements. Higher attaining students write sentences in print with accurate punctuation and spelling. Content is usually based on their own activities and experiences, and is well presented. Other students use symbols or adult support to express themselves. They have opportunities to use computers to present their work, and many can use them independently. Literacy skills are very well promoted across the curriculum.

166. Students at POST - 16 achieve well and make good progress in mathematics. The emphasis is on practical work, preparing for independence and life after school. Higher attaining students recognise all coins, understand the value of different coins and add up amounts to £1. They prepare for shopping by writing out shopping lists, pricing items and organising the correct amount of money they need. On their way to college, students discuss how they are going to spend their money. Students check that they are given the correct amount of change.

167. Lower attaining students sort coins, match coins and add coins up to ten, with appropriate support. They recognise coins are different but do not yet understand the value of different coins. One blind student uses a talking calculator well to count coins he has sorted. With one-to-one support, he records his work. Lower attaining students use symbols to prepare their weekly timetables.

168. Students with autism achieve well and make good progress. They participate fully in lessons and respond positively to questioning and prompts from teachers. With appropriate adult support, they throw plastic balls at six large cans. They then count the number of cans they have knocked over and record their work. As part of their work on 'time', all students complete daily work sheets which are shared with parents; this forms part of the school's 'supporting learning at home' programme. This is valued by students and parents.

169. Students are able to continue to develop knowledge, skills and understanding that they acquired up to 16. For example, they extend their skills in design technology, and their understanding of religious education. With support they design and make a bird table, bird

boxes and small trucks, and they have effectively rebuilt a gate. Their work is closely linked to the needs and deficiencies they see around them and they begin to learn the skills needed for future work in the subject. The work is an assessed module of the ASDAN 'Towards Independence'. They take part in activities to find out what life was like for the people who lived in biblical times. They enjoy sensory experiences to create atmosphere. They reflect on the different aspects of their own lives, and talk about ways of improving the community in which they live. Through projects such as recycling, they develop a sense of social responsibility. Students also continue to develop their physical fitness, and are able to explore a good range of leisure opportunities. Their stamina and endurance are tested during expeditions, and students are proud of their achievements in these situations.

170. Students also develop a good understanding of the world of work. For those who will benefit, there are work-experience placements, and all students have the opportunity to visit a wide range of commercial and business establishments to find out what happens there. For example, students have visited a film processing unit, a car wash, supermarkets, hotels and a fire station. All take part in vocational courses at the local college. For example, they may follow courses such as film studies, photography, pottery, art and design.

171. Provision at POST - 16 contributes strongly to students' personal development. Through the challenges presented to them, particularly as part of the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme, students develop self-reliance and self-confidence. Good opportunities to mix with their peers, both in school and outside at college, enable them to further develop their social skills. They also build on their independence skills, both in school and on residential. Students leave Downs View well prepared for their next step.

172. The school successfully achieves its aims for students over 16. The provision is well led by a co-ordinator who has been in post for two terms. Particular strengths of leadership are high expectations of what might be achieved, and energetic pursuing of the vision associated with this. An area that has been identified for further development is the formal monitoring of teaching.