

# **INSPECTION REPORT**

## **DOWNS PARK SCHOOL**

Portslade

LEA area: Brighton and Hove

Unique reference number: 114685

Headteacher: Mr A Jedras

Reporting inspector: Ian Naylor  
20906

Dates of inspection: 30<sup>th</sup> October - 3<sup>rd</sup> November 2000

Inspection number: 223689

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

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school: Community special

School category: Maintained

Age range of pupils: 4 - 16

Gender of pupils: Mixed

School address: Downs Park School  
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Portslade  
East Sussex

Postcode: BN41 2FU

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Appropriate authority: The governing body

Name of chair of governors: Dr W Watts

Date of previous inspection: January 1997

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
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Christine Haggerty 13807	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Parents, care, attitudes and behaviour.
Anthony Hill 18261	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science; Physical education.	Equal opportunities.
Kathleen Cannon 27058	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography; French; Mathematics.	Assessment.
Gillian Lawson 21899	<i>Team Inspector</i>	English; Information and communications technology.	English as an additional language.
Lily Evans 23300	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Design and technology; Religious education.	Special educational needs.
April Dakin 25441	<i>Team Inspector</i>	Art and design.	Curriculum.
David Ward 8645	<i>Team Inspector</i>	History; Music.	Social, moral, spiritual and cultural education.

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Downs Park is a mixed community special school, maintained by Brighton and Hove for 128 pupils with complex learning difficulties. The number of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties has grown. The school currently has 58 pupils with moderate learning difficulties; seven with severe learning difficulties, 14 with emotional and behavioural difficulties; several pupils with sensory or physical difficulties; and 25 pupils with autism. There are two units for autism attached to mainstream primary schools for which Downs Park has a management responsibility. The school is also a local education authority (LEA) designated support service to mainstream schools for autism, and part of an LEA inclusion project. Many pupils come from low socio-economic backgrounds, and attainment on entry is very low.

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

This is a very effective school with some excellent features, in which the high quality of leadership and management, teaching and care contribute significantly to good pupil achievements. The school has a good sense of its own strategic role in LEA provision, and is working hard to achieve this.

### **WHAT THE SCHOOL DOES WELL**

- Teaching is very good overall. There are particular strengths in the teaching and provision of French, physical education and music.
- Achievement is good and often very good.
- Curriculum is very good overall, and it is excellent for autistic pupils.
- Inclusion for pupils is very good.
- Leadership is exceptional and management is very good.
- Attitudes, relationships and personal development are very good. Behaviour is good.
- The individual needs of all pupils are very well provided for, and their overall welfare is very good.

### **WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED**

- Accommodation.
- Resources for information and communications technology.

*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 significant improvement in all areas since the previous inspection in 1997. Better monitoring and evaluation have raised the quality of teaching. Clear role descriptions and delegation of duties have made management more effective. The length of the taught week has been increased. Teaching of information and communications technology is now good. Child Protection guidelines have been introduced. The provision for autistic pupils has been extended and further improved. More pupils have benefited from inclusion across the school and into mainstream schools.

## STANDARDS

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

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

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

The characteristics of the pupils for whom the school caters make it inappropriate to judge attainments against age-related national expectations or averages. Achievement and progress is very good for pupils with autism. It is very good in French, music, physical education, and personal and social education. It is good overall in the other subjects except information and communications technology, where it is satisfactory. Pupils make very good progress against their individual education plan targets. All pupils make very good progress in self-confidence and self-esteem.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good, which is a significant improvement since the last report. Pupils enjoy coming to school and respond well in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Pupils' behaviour is consistently good. They are polite and courteous, and there is very little evidence of bullying. Many pupils with behaviour difficulties make very positive gains in making their behaviour acceptable. This is a significant improvement since the last report.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils make very good progress in their personal skills. By age 16, they are well prepared for the next phase of education or for work. There are very good relationships between pupils and staff, and between pupils themselves.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	aged 5-11	aged 11-16
Lessons seen overall	Very good	Very good

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

Teaching successfully addresses the learning needs of all pupils. Teaching is excellent in 12 per cent of lessons, very good in 36 per cent, good in 34 per cent, and satisfactory in 18 per cent. Teaching is very good overall in science, art and design, music, physical education, French, personal and social education and in mathematics by age 14 and 16. It is good overall in English, mathematics by age 11, design and technology, humanities, religious education and information technology. Planning is especially good in the majority of lessons. Teachers and learning support assistants work very well together. There is an exceptionally high level of knowledge and understanding of the individual needs of pupils and of specific teaching approaches, such as those for autism. Pupils' behaviour is managed exceptionally well. Literacy is taught effectively across the school.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	There is an extremely broad and very well balanced curriculum that very effectively meets each pupil's special educational needs. There is particularly good curriculum provision for pupils with autism, and a developing strength in that for inclusion. There are exemplary links with mainstream schools.
Partnership with parents	Parents view the school very positively. The school provides them with very good information. The majority of parents agree with the things that the school does for their child. The school involves parents in setting targets on IEPs, which has a positive effect on pupils' progress and attainment. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is good.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. Spiritual development is good. Moral and cultural development are very good, and social development is outstanding. There is a very strong moral code in the school. Many opportunities are provided to foster awareness of the pupils' own culture and that of others, particularly through links with a French school. There is continuous emphasis on building character, initiative and independence.
How well the school cares for its pupils	There are very good Child Protection guidelines and procedures. Health and safety requirements are met, and risk assessments regularly undertaken. There is a range of very good procedures for ensuring pupil welfare. Staff provide a very secure, positive and caring learning environment.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher is an exceptional and visionary leader who very effectively motivates the staff team. This enables them to deliver a high quality of teaching, which significantly raises pupils' self-esteem and achievements. He is very ably supported by senior managers, who are industrious and talented in their pursuit of excellence in provision. Management is very good, both in the school and of the offsite autistic facilities.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governing body is extremely supportive of the headteacher and staff, and meets all its statutory obligations. Governors have a very good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and support staff and pupils extremely well.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The headteacher, staff and governors constantly seek to improve, and the school improvement plan is a very detailed and effective tool. There is detailed analysis and monitoring of the performance of teaching and of pupils' attainments. This is used very effectively to guide future teaching and curriculum so that provision meets the individual needs of pupils.
The strategic use of resources	There is very efficient and prudent financial management and administration by the school finance and administration manager. The school office is very efficient. The headteacher and governors are very diligent in the pursuit of the most efficient spending and use of material and human resources. This, together with good attention to the principles of best value, high quality of teaching and pupil achievement, leads to very good value for money.

There is an appropriate number of well qualified and experienced staff. Classroom learning resources are satisfactory overall, but there is still a weakness in the range and quality of resources for information and communications technology. There have been some additions and there are active plans for improvement. The accommodation is poor overall. Facilities lack space, and there are no specialist areas for music, art and design, design and technology (resistant materials) and library. Those for physical education are inadequate for older pupils. Facilities do not serve the full curriculum needs of pupils, which places them at a distinct disadvantage in aspects of their learning. Teaching is sometimes severely hampered, and opportunities to meet pupils' individual needs are severely restricted by the inappropriateness and poor quality of the accommodation.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Very positive comments from many parents. They think well of the school.</li> <li>• Parents consider the autistic provision is excellent.</li> <li>• Pupils and staff know one another well; there is a sharing and caring environment.</li> <li>• Children always want to come to school; behaviour in school is good.</li> <li>• There is a good homework policy that is understood by parents.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A few parents have concerns about homework and about information on progress.</li> <li>• Some parents are concerned about whether school is helping their child to become mature and responsible.</li> <li>• Some are concerned that school does not provide interesting activities outside lessons.</li> </ul>

Inspectors agree with many of the views of parents. However, they feel homework is successfully provided overall. There are many very good opportunities provided for activities outside lessons, particularly at lunchtime. These and other school activities effectively promote pupils' maturity and responsibility.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

- 1. The characteristics of the pupils for whom the school caters make it inappropriate to judge attainments against age-related national expectations or averages. The report does, however, give examples of what pupils know, understand and can do. Judgements about achievement, progress and references to attainment take account of information contained in pupils' statements and in annual reviews.*
2. The changing criteria of admissions has meant that pupils arriving at the school now have generally very low attainments, and this has had an effect upon overall levels of achievement. Nevertheless, the school strives and succeeds in promoting achievement and progress at each key stage.
3. By age 16, many pupils have gained success in a range of national accreditation, including GCSE grades in the D - G range in art and design, science and mathematics. Many have also gained distinction and merits in the Assessment and Qualification Alliance (AQA) Certificate of Achievement in English, mathematics, science, art and design and music. Most pupils aged between 14 and 16 take part in work experience placements with local employers, and also attend weekly sessions at the local further education technology college on a Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) sponsored Work Related Learning project. They are very successful in these areas, and gain considerably in their skills of independence, initiative and personal development, as well as in several work skills such as catering and horticulture.
4. Analysis of pupils' work, individual education plans (IEPs), annual reviews, reports, teachers' records and evidence from lesson observations shows that achievement across the school is consistently good, and often very good or better. Progress over time is good. Achievement and progress is very good and often excellent for pupils with autism. Many make sufficient progress to enable them to operate successfully in the main classes of the school. They improve their social and communication skills through the use of symbols, and are very well supported by the use of TEACCH (Treatment and Education of Autistic and related Communications Handicapped Children) methods used in teaching. They grow in self-confidence and self-esteem, and many begin to make social relationships with other pupils and staff.
5. In academic subjects, achievement and progress over time is very good in science at Key Stage 1 and art and design at Key Stages 1 and 3, in personal and social education, music, French, and physical education. It is good in science in the remaining key stages, and art and design at Key Stages 2 and 4. Achievement and progress is also good overall in all the other subjects except information and communications technology, where it is satisfactory across the school.
6. Pupils make good progress through the school in speaking and listening, reading and writing. Achievement in speaking and listening is good, and pupils make rapid progress in improving their

general communication skills. By the age of 11, they are able to take part in class discussions and talk sensible about their work. By age 16, they are confident speakers, who able to express themselves clearly and cope with the social interactions on work experience placements and on college link courses. Pupils enjoy reading, and most make good progress so that, by age 16, they can read instructions and follow COA and GCSE courses successfully. Writing skills also improve considerably so that, by age 16, most pupils can complete work experience reports, project folders on their work-related courses, and write for a variety of purposes and audiences.

7. The introduction of the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has supported good progress in literacy and numeracy skills, particularly up to the age of 11. There has been increased emphasis by teachers on literacy and numeracy across the subjects, and this too has helped pupils' progress. The school has very good methods for promoting the communication skills of pupils, using pictures and symbols and a variety of other methods. This, together with close collaboration with speech and language therapists, helps all pupils and particularly those with autism to make good progress in this area.

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

8. There has been a significant improvement in pupils' attitudes, behaviour, relationships and personal development since the last inspection report, and they are now generally good and often very good. Pupils generally play well together during break-times and in lunchtime clubs. Parents attending the parents' meeting and responding to the questionnaire are happy with the behaviour of the children and the values that the school promotes. They report that their children enjoy coming to school, and that school is a happy environment.

9. Pupils across the school have very good attitudes to learning, and the attitudes of pupils in the autistic classes are often excellent. Pupils are keen to come to school, and are friendly and welcoming to visitors. For example, two pupils took great pride in explaining the anti-bullying policy and providing a tour of their classroom to explain the rewards system and sanctions policy.

10. Behaviour is good overall, which has a positive effect on learning and the standards achieved. Pupils work well in pairs and alongside one another. The school is an orderly community. Many pupils are beginning to show self-discipline, by their good behaviour when moving around the school, at lunchtime and during breaks. The behaviour of the youngest pupils when on a walk to the park was impeccable. Pupils who attend college are fully integrated, and their behaviour is always good and often excellent. Pupils show respect for their environment. The grounds, the buildings and the furniture show no sign of graffiti or vandalism.

11. Relationships between pupils are very good, and between pupils and adults they are excellent, fully meeting the school's aim of mutual respect. This has a significant impact upon pupils' personal development, which is very good. Pupils become more independent and confident in life skills as they move through the school. They take full advantage of the many opportunities presented to them, which help promote their development, such as residential visits, sports fixtures against other schools, work experience placements and college link courses. For example, some fourteen-year-old pupils travel to and from school unescorted, and older pupils make their own way to work experience or college. Older pupils help staff in the dining room at lunchtime.



12. Overall, the attendance and punctuality of pupils is satisfactory, and pupils report that they enjoy coming to school. However, the attendance of pupils has fallen slightly since the last inspection. This is due mainly to the changing intake of pupils admitted to the school. For example, there are a number of pupils who had a history of poor attendance before joining the school, and there are two instances of long-term absence condoned by parents.

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

13. Teaching is excellent in 12 per cent of lessons, very good in 36 per cent, good in thirty four per cent, and satisfactory in 18 per cent. Because the quality of teaching is consistently of a high standard and there is no unsatisfactory teaching, it is judged to be very good overall. Teaching is excellent in French at Key Stage 3 and very good at Key Stage 4. Teaching is very good overall in science, art and design, music, personal and social education, physical education, and in mathematics at Key Stages 3 and 4. It is good in mathematics at Key Stages 1 and 2. Teaching is good overall in English and all other subjects.

14. Teaching was excellent in 12 of the lessons observed. This is a remarkable achievement in itself, but, when linked to the very good teaching, it means that very nearly half of all teaching is very good or better, with a further third that is good. Teaching therefore has very many features of high quality. It very successfully addresses the learning needs of all pupils, and leads to good and often very good achievement and progress at each key stage.

15. Planning, organisation and preparation is especially good in the majority of lessons, and it is often excellent. This means that the individual requirements of pupils are considered using information from assessments and individual education plans, so that the content of the lesson matches needs and expectations. This is linked closely to teachers' very good subject expertise and awareness of curriculum requirements. Lesson plans make learning objectives clear, and they are usually shared with the pupils, with very good opportunities for them to assess their own achievements. This was seen in an excellent design and technology lesson with autistic pupils in Key Stage 2, using play-dough to extend their understanding of the different qualities of materials. There were very good links to science, with the emphasis on testing and comparison, and to English, with very good opportunities through the use of picture symbols for extending the use of language.

16. Teachers and learning support assistants work very well together, and there is excellent teamwork in classes and across the school with appropriate levels of delegation. Most learning support assistants (LSAs) are very experienced and qualified. They make an outstanding contribution to the teaching and learning of pupils. Teachers and LSAs together provide a variety of stimulating and challenging activities in lessons, and have high expectations of pupils' behaviour and performance.

17. Pupils' behaviour is managed very well. Good use is consistently made of the school's rewards and sanctions strategy. All staff have been trained in the use of Team Teach methods (an approach that is aimed at reducing confrontation and aggressive behaviours of pupils). This, together with very good relationships between staff and pupils and a very positive approach to praise and encouragement, means that pupils feel secure in their learning and

grow in self-confidence and self-esteem. This was seen in a very good lesson at Key Stage 3 in personal, social, and health education. Pupils were learning about friendship, seeking to understand why bullying sometimes occurs. Through skilful support by teacher and LSAs, pupils were able to listen to one another, take turns, to think and evaluate their feelings and actions about friendship and relationships.

18. Literacy is taught effectively across the school. For example, in a very good literacy lesson at Key Stage 2, the Literacy Strategy was used most effectively, with suitable adaptations for pupils with special educational needs. There was very good planning and organisation for shared reading, whole class work on letter sounds, and group work on writing about the story. Pupils were challenged by the activities, and had a good understanding of what they need to do to improve their skills in reading and writing. The lesson was made interesting by the way the teacher and LSAs presented the work, and by the way in which pupils were expected to work together to achieve success at their tasks. Numeracy is taught well at Key Stages 1 and 2, and satisfactorily overall at Key Stages 3 and 4, where the National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) has not been established as long. Nevertheless there are some good features. For example, the best principles of the NNS were applied in a very good numeracy lesson at Key Stage 3. The teacher's weekly planning ensured that pupils' knowledge was reinforced on a regular basis. Within a whole-class approach, varied methods were used to sustain pupils' interest in learning odd and even numbers. Activities were well matched to pupils' ability. Frequent repetition helped pupils' learning, so that most knew the difference between odd and even by the end of the lesson.

19. Many excellent or very good lessons, particularly in art and design, French, music and physical education, work so well because of the teachers' enthusiasm and the way that lessons are prepared and presented to encourage pupils' self-confidence. This means that pupils are motivated and challenged to succeed and to enjoy what they are doing. A practical French lesson in Year 9 had pupils speaking French as part of a role-play of a café. In an art and design lesson on film animation, pupils in Year 8 were totally involved and focused, working co-operatively to produce their storyboards and models. The teacher's very clear instructions, using picture symbols, coupled with high expectations enabled autistic pupils at Key Stage 1 to participate enthusiastically and with an understanding of what they had to do to complete simple gymnastic routines in a physical education lesson. The pace and momentum of teaching in a music lesson at Key Stage 2 involved autistic pupils in reading simple musical notes and joining in songs, clapping patterns, and copying actions, which captivated and inspired their participation.

20. The teaching of pupils with autism is very good overall. The strengths of the teaching are in management of behaviour, development of personal and social skills, and the emphasis placed on ensuring that pupils understand their work and use the skills and knowledge across the curriculum. Teachers have excellent knowledge of how pupils with autism learn, and they know their pupils very well. Behaviour is managed through presenting work that meets the needs of pupils with autism, and assessing and evaluating provision routinely. Methods that help pupils to be informed and focused in their work include the use of visual resources and props, symbols and signing to aid communication, such as 'widget' symbols, and TEACCH. Well established routines and changes that are well signalled ensure pupils have a greater understanding of what they are to learn and do, and help to provide a secure environment for learning. Teachers' planning always links with specific and measurable targets set in pupils' detailed individual educational plans. This ensures pupils are

learning the right things. Teachers present pupils with challenging work in environments free of distractions. They help them to keep on task and succeed by giving very good one-to-one support. Lessons are highly structured, and teachers break down tasks into smaller steps to ensure pupils gain an understanding of what they are learning. Teaching places a very strong emphasis on the learning of language, and pupils are encouraged to use it in social contexts. Music is used effectively as a way in which to involve everyone.

21. Teachers provide whole-school projects that pupils enjoy. For example, a great deal of care and imagination went into depicting the school logo of an oak tree as a celebration for the millennium. Every pupil contributed to the project, making leaves or tiles, working with an artist in residence. Because teachers spend much time and effort in providing activities that are stimulating and interesting, pupils stay on task and concentrate well. For example, there was an excellent response from pupils to a lesson about firework safety, which included role-play. Teachers posed questions using a variety of strategies to ensure that all pupils understood and were involved in the lesson. This had a very positive effect on pupils' learning. Staff make very good use of praise to recognise effort and achievement. This has a positive effect on pupils' progress and self esteem.

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

22. The quality and range of learning opportunities is now very good overall and meets statutory requirements. The breadth, balance and quality of the curriculum have considerably improved since the last inspection, when the unsatisfactory arrangements for information and communication technology (ICT) were identified. This weakness has now been satisfactorily addressed within the limitations of the present resources. One of the many strengths of the curriculum is in the way teachers plan links between subjects, so that pupils can practise skills and consolidate the knowledge that they learn from one subject to another. Another strength is the way curriculum planning is clearly linked to assessment and evaluated rigorously to ensure work is set to meet the differing needs of the pupils.

23. The school has implemented the National Literacy Strategy well, and there is a good emphasis on the use of language and literacy across the curriculum. The implementation of the Numeracy Strategy is satisfactory, and has ensured an improved balance of coverage of the different attainment targets in mathematics. The science curriculum has improved significantly and is now very detailed. The school has adopted and adapted the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) guidelines for many subjects, and this is ensuring a broader range of work in most subjects. These adaptations are making lesson planning much more successful.

24. The school has extended the time available for teaching, and this time is used well. Lessons and assemblies now begin and finish on time, and the time allocated for physical education has been reduced to a more appropriate level. The balance of the timetable is now good at all key stages, with suitable amounts of time given to each subject. The school tries

very hard to ensure that enough time is allocated to examination work, and offers after-school classes where there is a deficit. However, the time allocated to art and design in Key Stage 4 limits the achievement of pupils in the subject, although some pupils attend a local secondary school for GCSE art and design lessons.

25. The school has worked hard to extend opportunities for accreditation since the last inspection, and now has a very good range compared with other schools. It offers AQA Certificate of Achievement courses in English, mathematics, science, food technology, child-care, art and design, physical education, religious education and music. There are also opportunities for those who can benefit from them to follow General Certificate of Secondary Education courses in mathematics, art and design and science. Years 10 and 11 have the opportunity to attain a Key Skill qualification in information technology at Levels 1 and 2. The current Year 11 pupils also have the opportunity to achieve a Bronze Level award in the Youth Award Scheme.

26. The programme for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is very good. It includes times to meet as a class to discuss day-to-day issues as well as regular themes, such as bullying, self-care and independence. All pupils have weekly lessons of PSHE, and these, together with assemblies, provide good opportunities for pupils to reflect upon their relationships with others. The school is in the process of reviewing the scheme of work to ensure that pupils can make progress from year to year. The school has a very good programme in place for teaching about sex, drugs and personal health. This is closely linked to the PSHE programme for the oldest pupils. The accredited child-care course helps pupils to understand the value of family life, the implications of parenthood, and the needs of the very young. The youngest pupils' sex education is addressed in an appropriate way through science programmes of study.

27. The careers and work experience programmes and college link courses are of a very good standard, and have recently been awarded the 'Committed to Careers' Standard, recognised by the Sussex Careers Council. The school is well supported by the careers service. Careers lessons are introduced in Year 9, and closely linked to the transitional review. The work-related curriculum prepares pupils well for life after school. There is a comprehensive programme of college link courses, and good links with local industries and employers. These provide a range of work experience opportunities for pupils. Work experience is carefully planned. It is flexible and ensures that individual needs are met, both through the type of placement and the time given to it. The links with various colleges of further education enable the majority of Year 11 pupils to experience a different environment in a supportive way, and also to take part in a wide range of vocational activities. Lower attaining pupils have links with Ash Cottage and Down's View school, which is a more sheltered environment, for post-school preparation.

28. The provision for extra-curricular activities is very good. There is a wide range of lunchtime clubs, and these are very effective in supporting older pupils' learning and developing their confidence and self-esteem. These include clubs for reading, homework, speech and drama, recorders, and sporting activities such as football, athletics and dance. The school has developed very good links with St Valerie in France and Year 11 visit France annually. This creates good opportunities for pupils to use their French in a supportive

environment. Pupils in Year 6 take part in an activity camp, which extends their personal and social education and gives them opportunities to take part in outdoor adventurous activities. The curriculum is enriched by visits within the wider community to support and further develop pupils' understanding. In addition, very good use is made of the local area around the school to support environmental science, art and design and humanities.

29. The school has very constructive partnerships with other educational institutions. Links with other schools provide pupils with inclusion and re-integration opportunities for both social and academic purposes. There is a strong partnership with Blatchington Mill Secondary School, which includes pupils in their GCSE art and design course, and also with the West Blatchington junior and infant schools, where the autistic facilities managed by Downs Park are based.

30. The school is the LEA centre and resource provider for support to pupils with autism in mainstream schools, and for the training of teachers about autism. It therefore has many strong links with many other schools in the authority.

31. The inclusion of pupils with autism and the links with mainstream schools for its other pupils represent exemplary practice. Downs Park School makes a very good contribution to the LEA inclusion project. The school sees social inclusion as one of its central aims. The co-ordinator, attached to the school, works closely with staff to identify, assess and prepare pupils from Downs Park for inclusion into local mainstream and special schools. If it is appropriate, pupils, such as those with autism, are also included into Downs Park main school. Great care is taken to ensure that receiving schools are well prepared to take pupils, by providing staff training. When pupils attend their new school, they are accompanied by a learning support assistant who knows them, to offer support in class and to record progress and any difficulties. Occasionally, if a placement is unsuccessful, alternative schools are identified. Two pupils from Key Stage 4 follow GCSE art and design, in an inclusion programme. A number of pupils have been successfully fully re-included into mainstream.

32. The school makes very good provision to meet the needs of the pupils with additional and complex needs. The provision for autistic pupils in classes attached to the school is of a high quality. Some pupils are introduced into the main school at higher key stages. A number of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD) are absorbed into the school community, and their needs are suitably met through careful behaviour management. At present, there is a reasonable balance between the number of EBD pupils and pupils with other complex needs. However, any increase in the number of EBD pupils would have an adverse effect on the learning of other pupils since this would put too big a strain on current accommodation, staff organisation and expertise.

### **Pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

33. Provision for spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good overall. Spiritual development is good. The school has created an ethos in which spirituality is experienced through its respect and very good care of pupils. In assemblies, pupils sing hymns and listen to carefully chosen pieces of music. They think about other people's difficulties, and hear stories that deal with goodness and faith. In lessons, they are

encouraged to think about the effects of war and famine on people's lives. In some lessons, for example in English and technology, they greatly enjoy listening to stories, such as Theseus and the Minotaur, or seeing the actions of robots. In art and design, pupils express deep feelings in their Millennium-wish cards, and they make compositions in music using instruments to express a stormy or calm sea.

34. Moral education is very good and promoted very well. The school makes its rules of conduct very clear to pupils. Teachers train the youngest pupils very well to listen to instructions, to attend to their tasks, and to behave kindly and respectfully to others. Rules are applied consistently and fairly throughout the school. Older pupils learn the notions of right and wrong, and reflect on the outcomes of their actions. Staff set very good examples of courtesy and respect. In lessons, pupils think and talk about moral issues, for example from Bible stories, and learn about fair play in physical education. The school places great emphasis on the elimination of bullying. Some pupils make posters on raising awareness of bullying, and show them to the rest of the school in assemblies.

35. Provision for social development is outstanding. In almost all lessons, pupils are encouraged to work in pairs and groups, for example in geography, where the youngest pupils move around the school sensibly. In French, older pupils cooperate especially well together as they practise words and phrases. Pupils with autism and those with sensory impairments are accepted very well by other pupils, and fully included in lessons and whole-school activities. All pupils learn to sympathise with problems that others might have. Pupils in the secondary phase take part in a wide range of lunchtime activities where they work in a variety of friendship groups. Other activities outside daily lessons provide excellent social opportunities. These include work experience, primary school camp and the visit to France. This visit gives the pupils in Year 11 an especially broad social experience. Pupils are given responsibilities, for example helping with equipment in lessons and assemblies. Older pupils have opportunities to work and help with younger children.

36. Cultural development is very good. Pupils are given very good opportunities to value aspects of their own culture and also to appreciate the arts, traditions and faiths of other cultures. In art and design and music lessons, they enjoy a very wide range of pictures, sculptures and performances from India, Africa, Egypt and China. They study modern fashions in dress as well as traditional items worn in various countries. In English, pupils have stories from countries around the world. In physical education, they talk about the Olympic games and their Greek origin. Outside lessons, pupils are involved in a very good range of events and activities. These have recently included the Worthing Museum, the Royal Brighton Pavilion, the Millennium Dome, and the London Victoria and Albert Museum. The school also welcomes visitors to school who enrich the curriculum, such as the Rainbow Theatre and African musicians. Recently an artist helped them to produce the Millennium Tree in the hall. There are music workshops with musicians from the Sinfonietta and the LEA music service, as well as a Theatre in Education group who present plays about wartime Britain. Pupils have been involved in contributing to a Millennium tree installed in the school hall under the direction of a professional artist. They also visit museums and places of historical and current interest, such as a Roman villa. The school has an equalities coordinator who ensures that there is a multicultural content in the whole curriculum.

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

37. Procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare, health and safety are very good. Three members of staff have attended the appropriate training for the named person, and all staff have received in-service training on child protection awareness. The child protection policy has been rewritten since the last inspection and meets legal requirements. Staff are aware of school procedures. The school also follows local authority guidelines. The school is well supported by outside agencies, which visit regularly and provide good quality support, including involvement in setting targets for IEPs. Nevertheless, there is currently no occupational therapist or physiotherapist attached to the school. The provision for speech and language therapy for pupils in the autistic classes is very good, but this provision is spread thinly for pupils in the rest of the school. Pupils would benefit from additional time for individual, paired and small group work using language programmes provided by staff with speech and language training. Visiting specialist teachers in sensory impairment make regular visits to support hearing impaired and visually impaired pupils.

38. There is a sex education policy, but this needs reviewing so that it conforms to the DfEE guidelines 2000. Procedures for first aid and dispensing medication are very good. The senior first aid LSA has nursing qualifications. A parent governor and a teacher make regular risk assessments of the building, and the caretaker carries out minor repairs. Adequate procedures are in place to record any concerns about safety. Legal requirements are met for fire regulations and electrical testing. The school does not have a medical room.

39. The school procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance are very good. The school always contacts parents on the first day of absence if they are not given a reason for a pupil not attending school. The school and the educational welfare officer work closely and often successfully together to bring about improvements in pupils' attendance. There is evidence in the registers of pupils who were once school refusers now attending school regularly.

40. Monitoring and promotion of good behaviour management is very good. 'Pupils have a right to learn and teachers have a right to teach' is the main aim of this policy. Staff offer good role models, and have very high expectations of behaviour. Pupils are aware of what is acceptable behaviour and what is not. Targets in IEPs are used to support and encourage pupils to behave well. Poor behaviour is recorded and incidents are monitored regularly. Staff are skilled in pupil management and resolve incidents very quickly. The rewards and sanctions policy is used consistently by staff and well understood by pupils. Procedures for monitoring and eliminating oppressive behaviour are also very good, with some excellent features. For example, actual incidents were used as part of a quiz during a PSHE lesson, and pupils were encouraged to think about and evaluate their own behaviour and friendships. This was very effective. The school has analysed classroom exclusions. There is an appropriate policy on restraint, and staff have received relevant training. All restraints carried out by staff are carefully recorded.

41. The needs of pupils with additional special educational needs are met effectively. The provision for pupils with autism is excellent. It shows a clear understanding of how to meet the needs of pupils with impairment of behaviour, social language and communication of thought. The school assesses pupils' individual needs and defines individual programmes to meet them. A variety of approaches is used to ensure pupils are able to learn and develop their personal and social skills. Approaches include the use of distraction-free environments. Work which is challenging, and well-deployed one-to-one support by staff.

42. Pupils are also given good opportunities to work together on less challenging work so they can develop their social competencies. Play-therapy is also provided. Staff use signing and symbols routinely to manage pupils through the changes in the day, and to provide access to language and literacy. Pupils' work is very structured and broken down into small steps to learning that are assessed regularly. There is a very good multi-professional approach amongst staff to setting pupils' targets and evaluating them. All members of staff have undertaken additional training to support pupils with autism. This has ensured that pupils can follow a gradual approach to inclusion, either in the main body of the school or in mainstream provision.

43. Procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are very good. Staff know pupils very well and use the knowledge to provide a high level of day-to-day care and support. Personal development is promoted through information gained from parents during parent-teacher consultations. There are many informal meetings between teachers and learning support assistants. Such meetings allow for a transfer of information about the progress that pupils are making towards their learning objectives and the targets on their IEPs, and identify when any additional support is required. Staff use the rewards and sanctions policy and procedures to monitor pupil's personal development. Rewards are linked to targets on pupils' IEPs. Secondary age pupils make comments or add targets for their own IEPs, which is good policy.

44. The school's procedures for monitoring and assessing pupils' overall achievements are good. At the time of the previous inspection, assessment procedures were in the early stages of development and were inconsistently applied across the whole school. This has significantly improved in all subject areas. In English, mathematics and science, pupils' progress is tracked from baseline assessment on admission and monitored as they move through the school. Their academic targets are matched to National Curriculum and pre-National Curriculum levels of attainment, and all pupils have at least one numeracy and one literacy target included in their individual education plan. There is a high standard of record-keeping kept by subject teachers, and this allows for the effective assessment of pupils' progress over time as well as predicting future outcomes and examination expectations. Progress within key stage groups is measured and gender and learning issues are highlighted, which makes early intervention possible. Pupils' achievements are evaluated twice a year, which informs curriculum development and lesson planning as well as individual target setting.



45. The system of target setting, which was inconsistent at the time of the last report, has improved, and there are now well developed ongoing procedures directly linked to pupils' needs. Individual education plans accurately reflect the recommendations of pupils' Annual Reviews, and are used well as working documents within the classroom to inform lesson planning. Additionally, teachers' very good knowledge of their pupils ensures that academic and personal needs are met during lessons. Work is marked during lessons and teachers keep very good daily records, with parents being kept well informed as to their child's progress. Annual Review and Transition Plan procedures are well organised, and form the basis of the school's annual progress reports to parents. At Key Stage 4, pupils build up well-organised and neatly presented Records of Achievement, which highlight their academic successes.

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

46. The school's links with parents are very effective. The school involves parents in setting targets in individual education plans, which has a positive effect on pupils' progress and attainment. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is good.

47. Parental views are that the autistic provision is excellent, and evidence of inspectors upholds this view. Parents feel well informed about their child's progress. The prospectus and governors' annual report to parents are informative and provide all the required information. There are regular newsletters from the school, the autistic classes and each class teacher, keeping parents well informed about a range of class activities and forthcoming events. Each child in the primary school has a reading pack, which contains advice to parents on how to help their child to read at home. Class teachers provide information on the topics that children will be studying. There are two consultation meetings per year, where parents and teachers discuss and agree on the targets in pupil's individual education plans. Parents are also provided with information from the multi-disciplinary teams involved in annual reviews of their child's needs. Annual reports for secondary age pupils are good in English, mathematics, science and physical education, but they not as full in other subjects as they are in the primary age. Those for primary pupils are of a higher quality because they clearly show what pupils know understand and can do. Staff make home visits to pupils who are joining the autistic classes, and this provides a very good opportunity for an exchange of information with parents.

48. Parental involvement in their child's learning is good. The home-school diaries are used for an exchange of social and academic information. Diaries show that staff know pupils and parents well, and the style of communication encourages a response from parents. At the consultation meeting with teachers, parents contribute social targets to individual education plans, such as tying shoelaces. Such targets are then linked to the rewards policy. A good example of strategies to help pupils with mathematics at home is found in the Purple Class newsletter. Parents are encouraged to help their children at home with homework and with supporting targets on individual education plans. Staff inform parents if homework is not completed. This is effective in encouraging the school and parents to work together. A small number of parents help in the classroom and with swimming. There is also an active parents' association, which organises regular discos to raise funds. Parents always

attend events that involve their children, such as sports day, Harvest Festival, Christmas events and the carol concert.

49. Parents who attended the parents' meetings and those who completed the parents' questionnaires are generally very happy with what the school provides and achieves. However, some parents were concerned that the school does not provide interesting activities outside lessons. Nevertheless, pupils enjoy a range of visits that support the curriculum, including residential trips. There are also a number of visitors to the school. At lunch-time there is a range of clubs, which are well attended by pupils.

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

50. The headteacher is an exceptional and visionary leader. He has a clear sense of purpose for the school, namely the pursuit of excellence in providing for the special education needs of each pupil. As a leader, he is very effective in motivating staff, and his very good management enables them to deliver a high quality of teaching, which significantly raises pupils' self-esteem and achievements. The ethos of the school is very high, led by the high expectations of the headteacher and staff for pupils' behaviour and performance. The school's aims are the product of consultation and are set out for parents in the school brochure. They are well met. The school improvement plan (SIP) is also the result of consultation between staff and governors. This three-year plan is a very good vehicle for realising the main aim of supporting and raising the achievement and progress of pupils. The SIP has detailed arrangements for taking broad aims, making them a context for actions and producing areas for development. The key personnel responsible for action are identified, together with a realistic timescale and carefully analysed costs. The headteacher is particularly good at analysing the strengths and weaknesses of the school, and he uses relevant data to guide actions in the SIP. There are subsequent reviews and constant monitoring of progress for each area of the SIP by the headteacher and senior managers. This process has led to consistent progress to improve weaker areas. The Action Plan arising from the last inspection report was the starting point for development, and all the targets set in this have now been met or feature in the current SIP.

51. The headteacher is very ably supported by very competent senior managers. There is a good management structure in which heads of department and subject co-ordinators have clearly defined roles, with good job descriptions outlining their delegated responsibilities. Time is allowed within the timetable for them to carry out these responsibilities, particularly those of monitoring and evaluating teaching. This represents good improvement in management since the last inspection.

52. Management of the autistic facilities based at the local infant and junior schools is very good. There is regular weekly contact by the co-ordinator, with visits by the headteacher as necessary. Downs Park's responsibility for the staffing budget and management of the teachers and learning support assistants is carried out effectively. The team leader at the junior school facility benefits from a co-opted role on the senior management team and from advising the governing body of that school. This gives superb support to effective inclusion lessons within the junior school for autistic pupils. The selection and appointment of new staff to these facilities works best when the headteacher of the receiving school is fully involved alongside the headteacher of Downs Park.

53. There is a core of very committed governors. The chair of governors is very experienced in the role, and, as a parent governor, has a deep understanding of the needs of pupils. He has addressed many crucial issues very well on behalf of the school. The governors are extremely supportive of the headteacher and staff, and share the same vision for the future of the school. The headteacher provides extensive information to the governing body to inform its policy decisions. There is a good sub-committee structure with terms of reference; meetings are regular and minuted, and all statutory obligations are met.

54. Staff are suitably qualified and experienced and well deployed to take advantage of individual strengths and specialist knowledge. Appraisal is well structured, and a performance management policy is already in place with governors aware of their role. The school is on course for implementation of the new requirements. Targets for the headteacher's performance have been set. There is detailed analysis and monitoring of the quality of teaching and of pupils' attainments. The information is used very effectively to guide future teaching and curriculum so that it meets the individual needs of pupils. Staff professional development is very extensive, and directly linked to the raising of standards in teaching and attainment. Staff have taken part in training for literacy and numeracy. There are weekly training sessions in the Team Teach approach, led by the Team Teach trainer, who also provides training for other schools. The co-ordinator for autism provides training about autism for teachers in school and from other LEA schools. The school has participated successfully in DfEE initiatives, including the pilot Numeracy Strategy, the Work Related Learning Project and the local education authority's Inclusion Project. This demonstrates educational vision and strategic thinking on the part of the headteacher and staff. The appointment of an equalities co-ordinator is a bold initiative that indicates the high priority given to equal opportunities at the school.

55. There is very efficient and prudent financial management and administration by the school finance and administration manager, who has a permanent place on the senior management team. A sensible decision has recently been made to separate her duties from those of the school office, so that she can give full attention to the financial administration of the school. This is complex because it incorporates two offsite facilities, an inclusion project and the local authority autism support service.

56. The governor's finance sub-committee has close control and supervision of all spending decisions. A recent audit by the LEA of the school accounts reported efficient financial administration. Funds provided through specific grants are spent appropriately. The headteacher and governors are very diligent in the pursuit of the most efficient spending and use of material and human resources. This, together with good attention to the principles of best value, high quality of teaching and pupil achievement, leads to the school providing very good value for money.

57. The headteacher and governors have a good rapport with the LEA, whom they feel supports the school very well. There has been general agreement between the school and LEA about the criteria for admission of autistic pupils to the school. The school is rightly seeking further clarification on the composition of the rest of its pupil intake, and is correct in

viewing with caution the need to achieve a balance between groups of pupils with different learning difficulties. The school has worked hard to cope with the increase in the number of pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties, and achieved a delicate balance between catering for the needs of these pupils alongside those with autism. This balance should not be jeopardised by ill-considered referrals.

58. Similarly, the school is working with the LEA to improve the accommodation, which has improved only slightly since the last inspection, and is still poor. Although the school offices and staff-room have been improved, there is still a shortage of specialist classrooms for music, art and design, design and technology, and no leisure area for senior pupils. The hall is too small for senior pupils' physical education, and changing room facilities are inadequate. There is no provision of rooms for visiting teachers or therapists. For example, speech and language therapists are obliged to work with pupils in a cupboard with no window. There is no space available to withdraw pupils with emotional and behaviour difficulties for counselling. Cramped conditions mean that pupils sometimes have to work in corridors. There is no medical room, although this is a requirement. Although there is some provision for pupils with physical disabilities, wheelchair access to many areas of the school is restricted by narrow doorways and the lack of ramps. The school is working to raise funds for an information and communications technology suite, for which it is receiving joint funding from the LEA. The curriculum at present is severely hampered by lack of these facilities. There is no library, and this seriously affects pupils' access to books. Resources of books and materials are satisfactory. The existing accommodation is used very well, and is well maintained by the premises officer.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

59. To sustain the high quality of teaching and achievement:

- The headteacher and governors should continue to seek the support of the local education authority to upgrade the accommodation and facilities, in particular those for music, art and design, design and technology (resistant materials), physical education and library. A medical room should be provided;
- Continue the improvement of resources for information and communications technology by completing the project to provide an information technology suite.  
(*Paragraph: 58*)

60. Minor issues:

- Increase the amount of time available for art and design at Key Stage 4;  
(*Paragraph: 24*)
- Support equality of opportunity for all pupils by increasing the use of speech and language programmes;  
(*Paragraph: 37*)
- Further support academic standards by providing a whole-school library;  
(*Paragraph: 58*)
- Improve the quality of annual reports for pupils aged 11-16 by including precise information about what pupils know, understand and can do in all subjects;  
(*Paragraph: 47*)
- Update the school sex education policy needs so that it conforms to the DfEE Guidelines 2000.  
(*Paragraph: 38*)

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	98
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	180

### *Summary of teaching observed during the inspection*

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
12	36	34	18	0	0	0

*The table gives the percentage of teaching observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about lessons.*

### *Information about the school's pupils*

#### **Pupils on the school's roll**

	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	128
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	45

#### **English as an additional language**

	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	1

#### **Pupil mobility in the last school year**

	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	8
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

*Attendance*

**Authorised absence**

	<b>%</b>
School data	7.5

**Unauthorised absence**

	<b>%</b>
School data	1.5

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

<b><i>SATs Results 2000</i></b>
<i>Tasks and Tests</i>
Key Stage 1 No pupil attained Level 2
Key Stage 2 No pupil attained Level 4
Key Stage 3 No pupil attained Level 5

<b><i>Youth Award Scheme</i></b>	
Bronze Award	10 pupils
Silver Award	2 pupils

**AQA Certificate of Achievement 2000**

	<b>Distinction</b>	<b>Merit</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>Working towards</b>
<b>English</b>	33%	25%	42%	

	<b>Distinction</b>	<b>Merit</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>Working towards</b>
<b>Maths</b>	17%	17%	50%	17%

	<b>Distinction</b>	<b>Merit</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>Working towards</b>
<b>Science</b>	25%	33%	25%	17%

	<b>Distinction</b>	<b>Merit</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>Working towards</b>
<b>Art</b>	60%	20%	20%	N / A

	<b>Distinction</b>	<b>Merit</b>	<b>Pass</b>	<b>Working towards</b>
<b>Music</b>	33%	75%	25%	N / A

## GCSE Results 2000

### Summary

Subject	No of Pupils	Grade						
		A	B	C	D	E	F	G
art	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
science	6	0	0	0	1	1	1	3
maths	3	0	0	0	0	0	1	2

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	2
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	123
Any other minority ethnic group	3

### *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	7	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:**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	20.9
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6
Average class size	11

#### **Education support staff:**

Total number of education support staff	22
Total aggregate hours worked per week	587

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### *Financial information*

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	1154969.00
Total expenditure	1134694.00
Expenditure per pupil	8865.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	24938.00
Balance carried forward to next year	45213.00

## *Results of the survey of parents and carers*

### **Questionnaire return rate**

Number of questionnaires sent out

128

Number of questionnaires returned

45

### **Percentage of responses in each category**

	<b>Strongly agree</b>	<b>Tend to agree</b>	<b>Tend to disagree</b>	<b>Strongly disagree</b>	<b>Don't know</b>
My child likes school.	58	36	2	2	2
My child is making good progress in school.	47	44	9	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	36	58	2	2	2
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	56	14	2	0
The teaching is good.	51	44	0	2	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	58	29	4	0	9
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	76	24	0	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	64	29	2	0	4
The school works closely with parents.	66	25	7	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	51	40	2	0	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	41	7	0	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	25	43	14	7	11

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

### **ENGLISH**

61. Pupils achieve well in English. They make good progress in all areas of English across the school because of well organised and expert teaching by staff, who have a good knowledge of pupils' special educational needs.

62. Many pupils enter school with speech and listening skills that are significantly delayed. They have limited meaningful communication and a very restricted vocabulary. By age seven, most learn to speak clearly and listen carefully to their teachers and each other. Higher attaining pupils are able to talk about their work. They develop a good vocabulary and can answer questions in simple sentences. Pupils with autism and complex needs develop good eye contact during conversation, and make very good progress in participating in group work, taking turns and functioning well for increasingly longer periods in whole class situations. Through carefully planned and structured teaching, pupils begin to acquire reading skills. They enjoy shared reading and remember the sequence of events in their class reading book *Handa's Surprise*. Two higher attaining pupils can read parts of the book on their own, clearly and accurately. Most pupils know the initial letters and sounds of the fruits in the story. They overwrite, copy letters and develop initial skills in writing.

63. By age 11, the majority of pupils listen carefully and respond appropriately in a variety of situations. Pupils continue to make good progress in speaking and listening because of careful attention to language in all subjects and the opportunities presented for pupils to develop language skills. For example, pupils explained clearly their views of safety and the danger of fireworks in a personal and social education lesson. They listened to each other's contributions with respect and patience. Many pupils are confident and speak clearly, and some use a varied vocabulary. A few, who still have difficulties with communication, work with the speech therapist to develop their clarity and range of speech. Pupils with autism extend their vocabulary and make very good improvements in their enunciation through precise, expert coaching. Pupils enjoy shared reading and whole class sessions with the 'Big Book', and soon learn the text. They have improving word recognition skills, choosing words to put into simple sentences, which they read accurately. Most can identify the author and title. Higher attaining pupils can select words that rhyme, and put rhyming words from their texts into their own sentences. They begin to understand imagery and the use of adjectives in their reading and writing. For example, pupils in one class described each other creatively and with some humour in a similar way to the poem they had just read. Progress in writing skills is good. Pupils understand basic grammatical structures and can write in simple accurate sentences. Higher attaining pupils use dictionaries to ensure their spelling is accurate and to understand word meanings. They write in extended sentences with evenly well formed letters, and some write in a cursive script.

64. By age 14, pupils recognise moods and feelings in prose and poetry. Many pupils talk about their reading clearly and thoughtfully. They follow simple verbal instructions, many coping with more than one instruction, by listening carefully to their teacher. In discussion, higher attaining pupils explain clearly what they are doing and the reasons for it. Pupils use speaking and listening skills for

different audiences. For example, they are competent at giving a talk to other pupils in the tutor group. Many higher attaining pupils read from a wide range of books. They have good word recognition and accurately retell the story of their book, showing a simple understanding of plot and character. They can predict story endings sensibly and discuss confidently the books they read. Most pupils use more than one strategy to work out unknown words. Some higher attaining pupils at this age are comparatively fluent and accurate readers and can select books and talk about their selection with enthusiasm and confidence. Pupils enjoy poetry and higher attaining pupils recognise patterns in poetry and can say why they find the poem effective. They begin to write for a range of purposes in sequences of sentences, which are organised and clear. They draft and redraft their work with support and pay great attention to the presentation of work. They are more aware of the audience they write for, and some begin to write creatively in response to the books they read. Pupils understand different genre in stories, and attempt to write their own stories using similar characteristics. Pupils with autism make particularly good progress. They are focused and work at a good pace.

65. Pupils maintain good progress as they continue through the school so that, by age 16, they listen to each other with interest and work well together in pairs. They have a developing confidence in speaking to a wider audience. For example, when giving a talk to their class, most pupils can adapt their talk to their audience. They answer questions confidently and join in discussion, listening carefully to others' comments. In another example, during a discussion on the life of Ann Frank, pupils could express empathy for Ann's situation and make suggestions on why Ann's escape was successful at first. They listened to each other and responded with thoughtful and sensitive comments. The ideas generated were used in their writing to produce a creative and perceptive response to their reading. Higher attaining pupils make effective independent use of dictionaries, vocabulary and sentence structure to make their writing interesting. Pupils write for a range of audiences, using letters, diaries, articles, and stories, showing understanding of the differences between formal and informal writing. By the time they leave school pupils have developed well in reading and writing skills, and although still significantly below national expectations, it is sufficient to gain them accreditation in vocational English and in the Certificate of Achievement in English.

66. Overall, teaching and learning are good. Teaching was very good in over one third of all lessons, and satisfactory in one sixth of lessons. Teaching was never less than satisfactory. In the best lessons, very good planning and well-structured teaching, together with a high but realistic level of challenge, ensures pupils are strongly motivated and eager to achieve. In these lessons, teachers have confident and secure subject knowledge, and make sure that pupils are learning the right things. Teachers set out clear learning objectives that pupils know and understand, and keep detailed and useful records of pupils' progress in most lessons to ensure that their learning needs are being met.

67. Pupils are enthusiastic and highly motivated by the lively and imaginative teaching. Teachers know their pupils well and most have good experience in working with pupils with complex needs and with autism. They encourage pupils to be independent and attentive from the earliest age by proven teaching methods and effective organisation. Management of pupils is consistently good and unobtrusive, which cuts short any challenging behaviour and

builds pupils' self-confidence and self-esteem. Very close collaborative relationships between teachers and learning support assistants enable consistency of approach, and this reinforces the positive attitude pupils have to English and their work. Pupils develop a genuine interest in books and an increased confidence in their approach to them. They are learning information-finding skills and how books are organised.

68. Pupils have very good relationships with each other and with their teachers. They are generally polite and work well independently or in small groups. Staff and pupils value each other. Pupils' displayed work shows they are proud of their successes. Staff work successfully in close collaboration with the speech and language therapists to support pupils with more severe difficulties in communication and to enable them to gain access to the entire curriculum. In lessons where teaching was less successful but still satisfactory, work was not as well matched to pupils' needs as in other lessons. Pupils became more restless and their progress was slower.

69. There has been good progress in the department since the last inspection, due in part to the very good leadership and management of the subject by both coordinators. Teaching and learning have improved, well supported by the revised policy document and new schemes of work. The coordinators are clear about the strengths and areas for development, and have worked hard to establish a whole-school approach to the subject. They give clear educational direction and support and monitor developments well. The National Literacy Strategy has been carefully implemented in a way that is sensitive to the needs of many different areas of special educational needs, and has been suitably extended to the senior school. This, together with the careful targeting, extension and development of literature within the school, has had a positive impact on pupils' progress. There is a good range of appropriate assessment, including a developing range of accreditation in Year 11. Although good efforts have been made to establish a box of high quality books in each classroom, the lack of a school library severely hampers pupils' progress in reading in every subject area, by preventing pupils' access to reading material that demands higher-order reading skills.

70. Pupils at all key stages use their English skills well in other areas of the curriculum. For example, subject specific language is particularly well used in art and design, design technology, and science. Key words are emphasised in most subject areas and reinforced in worksheets and pupils' writing. Signing and the use of symbols are well used to enable all pupils to access the curriculum. Pupils are encouraged to listen attentively and follow instructions in most subjects, and they do this particularly well in physical education and information and communications technology. The majority of lessons include a reading and writing task. Teachers are aware of pupils' literacy targets and reinforce learning in these areas.

## **MATHEMATICS**

71. The school's provision for mathematics is good. The standard of teaching is good overall, and pupils in all years make good progress within their ability levels. National Assessment Tests indicate that pupils make progressive gains through each key stage in their knowledge of mathematical concepts. In Years 10 and 11, pupils follow courses leading to the Welsh Board General Certificate of Education or Certificate of Achievement examinations with increasing success in pass grades.

72. The quality of teaching and the learning of pupils up to the age of 11 is good. Lessons are well planned with clear learning objectives, and good use of pupils' individual education plans ensures that specific needs are met. Teachers' very good knowledge of pupils and the high quality of support from learning support assistants ensure that, from a low baseline on admission, pupils make good gains. For example, in Year 1 they begin to classify and count similar objects, sometimes using songs or computer programmes to aid learning. By the age of seven, they count pennies and accurately complete single digit addition and subtraction. They have a basic knowledge of shapes such as squares and circles, and begin to learn measurement, identifying shorter or longer lengths and drawing these appropriately in their books. By the age of 11, pupils refine their written number formation and increase their knowledge of two-dimensional shapes. For example, they recognise and explain the difference between a rectangle and a square. They extend their knowledge of mathematical signs through simple multiplication and division sums, and have an improving awareness of number patterns, working in multiples of two, five and ten.

73. The teaching of mathematics at secondary level is very good, and sometimes excellent. This is reflected in the very good and sometimes excellent progress made by older pupils. Years 7, 8 and 9 are set by ability, with work appropriately matched to individual and specific needs. This is very well managed, with effective support from classroom assistants. Lessons are well structured, balanced and imaginative, and the very good relationship between staff and pupils makes learning fun. For example, in one excellent and challenging top ability group lesson with Years 7, 8, 9 and autistic pupils, money sums were attractively presented in the form of a game in which the pupils purchased items for a meal. They counted, added and totalled the cost of their individual and combined purchases with a great deal of enthusiasm and enjoyment.

74. By Year 10, pupils follow examination courses and are encouraged towards more independent learning. For example, they complete mathematical investigations, working in pairs or groups to compare and record the different properties of three-dimensional shapes such as cuboids or hexagonal and triangular prisms. They conduct personal surveys at local shops, recording their findings as bar graphs. There are good links with other subjects, such as geography, when the pupils in Year 11 increase their number skills using positive and negative co-ordinates to plot and analyse maps or design a town plan.

75. Pupils with autism make good progress in mathematics and numeracy. Teachers and learning support assistants have good pupil management skills, and use clear, well-modulated voice controls to retain pupils' interest and continued concentration. Good use is made of practical resources to support learning. For example, dominoes are used to reinforce pupils' understanding of odd and even numbers. Well-planned lessons challenge pupils through mental mathematics, and their learning is further reinforced through effective plenary sessions. Higher achieving autistic pupils at Key Stage 3 are fully included in the year group lessons for mathematics, and participate on equal terms with their peers.

76. The National Numeracy Strategy (NNS) is well established in the primary classes and also at Key Stage 3 for the pupils with autism. Plans to extend this to all pupils up to the age of 14 are outlined in the school improvement plan. Pupils have at least one numeracy target in their individual education plans, and these are well addressed during lesson planning. However, the structure of numeracy sessions is inconsistently implemented, and this is a staff training issue. Nevertheless, the development of numeracy throughout the school is at least satisfactory and sometimes good. Numeracy skills are further promoted across the curriculum, and this is particularly good in art and design, science, music and geography.

77. Mathematics is well managed by two coordinators. Both co-ordinators and other teaching staff have received some training in the NNS, although further training is necessary to ensure consistency in the implementation of numeracy structures. Good quality mathematics and numeracy policies and long term schemes of work are linked to the school improvement plan, which also highlights the need to develop mathematical resources. Medium term schemes of work are jointly planned for continuity and progression across all years, and these inform short-term schemes and lesson planning. In turn, these are informed through the very good and continuous monitoring and assessment of pupils' achievement. Current resources are adequate to support the subject, although the use of information technology as a tool to support learning is insufficiently developed.

78. Provision for mathematics has been improved since the previous inspection through the introduction of the NNS at primary level and for pupils up to Year 9 in the autistic classes. Additionally, pupils in their final year now enter for Certificate of Achievement examinations, which increases their opportunities for national accreditation. The quality of teaching has improved and there is now no unsatisfactory teaching. The subject fully meets statutory requirements and is good overall.

## **SCIENCE**

79. The achievement of pupils at all key stages is very good overall. Key factors in maintaining a very good pace to lessons are teachers' excellent knowledge and understanding of the subject, along with work planned for different ability groups. These enable pupils to excel in their work. The well-informed and effective support of learning support assistants makes an important contribution to the achievements of pupils. The progress of pupils is very good overall and it is excellent on occasion. Their very good behaviour and interest in the work planned for them contributes to their rapid progress in lessons.

80. By age seven, pupils who have additional language and communication disorders make excellent progress in understanding and communicating the concept of flotation. They observe and experience objects in water, and use the correct language to describe the experience. Higher attaining pupils are able to predict the outcome of their experiments, and make a simple table of the results with some support from the classroom assistants.

81. By age 11, pupils are able to draw and construct a simple electrical circuit using a battery, wire and a bulb. Higher attaining pupils know that reptiles hatch from eggs laid by the female and

that they emerge fully formed. Lower attaining pupils understand that friction is ‘a force that stops things sliding’.

82. By age 14, pupils have undertaken a wide range of well planned investigations, and use specialist terms such as ‘potential’ and ‘kinetic’ energy with understanding. They know that if the forces that are applied to an object are not balanced, then the object will move. Using Newton scales, they conduct effective experiments to demonstrate this. Higher attaining pupils learn how different human activities can enhance or damage the environment. For instance, they know that factory pollution is drawn up into clouds to form ‘acid rain’ that damages crops and buildings in areas that may be a very long distance from the source of pollution.

83. By age 16, pupils are studying for national examinations and using their knowledge and understanding to conduct and record their investigations appropriately, using graphs and tables. Higher attaining pupils use laptop or personal computers to record their findings on spreadsheets. They name carnivores and herbivores, and understand their nature and feeding habits. They know the basic structure of an atom, and can identify and name many common symbols from the periodic table of elements. Lower attaining pupils write up what they have learned about food and energy, and they demonstrate effectively their learning about reproduction, cell growth and muscle movement.

84. The quality of teaching is good at Key Stage 2 and very good at all other key stages. Teachers in the secondary phase use their excellent knowledge and understanding of the subject to deliver very good and, on occasion, excellent lessons. In these lessons, expectations of behaviour and learning are very high and there is a very good rate of progress. Expectations are also very high at Key Stage 1. Teachers and learning support assistants demonstrate an excellent knowledge and understanding of pupils with autism. They time lessons effectively and make excellent use of resources. Teachers provide very good support for literacy and numeracy skills, using subject specific vocabulary fluently and providing opportunities for pupils to read, write and use measuring and calculating skills. In Key Stage 2, pupils are sometimes not quite clear about the intention or the outcomes of the lesson and make slower progress because teachers do not have secure knowledge of the topic in hand, and their planning is less. In the very few lessons that are weaker though still satisfactory, pupils are not clear about the intention or the outcomes of the lesson and make slower progress because teachers do not have secure knowledge of the topic in hand, and their planning is not as effective.

85. Teachers have very good relationships with the pupils and provide an interesting and productive environment for learning. Pupils respect staff and respond well, working hard to complete tasks. Most teachers make effective use of detailed and informative plans that ensure that lessons are well timed so that pupils make good or very good progress. In the best lessons, teachers and learning support assistants work as a team, supporting each other in lesson management. On occasion, lessons lack effective planning and learning support assistants are not used to best effect.



86. There is a very good, well equipped laboratory. Primary and secondary co-ordinators work well together, and have set out a sound curriculum that ensures pupils make continuous progress in learning through the school. Primary co-ordination is at an early stage because the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning is not yet fully effective. The lack of a technician for support in experimental and investigative work restricts the range of more sophisticated experiments that can be conducted at the secondary level. The subject has made a very good improvement since the last inspection in all aspects of its work.

## **ART**

87. Pupils of all ages and disabilities achieve well in art and design. Pupils make very good progress in a broad range of work by age seven and between the ages of 11 and 14. The progress of pupils aged between 7 and 11 is good overall, and very good for pupils with autism. Pupils aged between 14 and 16 make good progress and achieve well in Certificate of Achievement examinations or the General Certificate of Secondary Education. However, they could achieve even better if more time was allowed for art and design at this age.

88. Pupils are now making better progress in the subject than at the last inspection. The scheme of work is much improved since the adoption and adaptation of official guidelines. The scheme of work for secondary pupils is now exemplary and the new scheme of work for primary pupils is very good. These schemes should help to improve standards further. The school now offers a broader range of work, which includes work in three dimensions and the use of resistant materials. However, opportunities to extend skills and techniques in clay work are limited because the school does not have a kiln. The art room, which is a shared facility with English, is very small and has poor storage. This restricts pupils' opportunities for independent work. Display facilities are poor, and do not allow for the good end pieces to be shown to best effect to raise pupils' self esteem. However, where display is available, as in most primary corridors and classrooms, it is carefully mounted and explained in writing and symbols to show all pupils and interested parties what pupils' have achieved.

89. The judgement on teaching is based on observations of four lessons and analysis of sketchbooks, photographs and portfolios of work. Teaching has improved and is now very good overall. It was very good or excellent in three out of the four lessons seen, and good in the other one. The teaching of the youngest pupils is very good, and work seen in portfolios shows very good progress over time. No teaching of pupils aged between 7 and 11 was seen, and portfolios of work show some variation in the quality of end pieces and the range of work covered. The best portfolio of work at this key stage is by the pupils with autism, where ideas are developed over a sequence of lessons and there is very good use of sketchbooks to gather ideas. The teaching of pupils aged between 11 and 16 is very good overall, and one lesson seen was excellent.

90. In the best teaching, there is excellent emphasis on the technical vocabulary of art and associated vocabulary of mathematics. Teachers use a range of strategies for teaching this vocabulary, including signing and symbols for the youngest pupils, and clear explanations and constant repetition for the oldest pupils. Consequently by the age of seven, pupils know their colours and some two-dimensional shapes. By the age of 11, they are beginning to show understanding of terms such as shade and tone. Older pupils discuss the geometric and organic shapes used in architecture.

91. All lessons seen are challenging, with work very clearly set out to meet the differing needs of pupils. There is very often a clear development of artistic ideas, skills and techniques over a series of lessons, using a range of media. Pupils from an early age are given opportunities to collect ideas in sketchbooks and to use them in their work. By the age seven and eight, pupils develop ideas about shape, pattern and colour and how it can be used to represent the things they see and remember. Work set shows clear links with other subjects, such as humanities, mathematics and science, and makes a very strong contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

92. Ideas about pattern, line, shape and form are developed further in the secondary department. For example, they design an extension for Brighton Pavilion using organic and geometric shapes in collage form. Pupils also have opportunities to discuss their work with local artisans and to develop skills in clay work, for example by visiting a local potter and learning to throw pots. The whole school made very good gains in clay work when they worked with a local artist to make individual clay tiles in oak leaf shape to form the Millennium Tree. This now stands as a permanent end piece in the school hall.

93. Pupils follow an interesting and stimulating range of work that includes an excellent module on animation in Year 8, and Egyptian and Aboriginal art in Years 9 and 10. Teachers and pupils evaluate end pieces well at the beginning of lessons, and use their knowledge to improve work in all lessons seen. Older pupils develop their own projects for examination purposes during lessons, visits and in after-school classes and homework activities. They are at present competently developing and researching ideas about fashion. Last year all pupils who entered the Certificate of Achievement gained at least a pass, while 60 per cent of pupils gained distinctions and 20 per cent gained merits. There are at present two pupils who are following art and design GCSE courses at a local secondary school. Pupils have some experience of using computer-generated art, and planning is in place to guide and support teachers in their delivery. However, resources are limited, and this is an area that is recognised by the two very able, enthusiastic and knowledgeable coordinators as a focus for future development.

## DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

94. Achievement in design and technology is good overall and makes a valuable contribution to pupils' life skills. Pupils make good progress over time. They work together with enthusiasm and excitement, enjoy making choices and make good decisions when evaluating their work for purpose and function. They make practical suggestions, for example, when discussing the design for a toddler's slipper. Pupils at the age of 16 have the opportunity to gain accreditation in the Certificate of Achievement for Food Technology. They work with increasing confidence and independence. Pupils with special educational needs are well supported by learning support assistants who ensure that pupils work safely and as independently as possible.

95. By the age of seven, pupils plan their own playground. They say which playground equipment they like best, and choose where they would put it on their plan. Higher attaining pupils use an information and communication technology software program. Pupils in the autistic classes concentrate very well when they work in small groups to make and explore play dough. They mix it, bend, pull, stretch, flatten and squash it when making their own name plaques. They know that it is like elastic.

96. By the age of 11, pupils work co-operatively in pairs and small groups, collecting their ideas together in a sketchbook. They exchange ideas and express opinions. They know about title, author and presentation when designing a three-dimensional book, but most find it difficult to think of ideas in this dimension. By the age of 14, they are very aware of design and function, and are continuing to improve their manipulative skills. Pupils with motor difficulties use aids to assist them in handling tools. They achieve well in threading needles with large eyes, and then refine their skills to work with small needles. They test designs for decorations using a good range of materials and fixing techniques. They evaluate and improve techniques, for example, sewing instead of gluing.

97. By the age of 16, they make tests on food, comparing vegetarian and meat products using all their senses, especially taste. They decide, for example, that vegetarian sausages taste better than meat sausages. They gain knowledge, skills and techniques in food preparation, with good awareness of hygiene and safety.

98. Teaching is of a good standard overall, with examples of very good and excellent teaching at Key Stages 1 and 3. All learning support assistants are well deployed and give very good support to teachers, which enables pupils with complex needs to make good progress. For example, they assist pupils with handling tools, and work with groups or pairs of pupils, increasing their opportunities for discussion and emphasising key vocabulary. Strengths of successful teaching are where teachers are very clear about what pupils will learn in the lesson, and pupils are aware of their own learning in the plenary session, either in group questioning or on a one-to-one basis. Pupils are encouraged to evaluate their work and say how they can improve the design. Teachers plan learning outcomes in the autistic classes so that pupils make progress in the targets of their individual education plans. Where teaching is strong, expectations are high and the timing of the lesson is such that pupils work purposefully. The use of questioning draws out pupils' knowledge and understanding, and they gain confidence by having time to give explanations. When teaching is occasionally less successful, opportunities are not as evident for pupils to discuss, make decisions and choices, and see good demonstrations.

99. There are very good opportunities for cross-curricular learning in communicating and listening, literacy, numeracy, science, personal and social education. The use of ICT is developing well and is included in the new scheme of work.

100. There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The two co-ordinators give very good leadership. They have worked hard to put in place a new policy and scheme of work, which is adapted from QCA documents and relates to Curriculum 2000. The topics have been selected to suit the needs of pupils, and assessment is also adapted from P-levels and National Curriculum. Teaching has improved, and some staff have had in-service training. A subject specialist delivers food technology well at Key Stage 4. Accreditation is available to pupils at Key Stage 4.

## **HUMANITIES**

101. The school's provision for geography and history is incorporated into the humanities curriculum. There is an overlap of delivery between both subjects, but are reported separately. The two subjects are co-ordinated well by two teachers, who regularly review schemes of work in order to match pupils' overall capabilities and to take account of the revised National Curriculum. Assessment of pupils' achievement and progress is good overall.

## **GEOGRAPHY**

102. Teaching in geography was seen at primary level only. The quality of this is good and, in relation to their abilities, pupils make good gains in their knowledge by age 11. Judgements on pupils' progress at Key Stages 3 and 4 are based solely on an analysis of the pupils' work. This indicates that they make good progress overall.

103. By age seven, very well organised lessons enable pupils to develop an awareness of geography by matching familiar objects to correct areas. For example, they use a street-map drawn on a carpet to place cars and people in correct locations. The quality of teaching is very good, and lessons are very well planned and organised. Literacy skills are promoted through the good teaching of vocabulary, so that pupils know how symbols and picture cards are used to represent objects.

104. By age 11, pupils have a greater awareness of their local environment. They draw simple maps of the school grounds, and extend their learning by looking at local housing. Well-planned lessons incorporate off-site visits, where the pupils are encouraged to compare bungalows, flats and houses. They explain the differences and the effect on the landscape. Numeracy skills are promoted as pupils calculate how many flats there are in a block and how many people live in the area. Relationships between the staff and pupils are very good, and pupils work hard. Effective sessions at the end of lessons encourage pupils to consolidate their knowledge and develop an awareness of their learning.

105. By age 14, there is evidence in pupils' work that they improve their mapping skills. For example, they progress from translating three-dimensional objects into two-dimensional representations in Year 7 to drawing local maps or planning a town or village by Year 9. They develop a greater awareness of world geography and know, for instance, where Egypt lies in relation to the African continent. They begin to look at climate and major rivers, such as the Nile, and this work is linked to history as they examine the ancient Egyptians.

106. By age 16, pupils examine the world's rain forests and the effects of deforestation on the flora and fauna. They use world maps to develop their knowledge of the continents, populations and climatic zones. Achievement noted both in lessons and in samples of previous work shows a fair understanding of the differences in dense and sparse populations of diverse geographical regions, and how physical catastrophes cause famine and death. They extend their local knowledge by making detailed local maps, complete with compass points, and use co-ordinates to identify map features. Directional skills are further encouraged in Year 11, where pupils work towards Silver and Bronze Awards in the Youth Award scheme.

## **HISTORY**

107. Achievement throughout the school has improved well since the last inspection. Pupils have made good progress by age seven. They know the difference between past and present artefacts and events. Most of them recognise and classify domestic articles and toys according to their age. They name articles well, for example a lantern and a calculator, and draw them clearly. Pupils also know items of equipment in and around the school, and understand how these are shown on a simple map. Pupils with autism recognise and remember well buildings, animals and play equipment that they see on their trip to the local park.

108. By the age 11, pupils, including those with autism, achieve well and make good progress. Their understanding of old and new and the passage of time develops well, for example when they study photographs of themselves as babies.

109. Achievement and progress are good by the age of 14. Pupils have a broad knowledge and understanding of some events of World War Two. In connection with this topic, they identify domestic items of the 1940s by comparing them with modern artefacts. Pupils with autism make progress on a par with their peers.

110. By the age of 16, pupils show that good progress has been continued, particularly in terms of their depth of understanding. They learn about settlements and how these come about historically. Good progress is therefore maintained as pupils move up through the whole school.

111. Pupils respond well in all lessons across the year groups. They listen well to their teachers, and show much interest in the subjects. The majority behave very well. Pupils with autism settle well and pay good attention in lessons. Almost all pupils respect property and classroom equipment.

112. Five lessons (including history and geography) were judged to be good, two very good and one satisfactory. Lessons are well planned and prepared. Teachers make very good use of pictures and word-processed work sheets, and either bring artefacts to school or use the immediate environment as an aid to learning. In all lessons, teachers emphasise the importance of the clear use of literacy and correct terms for objects and facts that relate especially to the two subjects. Teachers set good challenges for the pupils. They expect pupils to work hard and achieve well in their tasks. They use a variety of methods, including whole class instruction that includes revision of earlier work. In most lessons, pupils are given individual or group tasks, after which they come together to affirm what has been learned. Discipline is firm and fair, with good emphasis placed on encouraging pupils to take responsibility for their own learning. In almost every lesson, learning support assistants are given very clear directions; they show initiative very well and ensure that pupils, especially those with autism, get the most from lessons. Assessment of pupils' work is good.

113. Learning in all key stages is good. Pupils learn facts and develop their skills well, for example in using maps and symbols. Because lessons are made interesting and are well designed, almost all pupils think about what they are doing and work hard to produce a fair amount of work. As they move up the school, they acquire increasing independence in working habits and become more aware of their own strengths and weaknesses. Pupils with autism and those with particular sensory impairments learn well.

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

114. Pupils' achievement in ICT is satisfactory throughout the school. Overall, pupils make sound progress. Many made good progress in the lessons observed, but inconsistent delivery of ICT across subject areas slows pupils' progress over time. Pupils do not spend enough time on computers, and the school has a limited range of equipment and software, which has an impact on pupils' progress. Pupils with autism have specific planned lessons, and as a result they make good progress in lessons and over time. Their achievements are also good and compare favourably with those of their peers.

115. By age seven, most pupils understand a few simple instructions relating to the use of computers, such as press and drag, and some use the mouse and one or two switches. Pupils make lines, change colours and draw pictures with support. Higher attaining pupils independently play simple learning games on a computer using appropriate controls. Many pupils use ICT to support their reading and number skills.

116. By age 11, most pupils can use the mouse and the keyboard to write their weekend's news with words or symbols. Higher attaining pupils, using laptop computers, can enter their name, write short poems or text, and save and print their work with a minimum of assistance. Pupils know how to search for information. For example, to find a map of their home area, they use CD-ROM facilities and curriculum software. Lower achieving pupils learn to use the keyboard, listen to talking books, and practise basic word-processing techniques such as entering their own name. Pupils with autism understand switching and learn about simple control mechanisms to direct robots and programmable toys along a prescribed route.

117. By age 14, pupils use word-processing programs and work on spreadsheets. Some pupils have good keyboard skills, and most are reasonably confident in using the computer. They can load and save their work and make alterations to the text. They use ICT to present their work in a variety of forms, for example newspaper articles on the sinking of the Titanic. They make graphs, using data they have collected, to show results of experiments in science. Pupils talk about their work and explain what they are doing using the correct terms.

118. By the age of 16, pupils use ICT to combine different forms of information that they have collected and stored. Most have a sound understanding of spreadsheets, and higher attaining pupils can retrieve, save and delete records. When they have collected information suitable for putting into databases, they display the information on screen in a variety of forms. With support, they use CD-ROMs to find information and enhance their learning.

119. Information and communications technology is taught through the subject areas in the junior part of the school, except for autistic classes who have one specific lesson a week. Pupils in the senior part of the school also have one specific ICT lesson a week. Consistently good teaching was seen throughout the school in ICT, with one example of outstanding teaching in the junior autistic class. In the best lessons, teachers plan exciting and challenging work that motivates and extends pupils' learning, arouses their curiosity and enhances their self-confidence and self-esteem. In these lessons, teachers have very good strategies for managing behaviour and classroom organisation so pupils can work on their own or in groups in a calm but stimulating environment. Occasionally, a lack of resources or a failure of equipment hampers pupils' progress because teachers cannot provide higher levels of learning in the subject. This happened, for example, when higher attaining pupils in Year 11 tried to put together a holiday brochure and wanted to incorporate both scanned and digital images into their text. This was not possible because of faulty equipment.

120. Learning is good. The very good collaborative partnership between teachers and learning support assistants has a strong impact on pupils' learning. At all ages, pupils enjoy ICT and show pleasure and enjoyment when working with computers. They look forward to their lessons, co-operate well and learn from each other. They are proud of their printed work and are eager to learn. They understand what they have to do to succeed.

121. There has been satisfactory improvement in ICT since the last inspection due to developments in planning, effective and supportive co-ordination, and the extended range of external accreditation for pupils at 16. New policy documents and schemes of work are in place, but they need further development to link them coherently to assessment. Teachers are more confident in teaching ICT than at the time of the last inspection and this has had an impact on pupils' learning.

122. The school is now well placed to develop this area further, and extensive plans are in place for the development of a new computer suite. The SIP identifies areas for whole-school staff training and the need for an audit of the use of ICT in lessons. The school is now connected to the Internet. However, there have been technical difficulties with the installation of new hardware and software. This has limited its use, particularly in the senior

part of the school. The general lack of modern machines in working order and of up-to-date software restricts both the time pupils can spend on computers and the breadth of their experiences in ICT. Technical assistance in the maintenance and use of computers in school is available on a limited basis, and this could usefully be extended to ensure the more efficient use of equipment.

## **MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES**

### **FRENCH**

123. The school's provision for French fully meets requirements and is a strength of the curriculum. The very high quality of teaching ensures that the pupils make very good gains in their knowledge and understanding of French language, culture and customs. The previous inspection report found insufficient evidence to make judgements on the standard and quality of modern languages, though departmental documentation and assessment procedures were described as exemplary. These high standards have been maintained, and when linked with the very high quality of current teaching and learning, provision is now excellent overall.

124. Pupils study French between the ages of 11 - 16, and are entered for Certificate of Achievement examinations in their final year. Although pupils' achievements are below national expectations, they make very good and sometimes excellent progress in relation to their individual abilities.

125. The teacher's excellent knowledge of French, together with the imaginative and varied presentation of lessons, inspires the pupils with enthusiasm and interest in their learning. This is further encouraged through the very effective support given by the learning support assistant. Staff and pupils speak in French to each other throughout the sessions. Lessons are very well organised, balanced to include elements of speaking, listening, reading and writing, and are always fun. There are frequent competitions linked to French culture, and a particularly novel approach is the class graffiti wall. The pupils enjoy using this, writing or drawing annotated sketches in French.

126. By age 14, pupils have a sound grasp of basic vocabulary, and respond well to everyday directions to select the right page or give the day and date. They participate well in vocabulary games by raising the correct picture card in response to taped questions, which demonstrates their clear understanding of the spoken word and promotes their listening skills. Teachers use skilful question and answer sessions to reinforce and build on earlier learning, so that, by the end of Year 9, pupils say and write negative and positive responses using regular verbs such as 'detester' and 'aimer' when discussing their likes and dislikes. They participate in role-play exercises, reading together and working well in pairs or small groups.

127. By age 16, pupils improve their spoken French whilst working through their examination assignments. They extend their vocabulary, including, for example, everyday clothing and using textbooks for reference. Lower achieving pupils receive extra help, but all pupils are able to describe in French what they are wearing. Some higher achieving pupils also add the colours of their clothing, which shows retained knowledge. Certificates of Achievement are awarded after each completed and moderated task, and the pupils are delighted with their successes. Their oral



skills are further encouraged through annual residential visits to the College Jehan Le Povremoyne, in Northern France. This is reciprocated by French pupils each Easter, but between visits, the pupils of both schools correspond regularly via the post and by e-mail. This excellent arrangement, which strongly promotes pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development, attracts a high degree of coverage in the local newspapers of both countries for its excellence. In all lessons, pupils' individual education plans are used as working documents, and very good attention to catering for specific needs is included in lesson planning.

128. The pupils with autism make very good progress in developing their knowledge and understanding of France and its language. In some cases, autistic pupils are fully included within year group lessons, and their participation is such that it is difficult to identify their disability.

129. A committed and experienced French specialist manages the subject very well. Policy documentation and schemes of work are very good, and are regularly reviewed and evaluated. Long term planning is linked to the school improvement plan, while short-term schemes and lesson plans are informed through the continuous monitoring and assessment of pupils' achievements. Resources are generally good, with many original artefacts and texts. Teachers make good use of the Internet to support their resources, though current installation difficulties are restricting pupils' use of this facility. A lunchtime French club is popular with pupils of all years, and they play French computer games or board games that they have made themselves.

## **MUSIC**

130. Since the last inspection, standards of achievement have improved well, especially at Key Stage 4. Accommodation for the subject, however, has not improved and remains poor.

131. By the age of seven, pupils achieve very well and make very good progress in music. Almost all pupils can clap a steady beat along with a variety of rhythmic patterns, which the teacher plays on a drum. They coordinate hands and other body movements well in singing games, and read and play short, simple rhythm patterns from staff notation. They recognise and respond appropriately to a wide range of music. In one lesson, they listened to Handel's music for the Royal Fireworks and represented it very well in movement. Most pupils control untuned percussion instruments well, and recognise them successfully in a 'blindfold' game.

132. Achievement and progress by the age of 11 are also very good. At this stage, pupils read and play longer and slightly more complex rhythm patterns. They also acquire good social awareness in a game that involves passing a rhythm from one to another. They identify correctly Scottish folk music and jazz music, with some pupils naming the bagpipe, piano and double bass correctly. Pupils with autism achieve very well. These pupils read and play several short but moderately difficult rhythm patterns, and remember well an African song and dance learnt in earlier lessons.

133. By the age of 14, achievement and progress are very good. Pupils read, play and recognise rhythm patterns of moderate difficulty and acquire very good control on keyboards, untuned and tuned percussion. With these instruments, they understand semi-breve, minim and crotchet time values, which they use in a class composition to express alternately stormy and calm movements of

the ocean. At this stage, they are especially responsive to the expressive elements of music, both in their own compositions and towards professionally recorded pieces. Pupils with autism and sensory impairments achieve and make progress equally with their peers.

134. Pupils in Key Stage 4 develop excellent skills in performing and composing. In these particular activities, they produce pieces for the Certificate of Achievement examination that, whilst simple, compare very favourably with GCSE work, especially in terms of musical expression. Pupils cope very well with the technical language of music, which they use with confidence when learning, rehearsing and evaluating their pieces. These achievements represent excellent progress in lessons and very good progress over the whole time they have spent in school.

135. Pupils in all year groups respond very well to music. They often show great enjoyment and enthusiasm in their activities, much of which is the result of very good teaching. In almost all lessons, they behave very well and take good care of instruments and other equipment. As they move up the school, they take increasing responsibilities, for example helping to set out equipment and operate the CD player.

136. One lesson observed was excellent and the rest were very good. Lessons are very well prepared and planned, and always include interesting and relevant teaching aids, such as an African xylophone and pictures and maps, to illustrate topics connected with the lesson. Lessons proceed at a very brisk pace; every moment is used very well to teach not only the musical material but also essential elements of language and humanities. The teacher expects all pupils to learn. Lessons are very well structured. Often the material is challenging, but pupils are always allowed opportunities to experiment with sounds and rhythms. Control of behaviour is very good, often very well reinforced by learning support assistants. The teacher assesses pupils' contributions very effectively, and they also have regular opportunities to evaluate their own work.

137. The quality of learning is very good in all lessons. Very good planning ensures that pupils learn and practise musical skills well, understand how musical forms are created and acquire knowledge of rudiments and background facts about music. In all lessons, the teacher's energy and enthusiasm spreads to the pupils, with the result that lots of work is covered in lessons. In all lessons, pupils maintain a very good level of interest and concentration in the material. They move up the school with increasing self-control and independence in their learning. Pupils with autism and those with sensory impairments learn very well.

138. The subject is coordinated very well. Assessment is very good. Connections are made very well with other subjects, such as English. Pupils have very good opportunities to experience music outside lessons. They are regularly involved in workshops and festivals, often with mainstream peers. However, teaching and learning are disadvantaged by the lack of a specialist room. Much additional energy and time is wasted in moving to different rooms and setting up equipment there. Music is, however, a strength of the school. Many elements of the work are exemplary.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

139. Pupils' achievement is very good at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. It was not possible to observe lessons at Key Stage 4, as these took place on Friday afternoon, after the inspection had finished. Excellent records are kept of pupils' achievements and progress, and these show evidence of at least good and mostly very good achievement at Key Stage 4. In the lessons seen in other key stages, pupils demonstrated on occasion an excellent level of achievement through their interest and involvement, and the excellent physical effort they put in. They make very good progress, sustained by very good teaching in which expectations are appropriately high. Management of lessons is very good or excellent. Pupils with autism are included in lessons when they are judged to be ready. These lessons are managed sensitively and the very good teaching ensures that these pupils make similarly very good or excellent progress. Most pupils look forward to the challenge of physical education activities, and their very good behaviour enables all pupils to enjoy and concentrate on the planned activities.

140. By age seven, pupils put a lot of physical effort into the activities, and make very good progress in developing their sending and receiving ball skills. Higher attaining pupils are able to roll or bounce the ball accurately to their partners, and are able to stop it, without support. They can swing a bat correctly and send the ball towards their partner from a post. Lower attaining pupils lack the co-ordination to stand correctly or swing their arm accurately to connect with the ball. Pupils generally travel appropriately across equipment in a variety of ways, including balancing, rolling and climbing.

141. By age 11, pupils know the basic rules of football, but do not make strategic use of space in controlling and passing the ball. Lower attaining pupils lose control of the ball when dribbling and wander off the line of attack. All pupils show a good control of the basketball, moving whilst they bounce and dribble past their partners. Higher attaining pupils are able to pass the ball firmly and accurately to their partner.

142. By age 14, pupils have made very good progress and show agility on the basketball court, using the rules of the game effectively. Higher attaining pupils can shoot a basket accurately from a standing position. Pupils improve their swimming skills through very good coaching from teachers and a professional instructor. Higher attaining pupils have passed the Amateur Swimming Association Grade 2 Swimming Certificate, and most are working on more advanced swimming and lifesaving skills. In one lesson, a pupil swam about half a mile for a distance award, and another managed to swim five metres under water.

143. The quality of teaching is very good, and it is often excellent for swimming lessons and with autistic pupils. In all lessons, the support of learning assistants and supporting teachers is particularly effective, which makes a very good contribution to the pupils' progress. Lesson planning and preparation are always very good, with well-sequenced activities and appropriate warm up and warm down activities. The health and safety of pupils are given due emphasis in planning. Swimming lessons, where time is short and numbers are high, are particularly well managed. Teachers and support assistants work hard to ensure that all pupils participate in learning so as to

consolidate their skills at an appropriate level. They are positive in encouraging pupils and recording individual progress through the lesson.

144. Learning is very good. The rules of games are learned through targeted activities, and pupils apply them appropriately in the team games they play. Pupils understand the rules and skills involved, and their knowledge is reinforced in whole class discussions. They know about use of tactics and can evaluate their own performance. Many willingly demonstrate their skills to others in the class. Pupils know they are to come to lessons in appropriate kit. They expect to tidy up and return equipment after use, and do so willingly. Some pupils accept responsibility as team captains.

145. The subject benefits from excellent leadership and management across both primary and secondary phases. Good use is made of a digital video to analyse the quality of pupils' movements in some of the lessons. The sports hall is used as a dining and assembly room; the pressure on storage space makes it unsatisfactory for use by older pupils. The resulting clutter presents a potential hazard for younger pupils engaged in physical activities, and so restricts the range and extent of activities that can be undertaken. Changing facilities are unsatisfactory, and result in either boys or girls changing in their classroom. The small sports field is used well, and very good use is made of off-site leisure centres for older pupils. Pupils participate in a wide range of competitive events with other schools, and have held their own version of the Olympic Games as a cross-curricular event led by the English department.

146. The department has made a very good improvement since the last inspection in the quality of teaching and learning, the progress made by pupils and their behaviour in lessons.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

147. Achievement for all pupils, across the key stages, is good. Pupils, including those with additional special educational needs and pupils with autism, make good progress through Key Stages 1, 2, and 3. They make satisfactory progress at Key Stage 4, where they are working towards accreditation through a Certificate of Achievement.

148. By the age seven, pupils understand the concept of sharing. They talk about their families. Pupils with autism know that harvest time is a time for saying thank you. Higher ability autistic pupils offer food to others in the group, whilst a pupil with communication difficulties asks for 'chocolate' using the picture exchange card (PECs) system.

149. By age 11, pupils know that festivals are celebrated with special foods in different world religions, such as Chinese New Year, Hanukkah, and Diwali. Fourteen-year-olds write a class prayer: 'Dear father God, thank you for our food because it's yummy, When we don't have food, we will die. When we do have food we stay alive. You need food to make you healthy. Thank you for the farmers who grow our food. Amen'.

150. Pupils know the importance of pilgrimages in world religions. They know from watching video film evidence that people still go on pilgrimages today. By age 16, pupils are able to empathise with the emotions of the father in the New Testament story of *The Lost Son*, and suggest

that the son, 'was being greedy'. They are beginning to have some understanding of symbolism, such as the five pillars in Islamic prayer mats.

151. The teaching of religious education is good overall at Key Stages 1 to 3, with some examples of very good teaching in Key Stages 2 and 3. Teaching at Key Stage 4 is satisfactory. Key features of good teaching are, good planning for different abilities, including support for pupils with additional special needs as well as extension for the more able pupils. Planning is linked to pupils' individual education plan (IEP) targets. Learning support assistants are deployed effectively, and help pupils to make good progress through opportunities to develop skills in speaking, listening, reading and writing. When teaching is very good, teachers are skilful in their questioning. They adapt their questions so that the lower achieving pupils, including pupils with special educational needs and those with autism, have opportunities to answer or join in at the level of which they are capable. In the infant autistic class, teaching and learning in this subject is combined with counting songs, which help seven-year-olds to focus their attention. In the main school, teachers ask higher achievers open questions and give pupils time to reflect and answer fully, showing that they are listening and interested in the subject.

152. By contrast, where teaching is less successful, teachers give too much information. Their questions do not allow pupils to think, so that they remain passive and answer very briefly in one or two words. Pupils are less engaged in their learning and their ideas are limited when the teacher uses insufficient resources to help pupils' understanding, or misses opportunities for role-play.

153. Assessment is satisfactory, and there are good examples of pupils assessing their own learning at the end of topics. There are good opportunities to visit places of worship for Christian and other religions, and there are visitors to the school. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) is also improving and is now satisfactory.

154. Since the last inspection, there has been good improvement in religious education. The joint leadership of the two co-ordinators promotes continuity through the key stages. The scheme of work is of good quality, with good emphasis on world religions. The syllabus is being re-appraised to ensure that it is in line with Curriculum 2000. It has been adjusted to meet the requirements of the new locally agreed syllabus, and elements from the QCA scheme of work have been introduced appropriately. At Key Stage 4, there is accreditation through the Welsh Joint Education Committee (WJEC) Certificate of Education syllabus.