

# INSPECTION REPORT

## MILESTONE SCHOOL

New Ash Green

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 119061

Headteacher: Eileen Flanagan

Reporting inspector: George Derby  
25349

Dates of inspection: 9<sup>th</sup> – 13<sup>th</sup> October 2000

Inspection number: 253697

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## INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community special
Age range of pupils:	2 - 19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Ash Road New Ash Green Kent
Postcode:	DA3 8JZ
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs Theresa Davis
Date of previous inspection:	May 1996

## INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members		Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
George Derby 25349	<i>Registered inspector</i>	Information technology.	What sort of school is it? What should the school do to improve further? The pupil's results and achievements; How well are students taught?
Roger Williams 9895	<i>Lay inspector</i>		Pupils attitudes, values and personal development; How well does the school care for its students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? Integration.
Sue Lewis 10099	<i>Team inspector</i>	Under fives; Equal opportunities; Modern foreign languages; Music.	Special educational needs.
Lily Evans 23300	<i>Team inspector</i>	Mathematics.	Post 16.
Sue Slocombe 15590	<i>Team inspector</i>	Science; Personal and social education.	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to students?
Robert Franks 25340	<i>Team inspector</i>	English; Art; English as a foreign language.	How well is the school led and managed?
Andrew Hodge 18850	<i>Team inspector</i>	Design and technology; Religious education.	
Johnny Morris 23696	<i>Team inspector</i>	Geography; History; Physical education.	

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

### **INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL**

Milestone School is a mixed day school for pupils aged two to nineteen with a very wide and complex range of special educational needs, including those with severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD), multiple disability and visual impairment (MDVI) and autism. The school re-located from Dartford to New Ash Green in 1999 and since the last inspection has increased its roll. It now admits 140 full-time-equivalent pupils. The school's inclusion policy means that all pupils are included in all classes. Teams of staff have been set up to support the inclusion of the various groups and the number of support staff, to support such pupils has doubled in recent years. The school's nursery, which admits full and part-time pupils under the age of five, is located ten minutes away from the main school.

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

Milestone is a good, effective and inclusive school that cares very well for its pupils and gives good value for money. Its provision for pupils with complex needs and the support they receive from the school's specialist teams and pupil support staff is very good; this enables these pupils to make good progress overall and often very good progress. The school's positive approach to supporting pupils' communication skills means that their speaking, signing, symbol and listening skills develop very well over the time they are in the school. Overall, because of the teachers' high expectations all pupils achieve well and this is particularly the case in the Foundation Stage where their achievements are very good. The quality of teaching has markedly improved since the last inspection; it is now good overall, with some very good features. The school is very well led. Largely as a result of the headteacher's efforts, the school's accommodation is now very good and specialist subject facilities extensive.

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

- The way all pupils are included in lessons and the very good teaching and support for pupils with complex needs.
- Pupils' relationships with one another and staff are excellent. They are very caring of, and considerate to, each other. They have positive attitudes to their work and are always very interested in what they do in lessons. Their personal development is very good because it is well supported throughout the school.
- The provision in the nursery and reception classes is very strong;
- Pupils' achievements in music are very good. Music pervades the whole life of the school and makes a very good contribution to pupils' broader speaking, listening, communicative and personal development.
- The school's finances are managed very well and funding is well targeted to improve provision and what pupils learn.
- Pupils' individual targets are of good quality and they make very good progress towards these.
- The school has an excellent commitment to improvement.

## WHAT COULD BE IMPROVED

- The school's monitoring and evaluation of what it does, and where it needs to improve.
- How subjects are allocated time, so that there is better balance within the curriculum and within subjects and that there is enough time for learning in Key Stage 2 and for geography and history across the school.
- The school's long and medium-term curriculum planning, so that this focuses more on the progression of skills, knowledge and understanding within the subject. The short-term planning so that it clearly and consistently states what pupils (including individuals and different groups) will learn, incorporates pupils' individual targets, reviews what pupils have actually learned and how well the lesson went.
- Pupils' writing (by hand, using electronic means, using symbols or traditional text) across the curriculum for a range of purposes.
- Provision of opportunities for pupils to learn outside lesson times through activities and clubs.

*The areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the appropriate authority.*

## HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has made good improvement since it was last inspected in May 1996. The quality of provision has been improved and standards have risen at Key Stages 1 and 2. Pupils now make good progress overall in these key stages, whereas previously this was very variable and unsatisfactory in English and physical education. In English progress is now satisfactory and in physical education it is good. The curriculum fully complies with National Curriculum requirements and French is now taught in Key Stages 3 and 4. Schemes of work are in place but these mostly provide only a very broad framework for planning and pupils' learning is based largely on individual or medium-term targets. Planning has improved and science and information and communications technology (ICT) (only very recently introduced). The school has put monitoring procedures in place but the quality and regularity of these varies between teachers, and evaluation needs to be sharper and more perceptive. Significant improvement has been made with regard to the accommodation and the way the school has provided for pupils with more complex needs is very good.



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

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

Pupils' achieve well overall, particularly, in relation their personal targets and as a result of strong teaching. Achievement for pupils of five years and under is very good. It is good overall for pupils aged five to nineteen. Achievement could be even better if the school's planning and recording, in relation to subject programmes of study and intended outcomes were of a similar high quality. Achievement in English and mathematics is satisfactory overall and it is good in science. Pupils make limited progress, however, in geography and history, mainly because there is not enough time for pupils to study these subjects. In design and technology and ICT pupils' achievements are satisfactory but in all other subjects they are good. The school is working hard to identify and set itself meaningful targets to raise achievement but current targets need clearer success criteria and more rigorous evaluation to be effective.

## PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

<b>Aspect</b>	<b>Comment</b>
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils sustain their concentration remarkably well and they often maintain their interest in an activity right to the end of the lesson.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. On rare occasions, some pupils do exhibit challenging behaviour but are dealt with in a sensitive but firm way by staff.
Personal development and relationships	The way pupils are encouraged to use their initiative and develop personally is very good; relationships between pupils are excellent.
Attendance	Satisfactory in relation to similar schools but under 95 per cent.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is good overall and has many very good features at every key stage. This is a very good improvement since the last inspection when 22 per cent of the teaching was unsatisfactory. Ninety six per cent of teaching is now satisfactory or better, 70 per cent good or better and 31 per cent very good or excellent. In just under five per cent of lessons seen teaching was excellent; it was stimulating, extremely well matched to the pupils' needs and abilities and enabled them to make excellent progress. In just under four per cent of the lessons the teaching was unsatisfactory; teachers paid far too much attention to pupils' completion of activities rather than to the learning outcomes intended. Teaching and learning in the Foundation Stage is very good and has some excellent features. The teaching of music is also very good and addresses the needs of all pupils very well. The teaching of English (including literacy) is good; all staff work hard to improve individual reading, writing and oracy skills. However, very occasionally whole class introductions are too long for all the pupils within the group. The teaching of mathematics (including numeracy) is satisfactory and strongest in Key Stages 1 and 2. The teaching of mental mathematics at the start of lessons is good in some classes, where the emphasis is on counting, singing number rhymes and fun with numbers. In introductory sessions some pupils wait too long for their turn and are less involved in the lesson. The teaching of science and personal, social and health education (PSHE) is good and makes a really good impact towards developing pupils' independence in learning. All staff (teachers and support assistants) manage pupils expertly and work extremely closely together as a staff team in all subjects. The high quality support staff prepare themselves well for lessons, intuitively respond to the pupils' needs and some assess and record pupils' responses perceptively.

## OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall but good for pupils five years and under. Over the whole school a good range of relevant learning opportunities interest and challenge pupils well. Provision for PSHE and the way the school meets all pupils' needs is very good. However, the imbalances in the timetable limit pupils' opportunity to learn as effectively as they could. Taught time is short in Key Stage 2. Planning to develop pupils' understandings and skills in subjects is less strong than the school's planning for meeting individual needs.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Very good opportunities for social and moral understandings and good for spiritual and cultural development. Pupils are helped to reflect, for instance, on their day. They are taught right from wrong. Good behaviour is positively rewarded by adults, who are very good role models. Pupils are encouraged to work together co-operatively. Lessons contribute to pupils' cultural knowledge and understanding but opportunities are sometimes missed.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Pupils are well supported in their mother tongue as well as English. The school works well with the designated specialist to support families and children.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. All pupils' needs are fully catered for by the school and pupils are very well protected from harm. Monitoring and promotion of pupils' academic performance is sound and for their personal development it is very good. There are good procedures for assessing pupils and staff make satisfactory use of assessment information to guide their planning.

Parents value the school and the positive effect it has on their children. The school's links with its parents are satisfactory. The majority of pupils rely on official transport to travel to and from school; this affects parents' opportunities for informal visits. The school compensates for this by frequent use of the telephone, home visits and daily contact books. Contact is especially good in the nursery, where the majority of parents collect their children. The school has maintained its positive links with parents despite its relocation.

## HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher's leadership is very strong; she has worked tirelessly towards providing a newly constituted, high performing staff team, and Milestone now successfully includes pupils of all its disability groups in lessons. The school fulfils its aims very well.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Good. Governors fulfil their statutory obligations well. The chair is very perceptive and has a good view of the school's strengths and weaknesses. Governors are highly committed to the school, well informed, and monitor various aspects of school life.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. The school has worked hard to develop its monitoring and evaluation procedures, although these are insufficiently rigorous to actually evaluate what it needs to do better. Performance targets have been set for individuals and groups but have not always been sufficiently analysed. However, the school is a reflective organisation which strives for improvement.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. The headteacher and governors have very firm control over planning the budget, and ensuring that money is effectively targeted to areas of need. Proposed spending within focused plans is appropriately detailed in the school development plan. However, ways for the school to assess the effect of its spending on pupils' achievements are not fully developed.

Significant improvement has been made to the school's staffing. The high number of support staff, and their quality, enables all pupils are able to be included in lessons. Accommodation is very good and there are many good quality specialist facilities. There is a good level of learning resources. The principles of best value are soundly applied.

## PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What most parents like about the school	What some parents are not happy about
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The leadership of the headteacher;</li> <li>• It is easy to approach with a question or a problem;</li> <li>• The teaching of music;</li> <li>• Pupils' personal development and independence;</li> <li>• Children like coming to school.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of homework;</li> <li>• Provision of interesting activities out of lesson time.</li> </ul>

Inspectors' judgements support parents' positive views of the school. The school's leadership is very strong. The teaching of music is very good. The school focuses on pupils' conduct and behaviour very successfully, and is committed to improving their personal development. The school could do more to rationalise its homework policy and clarify this for parents. There is scope to deliver some extra-curricular activities to widen pupils' horizons.

## **PART B: COMMENTARY**

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

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

##### **Pupils' achievement across the school**

1. *The characteristics of the pupils for whom the school caters make it inappropriate to judge their attainment against age-related national expectations or averages. The report does, however, give examples of what pupils know, understand, and can do at the end of key stages. Judgements about progress and reference to attainment take account of information contained in pupils' statements and annual reviews. References to higher and lower attaining pupils and those with additional needs are made within the context of the school's population.*

2. Pupil achieve well overall. Their achievements are very good in the Foundation Stage and particularly so in the Reception class where the work is very carefully planned and very well taught. The Foundation stage has been strengthened by further refinement of the planning and school's own and local education authority's baseline assessment and this has had positive effect on what pupils' achieve. Their achievements are strongest in language and literacy where they are very good overall and sometimes excellent. All staff have very effective ways of extending and supporting children's attempts to communicate and provide a supportive environment where every child's utterances are acknowledged, valued and listened to with respect. Similarly strong is personal and social development where pupils make very good progress because they are encouraged to make simple choices and are given careful support for their social and health needs. They learn to take turns, listen to each other and adults and demonstrate increasing self-awareness and a greater awareness of others. Children in the Foundation stage who have additional special educational needs make very good progress, particularly in their relationships with others and in aspects of their communication and personal and social education. This is because the very close liaison between the school's specialist MDVI and autism co-ordinators, other therapists and the nursery and reception staff.

3. Pupils with additional needs such as PMLD, MDVI and autism also achieve well because of the school's strong commitment to ensuring that these pupils are well included in lessons and that work is specifically planned for their particular needs. Staff have high levels of expertise in teaching, managing and caring for such pupils and staff's training has certainly paid off; it has resulted in a significantly improved quality of education and improved standards for such pupils. For instance, in French MDVI pupils achieved extremely well because of the teacher's highly creative, sensory approach as well as the use of electronic communicators which motivated pupils extremely well. In music the teacher very carefully ensures that all pupils, but specifically autistic pupils, are aware of the next section of the lesson by the judicious use of symbols. This enables them to put all their effort into listening and responding thus helping them to achieve very well.

4. In Key Stages 1, 2, 3, and 4 and Post 16, pupils' achievements are good. Teachers set specific targets informed by a range of information, including the school's own assessment data and National Curriculum programmes of study, to determine what pupils should learn next. Pupils' achievements could be better if the school's planning and recording was more closely related to the programmes of study, the balance between and within subjects improved at Key Stages 1 and 2, and if the time available to study subjects at Key Stage 2 was longer.

5. In Post 16 students achieve well. Some arrive from other establishments and bring with them different experiences and difficulties. All make significant progress and leave with a good range of accreditation. They gain awards through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) Challenge (for example, *Sport and Leisure*, and *World of Work*) and through the Youth Award Scheme (for example in *Starting Out*). They reach their potential in personal and social development, leaving school with skills which strongly support their inclusion in society. Their progress is very good and well supported through a wide range of vocational, college, community and residential experiences. They make good gains in their social competency; their ability to order food in a restaurant; helping others; asking appropriate questions; and generally conversing on a social level while demonstrating good social behaviour.

### **Pupils' achievement in subjects**

6. Pupils' achievements in English are satisfactory overall but in speaking and listening they are very good. In drama they are good. In reading and writing the pupils' achievements are satisfactory. Writing for different purposes and in different forms is under-developed across the school and opportunities for developing handwriting, including the use of ICT for producing written work using traditional text or symbols, are similarly limited. Pupils' achievements in extended writing are limited because of this. Pupils make very good progress towards their literacy targets in their individual education plans. However, the English curriculum is narrow in certain areas and there is an inadequate balance between the elements that make up the subject, restricting pupils' overall achievement. Although the school has started to plan lessons based on the National Literacy Strategy and although the provision is satisfactory overall, not all aspects of the literacy framework are being systematically addressed by every teacher.

7. In mathematics pupils' achievements (including numeracy) are satisfactory. They are strongest in Key Stage 2, where they are good. The numeracy strategy has been in place now for one year and the increased times and better teaching within this have raised standards. The numeracy strategy has only just been introduced into Key Stage 3 and it has not yet had enough time to have an impact on pupils' standards in mathematics. Mental mathematics at the start of lessons is good in some classes, where the emphasis is on counting, singing number rhymes and fun with numbers. It has the positive effect of sharpening pupils' thinking skills. However, this needs to be extended consistently throughout the school for it to have an overall beneficial effect.

8. Pupils achieve well in science; in Key Stages 1 and 2 their progress is good and it is very good in Key Stages 3 and 4. The high quality of specialist teaching in the secondary part of the school and the way the curriculum is planned, using material adapted from a well-planned and progressive scheme of work, enable pupils to make the best possible progress. Pupils build well on knowledge and skills learned previously. They use scientific terms appropriately. Good quality and well-planned practical work helps pupils understand what they are learning.

9. In ICT, pupils make satisfactory progress during their time in the school because of the high level of support for, and focus on, individuals and their targets. A very new published scheme of work, appropriate to the needs and abilities of the school's population, has been introduced but has not yet made an impact on pupils' attainment. This should provide an extended range of learning opportunities in the subject. All pupils, including those with visual and physical impairments have appropriate access to the curriculum and a communication team has

been formed to assess pupils' communication needs and to provide appropriate technology for them. The lack of challenge for higher-attaining pupils, largely as a result of the way the school approach learning in ICT, should improve as teachers gain more confidence in the subject, through the new approach to planning and as a result of the impending training programme for teachers to be provided by the New Opportunities Fund.

10. Music is a significant strength throughout the school and pupils' achievements are very good. Learning in this subject also makes a very good contribution to pupils' communication skills and their ability to listen. In conjunction with dance and drama it supports their self-confidence, creativity, and awareness of self and others. Songs used in class routines in other lessons calm and involve pupils and keep pupils with the most complex difficulties aware of the next steps in a lesson and the next activity they are to do.

11. Good progress and achievement by pupils in personal, social and health education are a result of the high priority the school gives to the subject, the large amount of time allocated to it and also the way in which aspects of personal and social development are promoted through other lessons, as well as being taught separately.

12. Improvements to the accommodation, curriculum planning and good teaching have all contributed to good achievement in physical education. In religious education, pupils achieve well because of the good quality schemes of work, based on the local education authority's local agreed syllabus, improved teachers' knowledge of how to teach the subject and the enthusiasm of the co-ordinator in developing the subject.

13. In art pupils' achievements are sound. They make good progress in aspects such as 'investigating' and 'exploring' and although their progress in evaluating and understanding their own work and the work of other artists is satisfactory, strengths only just outweigh weaknesses. Pupils make good progress and achieve well in design and technology. Skills in food preparation and in 'making' develop well. Design skills are less well developed with few opportunities to practice them. Pupils show great determination to complete the challenges in making items and products and always work with great care. In French, pupils make satisfactory progress and for those pupils with autism, PMLD and MDVI it is very good. The highly creative and sensory approach used, including the way in which electronic communication aids enable to pupils to make contributions, motivates them and helps them learn very effectively.

14. Although the school has put a great deal of effort into planning in humanities (there was no such planning at the time of the last inspection), pupils' achievements in history and geography are unsatisfactory because there is not enough time to study the subjects.

### **The school's targets for raising achievement**

15. The school has a high commitment to raising standards. It sets targets for raising achievement in literacy, numeracy, ICT and PSHE. Staff and the headteacher have worked hard at developing a system based on *the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) differentiated performance criteria* to measure pupils' progress and to provide a measure of pupils' achievement as a result of target setting. It has become clear that the system is too complex and time-consuming and that clearer targets need to be set with specific criteria for success.

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

16. Pupils' attitudes, behaviour and personal development are very good, and this represents a significant improvement compared to the last inspection. Attendance at the school is satisfactory, overall, and this has also improved since the previous inspection. It is now in line with that of similar schools and there is no unauthorised absence. Parents are pleased with their children's behaviour and some parents remarked on how much their children's behaviour and confidence have improved since attending the school.

17. Pupils like coming to school, and this is reflected in levels of attendance. Where there is absence, it is mainly for medical reasons. There is no unauthorised absence. When pupils are late, this is usually due to traffic difficulties affecting school transport. Pupils' concentration in lessons is often remarkable, and they usually maintain their interest in an activity right to the end of the lesson, despite any distractions due to the occasional inappropriate behaviour or long lessons. This is especially evident when teaching is good or better. During a visit to Bore Place, an environmental studies centre where pupils carry out work-related studies and work experience, Year 10 pupils paid attention for well over an hour during a lesson on the harvest, which included making a harvest loaf. Pupils were very pleased with their efforts, and to have contributed to what will be the centrepiece for the school's harvest festival celebration.

18. The school has put a great deal of effort into improving pupils' behaviour and all staff have received substantial training in managing behaviour positively. The inability of some staff to manage pupils' behaviour was remarked upon in the last inspection report and this has now improved markedly. As a result of substantial training, behaviour management has improved markedly since the last report. The school's behaviour policy is carried out consistently and has led to a significant improvement in pupils' ability to exercise self-control and to relate to others. This is particularly the case for those pupils who do at times show more challenging behaviour. Teachers and classroom staff have high expectations of pupils' behaviour, and any misbehaviour is quickly and suitably dealt with in a positive and professional manner. There is no evidence of any bullying at the school and there are suitable procedures in place to deal with it, should it occur. The school does not exclude pupils as a matter of policy.

19. Pupils respond very well to adults, and, especially, to each other. Relationships between pupils and with staff are excellent. During the inspection, they were courteous to visitors, held open doors, and introduced themselves politely. They get on particularly well together and co-operate and help each other. Their attitude to others with particular difficulties such as severe communication difficulties or who are visually impaired is very positive, and they do all they can to help their fellow pupils, who are confined to wheelchairs, to experience as much as possible. For example, in a Year 9 class, a pupil sang "how do you do?" directly to another pupil, while standing in front of him, in order to include him, during a personal, social and health education lesson, and all the other pupils sang along with her, to mutual enjoyment.

20. The school is very successful at supporting pupils' personal development and this has improved since the last inspection. Pupils in all year groups have opportunities to take on responsibility, ranging from returning the attendance register and tidying up after themselves to setting out the secondary dining room and looking after younger pupils, when they are in senior school. Their self-help skills are systematically supported in changing times for physical education, in meal and snack times and they are expected to increasingly organise themselves for, and during, lessons. In the nursery class, they make simple choices about activities they want to do and snacks they wish to have. By the time they leave, they are well-informed individuals, able to understand and discuss, in a simple way, issues relating to their personal development, in the context of being a member of a society beyond school. Nurturing and developing pupils' independence and confidence is a significant strength of the school, and



pupils are trusted to behave responsibly. In a science lesson in Year 8, for example, pupils were trusted to light their Bunsen burners and adjust them to get an orange flame. The success of the school's efforts is evident in the increased maturity and confidence of pupils in the senior school. They present and read out their own poetry at assembly, decide on purchasing equipment for their common room at their school council meeting, and behave maturely and responsibly in a variety of work-experience placements.

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

### **The quality of teaching in key stages and across the school**

21. The quality of the teaching is good overall and has positive effect on pupils' learning and the progress they make. It is good at every key stage and in the Post 16 department. Much of the teaching has very good features. The teaching is particularly strong in the Foundation Stage where it is very good overall and has some excellent features; in the Reception class in over sixty percent of lessons the teaching is very good or excellent. The quality of the teamwork in Post 16 is of a high order; staff are very sensitive to the complex needs of pupils and students' learning experiences very relevant. Work is well matched to their needs and there are many opportunities for teachers to check and review pupils' learning. Occasionally, there is an insufficient range of resources to interest and involve those students with more complex needs and planning does not always identify what the students are to learn.

22. Ninety six per cent of the teaching is satisfactory or better and this represents a considerable improvement since the last inspection when the teaching in 22 per cent of lessons was less than satisfactory. The headteacher has been proactive in identifying weak teaching and in making clear what the expectations for teaching are, through monitoring and setting personal targets for teachers. Measures have been taken to rectify the causes of weak teaching and effective support is given to any teachers having difficulty. Seventy per cent of the teaching is now good or better and 31 per cent very good or excellent. In just under 5 per cent of lessons seen teaching was excellent; it was stimulating, extremely well matched to the pupils' needs and abilities and enabled them to make excellent progress. However, there is still some unsatisfactory teaching. Where this occurs, too much attention is paid to pupils completing activities rather than the teacher focussing on the actual learning outcomes intended.

23. Teachers have very good relationships with pupils and use these to good effect to manage the pupils in their classes very well. Pupils respond very positively and try their hardest to meet the high expectations teachers have of their behaviour. Pupils with most complex needs are handled sensitively and the very small number with challenging behaviour are managed positively, so that they gain the most from the learning opportunities on offer. On rare occasions, some less experienced teachers find some pupils' immature behaviour difficult to deal with and this affects the learning of others. This is not helped, however, when the work set for these pupils does not sufficiently involve them or they have to wait too long to take part in the activity.

24. Support staff are a considerable asset to the school. They respond intuitively to the needs of the pupils and anticipate well what needs to be done with particular pupils and in class activity. They are well informed in terms of the teachers' planning and deployed well, undertaking well-planned and matched work with pupils with PMLD and MDVI.

25. Teachers and support assistants know their pupils well, particularly in the Foundation Stage. They're awareness of the pupils' personal circumstances is good and they are particularly adept at knowing how to physically support pupils who need special apparatus, such as standers or special chairs, and in physically moving them from one position to another. Staff understand the needs of pupils with autism very well. They ensure that all pupils are clear about what they are to learn and do and that they are well informed, using well-established symbol sequences, about the next activity in the lesson or the next lesson that is to occur. This minimises any anxiety pupils may have and ensures a smooth progression through lessons and the school day. Those pupils with MDVI are very well supported, mainly because of the very good knowledge all staff have of their needs and the way classroom experiences for the majority are translated into meaningful activities for these pupils, which helps them learn effectively. The equipment is very well chosen to help them learn, and includes material which is tactile or visually highly stimulating, as well as switches which have voice output, which are used for pupils to indicate choice and involvement.

26. The quality of teachers' day-to-day assessment and how they use this in subsequent planning is satisfactory. In general, teachers evaluate their lessons well, although they sometimes miss opportunities during lessons to review pupils' learning and establish what needs to be extended or reinforced. This is particularly important when, as is often the case, teachers do not leave enough time for evaluation at the end of the lesson. This is particularly the case at end of lessons where there is often little time left or set aside for this. There are good examples where teachers ask probing and searching questions and use the responses that pupils give to inform planning.

27. Homework is provided throughout the school, although its use is inconsistent. In the Foundation Stage in particular, teachers involve parents in their children's learning by using the contact book to suggest activities and by providing material. In the rest of the school the setting and use of homework is inconsistent, for instance, the way the school involves parents in supporting reading is inconsistent, and this often means that parents are unsure about what they can best do on a day-to-day basis to support their child's learning. A large proportion of parents expressed concern about the lack of homework through the inspection questionnaire and the pre-inspection parents' meeting, although others believed that homework would be inappropriate, given the length of time that pupils spend travelling to and from school. The school needs to develop a clear policy about the nature and systematic provision of homework, based on parents' views, what pupils need to learn in subjects and the needs of the pupils in general.

### **The features of teaching in subjects**

28. The quality of teaching in English (including literacy) is good and is strongest in Key Stage 1. The focus on pupils' individual reading is strong and staff work hard to improve pupils' reading, writing and speaking and listening skills. The way the teachers praise and celebrate pupils' achievement has a really positive effect on their response in lessons; it spurs them on to try harder, and increases their time working independently and in groups. Teachers and support assistants use a wide range of sensory resources to ensure that the activities are well matched to the wide range of needs within each class and lessons are planned in fine detail. Occasionally, introductions and conclusions during literacy sessions are too brief and this limits pupils' understanding of what is expected of them and leaves little time for the teacher to review what pupils have learned. Weak planning and activities which relate little to English, are the features of unsatisfactory teaching.

29. In mathematics (including numeracy) the quality of teaching is satisfactory. Teachers' expectations of what pupils should do and learn are high and the work challenges all pupils well.

Lessons are effectively structured and each part well balanced. All pupils are busy and involved, carrying out mathematical activities relevant to their needs and abilities. Some teachers set up role play activities to help pupils understand better what they are learning and to help them use their developing number skills. Mental work in numeracy is helping pupils gain a better grasp of number ideas and a wide variety of activities and the quick pace to the lesson is developing pupils counting skills well. Sometimes the starts of lessons are not crisp enough and pupils have to wait turns unnecessarily. The school's response to the numeracy strategy in Key Stages 3 and 4 has not led to any changes to the lesson structure and a wider variety of different work is not yet covered within lessons.

30. Science teaching is good in Key Stages 1 and 2 and very good in Key Stages 3 and 4. Teachers motivate pupils through practical activities and experimental work, in particular, motivate pupils and pupils' personal development is well promoted through teachers giving pupils to carry out work for themselves, such as in learning how to light a Bunsen burner in Key Stage 3. Clear learning objectives in Key Stages 1 and 2 are not always clearly identified in planning and pupils not always clearly what they are expected to learn. Teaching is strongest in Key Stages 3 and 4, where the science co-ordinator teaches the subject and the National Curriculum programme of study is well understood and planned for effectively during lessons. Work is broken down into very small steps and very well explained to pupils, the teacher taking great care that pupils have clearly understood what they are to do and learn.

31. Information and communication technology is taught through other subjects. Support assistants often teach pupils the skills from very clear targets devised by the class teacher. The quality of this is satisfactory and the staff's knowledge of how to use a computer and teach the skills has improved since the last inspection. Occasionally, because of staff's lack of knowledge of the wide range of software available, there are opportunities missed to promote pupils' ICT capability and to support learning in other subjects.

32. The quality of teaching in music is very good overall. Specialist teachers' musical talents, enthusiasm for helping pupils to learn music, and very carefully measured pace allows pupils to consolidate previous learning and build upon it and make very good progress. Teaching in the drama, gymnastics, games and swimming parts of physical education is consistently good. Specialist teachers' expertise, supported by their good use of signs and symbols, makes it clear what pupils are to do and learn. Pupils are able to contribute to discussions about what they are doing but are rarely able to review what they have learned; this results in some missed opportunities for pupils to learn from the quality of their performance. Design and technology is taught well. Demonstrations by teachers help pupils understand what they are to do and learn. There is, however, little evaluation of pupils' work, either by the teacher or by the pupils themselves. The teaching of history was good but not enough teaching of geography was seen to make a judgement. The quality of teaching and learning in religious education is good and imaginative use of resources help what pupils are learning relevant for them.

33. The teaching in art is satisfactory overall. Good attention is given to the individual needs of pupils and particularly to the matching of the equipment they need to take part in the lesson. However, some teaching is too directive and limits pupils' creativity. The teaching of French is generally satisfactory. In one lesson seen for pupils with the most complex needs, the teaching was excellent because of the way all pupils were involved and the way which staff used a sensory approach to pupils' learning.

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

### **The quality and range of opportunities for learning**

34. The quality and range of learning opportunities provided in the school are satisfactory overall, as is the breadth, balance and relevance of the whole curriculum. The curriculum for children in the Foundation Stage provides them with a good preparation for Key Stage 1. The curriculum provides pupils in Key Stages 1 to 4 with a satisfactory range of learning experiences overall. Learning opportunities are good for Post 16 students. All subjects of the National Curriculum are studied, and with the addition of a modern foreign language (French) to the timetable since the last inspection, the curriculum now meets statutory requirements.

35. The curriculum content is very relevant to the individual needs of pupils and the school places considerable emphasis on PSHE. Provision is strong. There is a comprehensive programme which includes sex and drugs education, topics which are dealt with sensitively and structured to match pupils' mental and physical development. At the beginning and end of the school day and at lunch time, routines are in place which enable pupils to develop and practise their personal skills.

36. Information and communication technology is satisfactorily promoted and used across the curriculum, although monitoring is limited. All classrooms have computers that are mostly well used. However, problems with recently purchased equipment have restricted the time that ICT is used as a means of supporting pupils' learning, thus impeding their progress.

37. The curriculum is insufficiently balanced, especially in Key Stages 1 and 2. Not enough time is allocated to history, geography, art and design and technology, which are taught through topic work, and links with other subjects are seldom identified. Too much time allowed for lunch times at Key Stage 2 thereby reducing the available lesson time. Science as a core subject is under represented on the timetable with the result that learning is not reinforced and consolidated thus preventing pupils making even better progress. In Key Stage 4 the time allowed for science for pupils in the group for the lowest-attaining pupils is insufficient for them to cover the curriculum satisfactorily. The teaching of key skills is under-emphasised and lacks focus in the curriculum for Post 16, diminishing the progress that pupils could make.

38. Curriculum planning varies in detail and format from subject to subject but is satisfactory overall. Planning is good in science, physical education, personal social and health education, and religious education, and satisfactory in all other subjects except English and art where it is unsatisfactory, lacking in clarity and consistency. Schemes of work are still to be developed fully in English, mathematics and art. The quality of teachers' long, medium and short-term planning is variable. Many teachers' plans are based on individual or group targets that are not always obtained from a programme of study, but rely too heavily on teachers' current perception of what pupils need to learn. This means that in some subjects pupils' progress and understanding cannot be systematically built on across year groups and key stages, because a detailed overview is not in place to guide staff. Careful thought is given to how all pupils can have access to the curriculum. This is reflected in planning documents and the arrangements for individual pupil support and there are some very good examples of planning by individual teachers. However, some teacher plans fail to identify either learning objectives or appropriate activities. The curriculum designed to meet the individual special educational needs of pupils with autism or MDVI is very good and means that these pupils make very good progress in their ability to communicate and manage in the world around them and in using their senses to learn.

39. The literacy and numeracy strategies have been implemented satisfactorily, but require further development. Although teachers have had training, their knowledge and understanding of the literacy and numeracy strategy varies, as does their planning. Specific aspects of the literacy strategy are often well taught. However, planning and assessment does not always indicate which aspects are being taught and have been understood. A particular strength is the way teachers make every effort to include all pupils in shared text work. Support assistants provide effective support for individuals and groups in literacy work. Opportunities for pupils to develop and apply their literacy and numeracy skills in lessons other than English vary. However, in some subjects such as science, they are identified, well planned and taught. The full range of opportunities for pupils to gain improved numeracy skills has not yet been fully developed throughout the school. There are good examples of mental mathematics sessions at the beginning of some lessons helping to sharpen pupils' thinking skills; however, these are not yet systematically or consistently planned as parts of mathematics lessons throughout the school.

40. Pupils in both Key Stage 4 and in the Post 16 unit have good opportunities to develop independence and an understanding of the wider community through work placements and a well planned programme of activities. For example, visits to an environmental centre provide pupils at Key Stage 4 with the opportunity to study both curriculum subjects and vocational courses. Pupils benefit from this. They demonstrate considerable responsibility for themselves and others, and show interest and enjoyment in what they are doing. The Youth Award Scheme *Towards Independence* and ASDAN accreditation plays a major role in the development of the curriculum for Post 16 pupils and supports pupils' independence and preparation for the next stage of their life. Pupils are encouraged to shop, cook and care for themselves and their property as part of their studies. Work placements in the school or community offer pupils the opportunity to practice the skills they have learned.

41. The education business partnership works well, with the school itself providing work experience for some Post 16 pupils. Such placements help to give pupils a real understanding of the wider community and the world of work. The school receives good support from the careers officer, who has assisted in the development of careers lessons in Key Stage 3 and 4 and Post 16.

42. At present, the provision of extra-curricular activities is unsatisfactory. Although pupils do take part in a good range of visits and residential journeys, no extra curricular activities are available after school or at lunchtime. Prior to the school moving to its present accommodation, more such activities were offered and enriched the curriculum as well as aiding the development of pupils' personal and social skills. The long journey to and from school created by the change of location has prevented the continuation of these activities. This is an area the school plans to develop. Within the school day, however, a number of day trips and short visits to local places of interest are organised to support the curriculum, and these enrich and extend pupils' learning.

43. Provision for pupils where English is an additional language is good. The specialist teacher liaises well with school staff and keeps up-to-date records of her work with individual pupils. She supports pupils in their mother tongue as well as in English, using both in and out-of-class support to work on aspects of pupils' priority learning targets. She attends review meetings when required and communicates with parents by phone and letter in their mother tongue. Home visits are also made when necessary. The amount of designated time has been recently reduced and the impact of this is being carefully monitored by a designated member of school staff, to ensure that pupils whose first language is not English and their families'

individual learning needs continue to be met. Overall, provision for pupils with English as an alternative language could be further improved by ensuring that high frequency words and important signs are displayed in other languages around the school. There are too few artefacts related to different cultures and more dual language books are needed for the school library (fiction and non-fiction).

### **The provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development**

44. The school makes very good overall provision for the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

45. The provision for spiritual development is good and the provision for moral development is very good. Assemblies contribute well to both, through reference to a supreme being, the use of stories such as *The Good Samaritan* and the sense of celebration created by the use of music. Simple techniques, such as the use of candles in large assemblies and classrooms, calm pupils and help them reflect on their day or the point of a story. Through lessons in religious education pupils learn about different faiths and practices. For example, comparison of Christian and Hindu weddings helps them understand that people celebrate marriage in different ways, but that it is always a special occasion. In some lessons pupils are told stories with deep messages, such as life being a search for faith, truth and understanding. Pupils are given very good support for understanding the difference between right and wrong. Desired behaviour is rewarded with positive attention. Unacceptable and inappropriate behaviours are managed well, with clear consistent messages being given to pupils. Adults remain calm but firm. Many classes have their own rules and reward systems. Pupils throughout the school gain a sense of pride in their ongoing collection of certificates and work (Record of Achievement) although there is scope for these to be developed further, and in ways that give pupils an even greater sense of pride and ownership.

46. The provision for social development is very good and the provision for cultural development is good. All classes have clear information on display to inform both staff and pupils about daily routines and activities. Pupils are encouraged to work together co-operatively in a range of situations including art, music and physical education lessons. Weekly assemblies celebrate particular achievements. Sports Day and Book Week are examples of important events during the school year which promote pupils' sense of belonging to a particular community. The high quality Common Rooms in the secondary and further education departments are an important feature in the school building and help the older pupils develop a sense of maturity and responsibility. The School Council meets weekly and a small group of secondary pupils, with careful staff guidance, are given genuine responsibilities and opportunities to make choices and decisions including a considerable budget to manage.

47. Lessons in art, dance/ drama, music, French and geography, in particular, contribute to the pupils' cultural knowledge and understanding. Parents of pupils at the school and other representatives of the Asian community also make a significant contribution to this area of the school's work. For example, Indian dancers have visited the school, a Punjabi speaker participates in home visits and families donate food, religious and personal artefacts. However, opportunities are sometimes missed to extend pupils' awareness and understanding through experiencing and discussing a wider range of art and music from around the world.

## **The school's links with the community and partner institutions**

48. The school has good links with the local and wider community, and these are developing well. The headteacher has been particularly active in the field of public relations and has spoken to a wide range of organisations and individuals locally, about the school, both before and after relocation to the new site. She has worked hard to establish the school in its new community. Her efforts have resulted in significant amounts of sponsorship and assistance from local firms and agencies for the school which have significantly benefited the school in terms of providing additional facilities. Links with the local police and fire service are good, and officers visit and support the school. Pupils have carried out shopping surveys locally, and there are useful links with the Orchard Theatre in Gravesend. Pupils visit places of interest in the locality to supplement lessons and college placements for Post 16 pupils and work experience at Bore place for Key Stage 4 pupils enhances pupils' learning of the wider world. They support various charities and they visit local residential homes for the elderly, and the school band performs in music festivals.

49. Relationships with other schools are satisfactory, and there are positive links with other nurseries and playgroups; for example, the school's autism co-ordinator assists the pre-school advisory service with her expertise as part of her identified role. Some nursery pupils have dual placements – at the school and at their local playgroup or nursery school and the school liaises well to support this. Links with local primary schools are being extended but are, at present limited. When the school was located at its previous site good integration links occurred but these have not yet been developed in the new location. The headteacher has plans to develop 'on-site' inclusion facilities at a mainstream primary school base for Milestone pupils. Pupils from a local secondary school have work experience at Milestone and arrangements have been made for pupils to make reciprocal visits to the secondary school. Arrangements for Milestone pupils' work experience draw heavily on the Kent Business Partnership, and this provides a variety of opportunities, especially for Post 16 pupils, who enjoy the experience and gain in self-esteem. The excellent accommodation at the school is used to host meetings for headteachers and governors from local schools. The school has run workshops on autism, signing and disability awareness for parents and members of the local community, although the poor attendance at some of these by parents has disappointed the school. All of these links enhance the school's curriculum, enable it to make a contribution to the local community and make a satisfactory contribution to pupils' learning.

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

### **The steps taken to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety, including arrangements for child protection**

50. At the time of the last inspection procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare were very good, with the exception of the key issue concerning the school's provision for pupils with more complex needs. This key issue has been fully addressed by the school, and a substantial amount of training, for all staff, has been undertaken. Extra specialist staff have also been employed. All pupils' needs are now fully catered for in an effective way by the school, and its procedures for child protection and for ensuring pupils' welfare are now uniformly very good. The headteacher has considerable experience in the field of child protection and has ensured that staff are well trained. There is a well-written child protection policy contained in the staff handbook and there is excellent liaison with all the relevant external

agencies. Monitoring and promotion of pupils' academic performance and their personal development is good, and they receive good educational and personal support and guidance. Personal, social and health education is a focus at the school and, as well as formal lessons, the skilled staff introduce appropriate elements, whenever they are needed, to support and guide their pupils.

51. The health and safety of pupils and staff is viewed as a priority and the school ensures that the environment is both hygienic and safe for pupils and staff. The site manager and governors are active in promoting the good quality health and safety policy, and they assist by carrying out regular risk assessments. The risks that pupils pose to themselves and others are also carefully considered and monitored regularly. These are very well documented in staff's files, so that all are aware of how to deal with pupils and any risks that are posed. Pupils' medical needs, both physical and psychological, are attended to expertly.

52. Pupils' attendance is closely monitored by class teachers and the headteacher. Home visits are made, if necessary, and there is good liaison with parents to ensure regular attendance. Absences are followed up promptly, and the educational welfare officer is a regular visitor at school. This careful monitoring of attendance has brought results in the steady improvement since the last inspection. A particularly strong feature is the way the school nurses follow up any pupils' absences which are due to illness and offer support to the family.

53. The school's management and monitoring of pupils' behaviour and conduct is good. When there is occasional inappropriate behaviour in class or around the school, usually due to a pupil feeling stressed, it is handled expertly and consistently by teachers and support assistants. All staff are committed to a truly positive approach in dealing with inappropriate behaviour, and they follow the school policy to the letter. The 'time-out' sanction is used sparingly by staff, and this achieves the desired result in most cases, allowing for quick re-inclusion in the lesson. The systems that each class has for rewarding good behaviour and hard work are effective and the pupils are keen to hear about their review at the beginning of the afternoon session - and to see whether they have 'earned' their points or stars. Sometimes, teachers could encourage pupils to say more about their own evaluation of what they have achieved and thus to take increasing responsibility for their learning and behaviour. Teachers make good use of praise to encourage good behaviour, and show much patience when they manage more difficult pupils. Pupils do know the class rules and most follow them closely. Parents are made aware of any problems or praise, through the daily contact books, and they themselves use the book to express such matters. 'Behaviour' features in pupils' care plans and individual educational plans, and there is regular monitoring and development within the plans. Good behaviour and positive behaviour management is seen as a priority at the school. This is good practice. The air of calm and security, which the school achieves, is a major factor in pupils' development.

54. In order to meet the needs of the pupils with more complex difficulties three teams of staff, for pupils with autism, MDVI and communication problems, have been established within the school. These include teachers, learning support assistants and therapists and all work extremely closely together to advise, support and teach such pupils. The teams make highly effective contributions to pupils' welfare and their learning. The school is very well supported by external specialist agencies. Its commitment to high achievement and to the broader needs of their pupils is evidenced in their 'buying-in' of additional speech and language time to ensure that as many pupils as possible have access to such support.



## **Assessment and monitoring of pupils' academic performance**

55. The school's assessment and monitoring of pupils' progress is good overall. It is very strong and thorough when measuring pupils' progress against their identified targets in their IEPs. Although the assessment of progress within subjects overall is satisfactory, in some subjects pupils' prior learning is insufficiently taken into account when planning and their progress is not always well documented. For example, pupils' understanding of the passage of time in history is not consistently monitored and assessed.

56. Assessment systems, and their use, are strongest in those subjects clearly underpinned by a scheme of work such as PSHE and science, and where what the pupils have learned, understood and can now do is recorded, not simply the activities they have experienced. Assessment and the use of it is very good in PSHE, where all aspects of the pupils' individual programmes and of their curricular understandings are appropriately assessed, monitored and used to inform both what is taught and also pupils' IEP targets. Assessment is good in mathematics and English, within the context of the targets identified in IEPs, though the recording of pupils' understanding in relation to broader aspects of the curriculum are not always recorded. For example, in English, pupils' understandings of story and of literature are not systematically recorded and their progress in their drama skills is not identified in any detail. Assessment procedures and the use of them are very strong in the Foundation Stage (the nursery and Reception classes), where the use of a mixture of school devised profiles, LEA baseline materials and more formal profiles are used effectively to plan children's programmes and to document their progress.

57. Assessment is weakest in the foundation subjects, and particularly in those covered within topic work at primary level. In art, for example, there is no clear system for recording and monitoring and no systematic way of retaining or collecting examples of pupils' work as evidence of their attainments and progress.

58. In subjects such as English and mathematics pupils' individual progress is monitored well against their individual targets but there is, as in other subjects, some inconsistency in teachers use of the assessment procedures. For example, not all records are dated, the context in which pupils' work was gained is not clearly stated and the children's current National Curriculum level is not indicated. This makes it difficult for some pupils' rate of progress to be effectively monitored.

59. The schools' procedures and practices relating to Annual Reviews of pupils' Statements of Educational Needs and for transition planning for the next stage of their education and life are good and meet statutory requirements. Parents and other professionals/ key workers are appropriately involved and their views sought. Their contributions are aided by the ready availability of staff for discussion and the school's willingness to home-visit and re-arrange meetings if necessary. The quality of the review report, which also forms the annual report for parents, is generally very good, particularly where reporting relates to core subjects and to pupils' IEP targets. Examples are clear as to what pupils know, can do and understand and progress since the previous year is clearly identified by most teachers.

60. Reporting about pupils' progress in foundation subjects such as design and technology, geography and history is only just satisfactory. It is too often a description of what pupils have experienced or activities they have carried out rather than an assessment of progress. The school is trying increasingly to involve pupils in their own assessments but is at a relatively early stage of this with younger and less able pupils. Older pupils are appropriately involved. This is particularly so at Post 16 and in Key Stage 4, where pupils are involved in assessments relating to their accredited course work which require them to self-evaluate and have views on their learning.

61. The school works effectively with a range of therapists including speech and language therapists and integrates the results of these specialist assessments into the pupils' programmes well. The range of assessments and procedures that teaching staff themselves carry out is currently being reviewed. The school seeks to incorporate the use of the 'p' levels (*QCA – differentiated performance criteria*) into its own assessment, monitoring and target setting. This should tie pupils' progress into National Curriculum attainment level descriptors more meaningfully and systematically, while retaining their high quality procedures for identifying pupils' special educational needs targets and levels.

62. The quality of targets set in IEPs as a result of the assessments and observations that the school carries out is good. Parents have the opportunity to contribute to these and clear success criteria are set. The school is moving from one way of setting IEP targets to another and, at present, the paperwork associated with this is overwhelming for some staff. It also means that there is some confusion in the documentation as to the relationship between the Annual Review targets, short and medium-term individual education plans and the care plans which the school have initiated. The school recognises this and is taking steps to make the process less unwieldy.

63. All staff know pupils' individual targets well, are clear about their roles and responsibilities in helping pupils to meet these. A strength is in the way that staff support pupils' targets in all curriculum subjects using, for instance, signs and symbols to support pupils' access, but also to meet their physiotherapy and communication targets. The system of support assistants keeping detailed ongoing assessment logs and diaries for pupils with additional special educational needs ensures that the small but significant steps that they make in their learning are recognised and considered when their programmes are devised. The recently introduced practice of keeping portfolios of pupil's work and experiences, in addition to the pupils' Records of Achievement, is strengthening the schools' assessment and monitoring of progress further, but needs now to be developed and extended systematically.

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

64. Parents' views of the school are good. They value its provision and the positive effect it has on their children's progress and development. The school's links with parents are satisfactory, as is parents' involvement in the work of the school. Despite its relocation, the school has maintained the positive links with parents which were found during the previous inspection. The increased distances between pupils' homes and school means that the majority of pupils rely on official transport to travel to and from school; this affects parents' opportunities for informal visits. The school compensates for this by frequent use of the telephone, home visits and daily contact books. Contact is especially good in the nursery where approximately a half of parents collect their children and discuss their pupils' work and progress.

65. The association of friends raises funds for the school and has contributed significantly to the development of the sensory garden. A few parents help in classrooms, mainly in the nursery. Some individual parents perceive that their children could make better progress than they do, but this is not the view of the vast majority, and the inspection found that pupils' progress generally is good. Parents expressed very positive views about the headteacher, and her leadership of the school. They feel their views are listened to and action is taken promptly, if it is justified.

66. A minority of parents expressed the view that the school did not provide an interesting range of activities outside lessons. Inspectors agree that while pupils do have some opportunities for day and residential visits, there is little in the way of extra-curricular activities at lunchtime or after school. The school is aware of this and, whilst needing to overcome the difficulties of managing the transport needs of pupils, is seeking New Opportunities funding to develop such facilities to support pupils' learning outside school. Some parents expressed doubts about the school's homework provision, and the inspection found that there is inconsistency in the setting of homework.

67. The information provided for parents is of satisfactory quality overall. Newsletters are informative and the prospectus gives a good flavour of the facilities the school provides and what it aims to achieve. Annual reports indicate pupils' progress and areas needing attention. These usually say what pupils know, understand and can do but the quality is very variable and National Curriculum levels are not always assigned to pupils at the end of key stages. The school provides a number of opportunities for parents to learn further about their children's needs and how best to help them but these are not well attended. The school's flexibility ensures that all parents are generally present for their children's annual review meetings. There are open evenings and workshops for parents on autism, signing and disability awareness, as well as on the curriculum. There is a well equipped and spacious parents' room, with a useful lending library for parents to use. The school works hard to involve parents whose first language is not English and uses a translation facility for the reports on their children.

68. Overall, the contribution of parents to children's learning at school and at home is satisfactory. Good use is made of reading and contact diaries, and parents generally comply with the commitment expressed in the home school agreement. Parents are fully involved in the processes of their child's annual review by the school. Whenever parents miss important appointments, the headteacher visits them at home, to ensure they are fully informed on their child's progress.

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

### **Leadership and management**

69. The leadership and management of the school are good overall. The headteacher leads the school very effectively on a day-to-day basis; she is a very good role model and monitors daily practice by being visible around the school and being available to support children and staff when necessary. There is an atmosphere of mutual respect between staff and pupils, where the leadership is seen to value and respect the opinions of all. The headteacher has persevered tirelessly to secure improvement as evidenced in the better school accommodation and quality of teaching.

70. The headteacher, together with the deputy headteacher, have worked hard towards building a high performing team with specialist personnel that have specific responsibility for monitoring and improving provision for the different ability types of pupils that attend the school. For example, there are now senior staff with designated responsibilities for autism and the MDVI. In addition, the deputy headteacher has responsibility for overall co-ordination and monitoring of the curriculum. The senior management team has introduced, and is developing, performance targets for the three distinct groups of pupils in the school with the intention of raising standards and addressing key areas of group learning further. Recent analysis and evaluation of last year's targets indicate that the process was beneficial to both staff and pupils but will require further modifications to ensure all targets are challenging and achievable by the majority of pupils.

71. The school's monitoring systems are satisfactory overall. The analysis and use of information gained needs further development to enable the school to identify better what it needs to do to improve standards further. The headteacher has informally monitored individual lessons and produced detailed quality assurance procedures to help senior managers and subject co-ordinators monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of provision. However, there are weaknesses in the consistent and rigorous implementation of some of the school's monitoring procedures by co-ordinators, although overall their monitoring is satisfactory. The recently developed co-ordinator pack helps to make co-ordinators' roles and responsibilities very clear and provides good guidance for co-ordinators, but it does not identify how the outcomes of monitoring should be evaluated in relation to subject standards and development needs. For instance, although there is good evidence of on-going analysis of pupil achievement by the senior management team there are, as yet, no detailed evaluations of why pupils achieve particular results.

72. The work of the governing body is good and they have a sound understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses. The chair of governors works closely with the headteacher and has regular meetings to discuss current concerns. The chair is aware of many of the school's strengths and weaknesses and where it needs to improve. The governors are developing their monitoring role by going into lessons and playing an active role in reviewing current provision. For instance, one governor recently spent the day in two Key Stage 2 classes looking at the quality of provision for autistic pupils and produced a brief report outlining what had been seen with many positive concluding remarks that focussed on teacher expectations, methods, and class atmosphere. This is good practice and the headteacher and governors' recognise the need to now increase their knowledge and use of more formal evaluation procedures to enable them to look more critically at individual and group achievements, including performance targets across all key stages. Governors fulfil their statutory duties well and give active support to developing all aspects of school life, including being present at all new appointments. The finance governor plays an active and successful role monitoring the school budget. All governors contribute to discussions and have involvement in strategic planning decisions. They attend relevant training sessions and invite visiting speakers and staff to give presentations on current issues when the need arises.

73. There is a very clear vision for the school held by the headteacher. The school development plan is satisfactory and covers a three-year cycle. It makes reference to student outcomes with the intention of stating what improvements will be expected for pupils. All co-ordinators contribute to this and some have developed their own detailed yearly subject action plans based on an audit of their subject's strengths and weaknesses. This now needs extending to all aspects of the school's work. Currently a number of action plans have imprecise success criteria and do not indicate what the impact of the actions taken will be on pupils' learning and standards. The yearly overview of the school development plan is referred to in the

documentation as the 'Headteacher's Areas of Focus'. This plan states priority areas for development but is insufficiently referenced to the school development plan to enable the reader to know in detail when, how, who, and what criteria for success will be involved in implementing the proposed actions.

74. The headteacher, in consultation with senior staff, has worked exceptionally hard to produce performance year-end targets for literacy, numeracy and personal and social education and has made a good start on this. These targets have been evaluated but not analysed in sufficient depth to allow future targets to be set that are linked to particular groups of pupils achievements within each key stage. The performance targets need clearer success criteria, however, and the link, if any, to pupils' individual education plans made clear for staff.

75. The school fulfils the majority of its aims very well indeed. It is a very caring school with a committed staff who operate very effectively as a whole team. It provides an excellent working atmosphere where each pupil feels confident and valued. The school tries its very best to ensure that pupils' particular learning needs are met in the least restrictive environment possible. Staff are justifiably proud of the learning environment where they teach. The school gives every pupil the skills and aids to communicate with each other and adults in meaningful ways.

### **Staffing, accommodation and learning resources**

76. Significant improvement has been made in the school's staffing (for instance, the number of support staff has doubled), accommodation and ICT resources since the last inspection. Staffing levels and expertise are good overall across the school. The number of teachers is sufficient to meet the needs of the pupils and all staff are continually updating and adding to their skills and knowledge to meet the demands of the curriculum. Many staff have specialist skills and knowledge in the subjects they teach and this contributes well to pupils' learning, such as in science, design and technology, physical education and music. Twelve of the 22 teaching staff were new to the school in the last two years.

77. The ratio of support assistant to pupils is very high. The high calibre of support staff and arrangements within each class for supporting pupils makes a major contribution to the progress that the pupils make. The experience and knowledge of the support assistants is invaluable in supporting teaching, especially with regard to pupils with PMLD, MDVI and autism.

78. The school works closely with its external advisers and support teachers such as those from the hearing-impaired service. Its commitment to maximising pupils' progress is demonstrated by its recent decision to extend the availability of some key therapy services and curriculum support such as through an additional speech and language therapy assistant, additional speech and language therapist hours as well as a literacy 'technician' for modifying and making resources. It is in the process of appointing a part time ICT technician.

79. Very good arrangements are in place for the induction of new staff. Very good systems of staff support exist so that the strengths of the new teachers are utilised which has led to pupils reaching higher standards. The professional development needs of these teachers are supported strongly by the policies devised by the senior management team of the school; this too is leading to the pupils reaching higher standards. There are very useful guidance notes for staff in the staff handbook. All staff, including support assistants, have the opportunity to develop their own skills through further training. The training needs of staff are identified by the senior management team in response to the school development plan and through subject and personal interviews with staff.

80. Very good arrangements are in place for the professional development of staff. The school is used as a centre for training for the other schools for pupils with severe learning difficulties in Kent, provides important support for other schools in the field of autism and special educational needs in general and is committed to meeting its own and others' training needs. It has excellent links with other training providers to support this such as the Royal National Institute for the Blind.

81. Staff are about to receive their performance management training by the end of the Autumn term. The school needs to give the matter of producing a relevant draft policy urgent attention and all staff will need to be fully aware of and understand the performance management process. This will enable them to discuss and set appropriate targets for their own professional development.

82. Significant improvements have been made to the accommodation as a result of the school's relocation in a re-modelled middle school building in New Ash Green. Accommodation is now very good overall and presents considerable improvement since the last inspection. The school now has a very good range of specialist facilities. The outdoor environment, including a sensory garden, has been very well developed as a resource to support learning in many ways. However, the school lacks hydrotherapy facilities and pupils have to travel some considerable distance, losing valuable curriculum time as well as the school paying additionally for such facilities. In some areas of the school acoustic problems impinge on the learning of some pupils, especially those with hearing and attention difficulties. The school is aware of this and plans are at an early stage to rectify the situation. The separate nursery accommodation is adequate; plans are in hand to make significant improvements. The library resources are adequate overall with a good fiction section, including 'big books'. Non-fiction texts are of good quality but are too few in quantity. ICT resources in the library are limited to one PC with Internet access, although this is well used, especially during breaks and lunchtimes for some individual pupils.

83. The school is very clean and kept in a very good state of repair by a dedicated site manager and a small team of cleaners. The corridors of the school are enhanced by displays that reflect the areas of work studied. These are of good quality but some opportunities are missed to use them in an interactive way by setting pupils questions to answer from them and using more symbols or objects of reference to enable all pupils to interact with them.

84. The school's resources are of good quality overall and are readily accessible. In English, design and technology, French, geography, history, drama and religious education. There are sufficient resources; other subjects, mathematics, science, art, music, physical education and personal and social education are well resourced. The school makes satisfactory use of computer technology in lessons but needs more software to support this. Some teachers also make effective use of ICT for their own administration and planning.

### **The school' financial planning**

85. Financial planning is very good. The headteacher and governors have very firm control over planning the budget, and ensuring that money is effectively targeted to areas of need. Proposed spending within focused plans is appropriately detailed in the school development plan. Funding set aside to manage the recent move to new premises has been well directed; for example to furnish a well-appointed soft play room. Plans to raise funds for key projects are

very effective because they are realised over a short time, largely through the very hard work public relations work of the headteacher and identifying the school's role in the local and wider community. Subject co-ordinators have budgets for which they bid annually. However, while plans are appropriately costed, ways for the school to assess the effect of its spending on pupils' achievements are not fully developed.

86. In the absence of an LEA audit the school has developed its own effective financial systems and recent changes in control over spending the delegated budget have enabled the school to improve the efficiency of spending; for example, through the appointment of a site manager who carries out his role efficiently and contributes to a well-managed site. Funds are generated by letting parts of the premises to local community and county groups, while use of the premises by charities is free. To meet costs of training and make a surplus, the headteacher buys in trainers and sells places on courses to other professionals and this enables the school to benefit from high quality training beyond the constraints of its designated budget.

87. Governors' financial priorities focus appropriately on large projects, staffing and training needs. A finance committee meets regularly with the headteacher to review the budget. There are two monthly meetings between the headteacher and an accountant to review and monitor the progress of expenditure. The finance and personnel committee work effectively together when appropriate, for example to reconcile anomalies in the new pay spine. Governors are fully involved in planning the school's finances through the school development planning. The finance committee works well with the headteacher, who reviews expenditure with an accountant.

88. Specific grants made to the school are used appropriately to target training needs and raise standards such as literacy and numeracy training, TEACCH training (a method of teaching autistic pupils), and courses for working with MDVI pupils. Money is also appropriately earmarked for staff ICT training. Plans are in place for teachers to receive training through the New Opportunities Funding next year. The school currently receives a large amount of funding for pupils on the autistic spectrum, but not for any others such as pupils with multiple difficulties and impaired vision.

89. There is very good day-to-day management of the finances of the school and of the school administration in general. The school uses ICT for management but this could be further extended to include co-ordinators' budgets. The financial management services of the LEA are purchased and there is a close and effective working relationship between the finance officer and a key person in the LEA finance department. Sound procedures are in place and supported by documentation. There are good double checks of spending.

90. The school is committed to the principles of best value for money and carries these out effectively. The overall management of the site and use of opportunities to let facilities and the school minibus represent clear thinking to maximise resources. Governors always seek the best value in services and resources supplied to the school and adhere to LEA procedures for this. Ways of comparing school standards with other special schools are being sought.

## WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

91. In order to improve the educational standards and rectify the weaknesses the headteacher, senior management team and governing body should:

- Ensure that all aspects of the school's work is rigorously monitored and evaluated by the senior management team and subject co-ordinators, so that the school is aware of how well it is doing and where it needs to improve including:
  - \* the quality of teaching;
  - \* the curriculum;
  - \* pupils' progress.
  
- Improve the curriculum so that:
  - \* there is an appropriate balance between and within subjects;
  - \* long, medium and short- term planning for National Curriculum subjects is based on content from the appropriate programmes of study and enables pupils to make progress in the subject;
  - \* short-term plans say what pupils with differing needs are to learn in lessons, incorporate pupils' individual education plan targets, expect teachers to evaluate what pupils have actually learned and identify how well the lesson went, so that ensuing lessons take account of this;
  - \* taught time in Key Stage 2 meets recommendations that there is enough taught time across the school for pupils to make sufficient progress in geography and history.
  
- Provide more opportunities for pupils to write in whatever form is appropriate for them (by hand, electronically with ICT producing symbols or traditional text) for a range of purposes across the curriculum;
  
- Provide greater opportunities outside lesson time in order to enrich pupils' learning and extra curricular experiences.



92. In addition to the key issues above, the following less important issues should be considered for inclusion in the school's action plan. These are indicated in the following paragraphs:

- Improve the use of ICT across the curriculum so it better supports pupils' learning in subjects;
- Improve the acoustics in the large assembly areas of the school;
- Improve the consistency of the quality of pupils' reports in their annual reviews, stating clearly the progress they have made and what they know, understand and can do;
- Provide appropriate water therapy facilities for pupils with severe physical disabilities who will benefit from hydrotherapy.

## PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

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

Number of lessons observed	134
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	53

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

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
5	27	39	26	4	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*

<b>Pupils on the school's roll</b>	<b>No of pupils</b>
Number of pupils on the school's roll	138
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	40

<b>English as an additional language</b>	<b>No of pupils</b>
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	13

<b>Pupil mobility in the last school year</b>	<b>No of pupils</b>
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	2
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

## *Attendance*

### **Authorised absence**

	<b>%</b>
School data	8

### **Unauthorised absence**

	<b>%</b>
School data	0

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

## *Attainment at the end of Key Stages 1, 2, 3, 4*

The number of pupils undergoing teacher assessment was less than ten in each gender group. As a result the outcomes of the school's teacher assessment are not published.

### *Ethnic background of pupils*

	<b>No of pupils</b>
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	13
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	87
Any other minority ethnic group	1

### *Exclusions in the last school year*

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

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

### *Teachers and classes*

#### **Qualified teachers and classes:**

##### **YN – Y13**

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	21.3
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6.5
Average class size	10

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

##### **YN – Y13**

Total number of education support staff	53
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1497

*FTE means full-time equivalent.*

### *Financial information*

Financial year	1999/2000
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	<b>£</b>
Total income	1133254.00
Total expenditure	1322087.00
Expenditure per pupil	9444.00
Balance brought forward from previous year	78080.00
Balance carried forward to next year	21253.00

## Results of the survey of parents and carers

### Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	145
Number of questionnaires returned	50

### 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.	69	29	0	0	2
My child is making good progress in school.	56	32	10	0	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	49	41	4	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	28	25	22	8	17
The teaching is good.	59	33	6	2	0
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	60	32	4	4	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	74	24	2	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	50	46	4	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	61	31	6	0	2
The school is well led and managed.	74	16	6	0	0
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	46	40	6	0	8
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	39	34	9	9	9

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

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

93. The provision for children aged five years and under is very good overall. At the time of the previous inspection, provision for the children under five was a very good feature of the school. This provision has been enhanced and developed further and is a strength of the school. Provision made for the children in their Reception year is particularly strong. The curriculum, assessment of pupils and the monitoring of the children's progress in the Foundation Stage has been strengthened through the further refinement of the nursery's planning and the introduction of local education authority's and the school's own baseline assessments. This has improved the school's ability to provide for the diversity of the children's special educational and curricular needs and, together with the high quality teaching and learning, ensures a very good foundation is laid for pupils' progress either at Milestone or the other schools that children will go on to.

94. Children in the Foundation Stage attend the school's Woodview Nursery classes until the year in which they are five, when some transfer to the main Milestone site and others move on to a range of provision in the area. A few are able to attend their local mainstream school. The children enter the school with varying skills and needs, have a wide range of learning and physical disabilities, including a small number who have autism or MDVI. All children benefit from the close links between nursery staff and the rest of the school and the specialists and therapists that support them. Most children are placed in the nursery classes for a period of assessment. After the statutory assessment procedures have been completed the children are issued with a Statement of Special Educational Need. Nursery staff contribute effectively to these and keep careful records as to where children are in this process.

95. Children's achievements within the Foundation Stage of their education at Milestone are very good overall. Children who have additional special educational needs make very good progress, particularly in their relationships with others and in aspects of their communication and personal and social education. This is because the very close liaison between the school's specialist MDVI and autism co-ordinators, other therapists and the nursery/ reception staff ensures the children's priority targets are being met through all aspects of the curriculum, as well as in their individual specialist therapy sessions.

96. The curriculum provided for children under five is good, with some very good features. In the nursery classes it is appropriately planned in relation to the *Principles for Early Years Education* contained in the *Curriculum Guidance for the Foundation Stage* (Qualifications and Curriculum Authority (QCA) 2000). The curriculum provided for children in their Reception year and delivered within the framework of the National Curriculum is also good with some very good features. It provides a very good bridge between the nursery and general school curriculum. In nursery and reception the curriculum's strength is the way in which it is carefully planned in relation to the children's special educational needs, whilst taking careful account of the broader Foundation curriculum and the Areas of learning and early learning goals. Curriculum planning is currently being reviewed and further developed in the nursery itself to ensure that all children receive a balanced curriculum within the three-year cycle of the topic approach used. The nursery curriculum and its planning are carefully monitored by the Early Years co-ordinator and the information gained from this is being used very effectively to strengthen the school's provision further. Although not all nursery planning indicates what children will learn as a result of their lessons, most is highly effective and enables staff to focus clearly on what it is that children should achieve individually as a result of their lessons. Planning in the reception class is good and reflects the staff's understanding of children's needs

and of the curriculum that will best support their progress. The curriculum delivered to children with additional special educational needs who are under five years old, such as those with autism, MDVI or with emotional and behavioural needs is very good and often excellent. These children are expertly included in whole group sessions, through the careful inclusion of activities and routines, songs and practical experiences. Skilful deployment of staff and careful target setting in the children's individual education plans ensures there is a very good balance within the curriculum delivered for them.

97. The monitoring and assessment of children's achievements, progress and experiences within the Foundation Stage is good and has some very good features. Currently the school is involved in a local education authority baseline attainment initiative for three year olds and is using the information gained from these and from their own checklists to plan targets and programmes for individuals and small groups. All staff involved with children, including support assistants, contribute to the assessment process and have a very good understanding of what the children know and can do and what it is hoped that they will next achieve. Formal and informal observation is used well to track children's progress and detailed records are kept of their responses to their experiences. The information gained is shared well with parents through the contact books and reports that they receive. The samples of work and photographs now kept are supported by careful written comments that explain what a child has achieved and how. This ensures that children's progress is meaningfully documented over time and helps further targets to be set and appropriate programmes to be planned. The whole school movement towards the use of the 'p' levels (*QCA – differentiated performance criteria*) will enable progress over time to be tracked even more effectively.

98. The quality of teaching and learning is particularly strong. It is very good overall. The teaching of children in the Reception year is consistently strong. In over six tenths of the lessons seen in this class the quality of teaching was very good or excellent. When teaching and learning is at its best teachers have high expectations of children's behaviour, attention and contributions; there is a very good pace to lessons; support staff are well deployed; and the use of visual aids, signs and symbols keeps all pupils involved in both group and individual sessions. Very good examples like this were seen in language and literacy sessions in the nursery; for instance, in the use of puppets to reinforce the story of *Red Riding Hood* and the characters in *Have you seen the Crocodile* in music lessons. Teachers' and support assistants' use of language and their management of children's behaviour and attention were particularly skilful in these lessons. In the single instance of unsatisfactory teaching, during a water play activity in the nursery, the weaknesses were to do with the organisation and management of the lesson and the groupings of children, rather than the teacher's understanding of the children's needs. This meant that the teacher's time was spent managing the safety aspects of the lesson rather than supporting the children's learning. Learning support staff make a very good contribution to the quality of teaching; they plan with teachers, have a good understanding of the children's needs and have excellent relationships with them. They are quick to notice and comment on the small but significant steps that children make towards their learning targets and provide strong support for children's language and literacy and their personal and social growth.

99. The very effective teaching and support from all staff has a very positive effect on pupils' progress and confidence. The safe and secure environment that is provided and the praise and encouragement that they receive means that the children respond in a very positive way to the learning experiences which are offered to them, whatever their level of learning difficulty. They trust their teachers and, as they progress through the Foundation Stage, join in class routines in lessons and at lunchtimes with increasing confidence and self-awareness. They contribute their

own ideas, look with interest at newcomers, are increasingly aware of the other children in their groups and are sensitive to their needs. Staff's careful use of language, questioning and praise enables children to think about what they are doing and to begin to take some responsibility for their learning and behaviour. For example, by Reception, most pupils know how they are expected to walk when outside the classroom and that there are times when they must listen to others and not interrupt.

100. About a half of all of nursery parents bring their children to school and this enhances the contacts and the partnership with parents. In addition, the home school contact book and coffee mornings keeps parents well involved and informed, but also helps the nursery to build effectively on experiences from home. Once children transfer to Milestone campus, parents are less directly involved in the life of the school, but the good quality communication and observations in reports and home-school books used in Reception ensure that parents are kept informed and involved in so far as they wish.

101. The early years co-ordinator provides strong and effective leadership for the nursery and is increasingly involved in supporting Foundation curriculum as a whole. Her leadership is informed by highly effective monitoring of the nursery curriculum and the quality of the teaching and a clear identification of areas for development. She is well aware of the need to further strengthen medium-term planning and curriculum links between the nursery and Reception classes further. The accommodation in the nursery class is satisfactory; in the Reception class it is good. There is a separate, safe, outside nursery play area which has limited play equipment. However, what is there is used well and the pupils' physical development is well promoted.

### **Language and literacy**

102. The children's achievements and progress in language and literacy are very good overall and sometimes excellent. They are particularly strong for speaking, listening and communicating. The teaching of language and literacy skills is very good. Teachers and learning support assistants have highly effective skills in extending and supporting children's attempts to communicate and have established an environment in which every child's communications are acknowledged and listened to with respect. The children use a variety of language skills to communicate, such as simple signs, gesture, voice and eye contact and staff are skilled at both interpreting these communications and using Makaton signs, symbols and communication aids such as a Big Mac, to further support children's understanding, self-expression and confidence. Most children enter the nursery with limited expressive language and some have very little interest in what others say and do. By Reception, those with more complex difficulties display more interest in what others have to say, vocalise or use eye contact, facial expression and movement to indicate involvement and hold eye contact for longer. They co-operate for longer in activities. Other children have extended their use of symbol and sign and most now use voice to indicate their needs and wants. The more able use simple sentences and phrases appropriately and are beginning to use some of the curriculum vocabulary (such as 'seeds' and 'loom') and words that accompany class routines (such as elements of songs and 'think about what you are doing'). In literacy, children in the nursery look at books, pictures, symbols and objects of reference with interest e.g. in relation to a *What's the time Mr. Wolf* book, where each child had an object to hold and some were able to identify the object in the book. Some can match picture to object. They are given systematic support for tracing and copying and gaining handwriting skills and teachers and support assistants act as scribes for



their writing. Children gain confidence in their own ability as they are given feedback on the success of their attempts. In the Reception class most children have progressed significantly in how they handle books and turn the pages, some will follow a story and point out key characters with support. Others look with interest at the pictures and spontaneously voice or sign the name of an object or person that they see.

## **Mathematics**

103. Children's mathematical development is carefully and systematically supported through their everyday experiences of song, of counting rhymes, of class routines and the timetabled mathematics and numeracy lessons, and their achievements are good. Through the use of action songs such as *Five fat sausages* the children are beginning to develop a basic mathematical vocabulary and of counting and matching. Reception children count backwards to 'Blast-off' with enthusiasm. They learn about capacity through pouring drinks and through sand and water play activities. Nursery children collect leaves and sort them into colours and sizes; reception children recognise shapes and some are beginning to use words like square and round appropriately. The more able can count objects up to five reliably and sort cubes to numbers in a number tray. Others match shapes and colours and sort into number groupings with help. The quality of teaching is good. All staff know the mathematical concepts that are being supported and are quick to reinforce key language and signs, not only in designated maths times but also in stories and other activities such as movement and dance. Reception staff are supporting mathematical skills within the structure of the school's response to the National Numeracy Strategy and do this effectively.

## **Knowledge and Understanding of the World**

104. The children achieve very well in developing a knowledge and understanding of their world. The use of daily routines is enabling the children to develop an early understanding of time. Group sessions are used well to remind the children of what they have done and what they will do. The outside environment is used well to collect materials, observe changes and feel and explore textures – such as when the children collected leaves in small groups and then sorted them or explored pasta shapes and shaving foam. In Reception the children's observational skills are systematically built on and most understand that something will grow from a seed. The more able know that water and soil is needed to help it grow. The careful provision of activities and sensory experiences for those with more complex needs allows them to explore light and sound further and heightens their awareness of their surroundings. Staff talk the children through their activities well, using the appropriate vocabulary and there is a good degree of challenge in the activities devised. In Reception the materials used and teacher enthusiasm particularly enthrall – they smell the autumnal leaves, compare their shapes and identify a Christmas tree. Pupils respond enthusiastically to their sessions in knowledge and understanding. They are inquisitive and take up opportunities to explore their environment and the materials that they are given. They are helped to make choices and the teaching is very good. It is particularly successful in engaging the involvement of all pupils and stimulating children's interest in their experiences and the world that surrounds them. Occasionally, as in a water play activity in the nursery, children's learning is limited because the teacher's management of the activity has not been clearly enough thought out.

## **Creative Development**

105. Music, art, dance and a range of sensory experiences support children's creative development well. They make very good progress in this area and achieve particularly well in their enjoyment of, and the practical skills in, music making and singing. Music and songs underpin the whole school day and early years life. Music and song are used effectively to help

children to recognise the activities that they are doing, class routines as well as to calm them. It is also used through the timetabled specialist sessions in nursery and reception to develop the children's love of sound, listening and self-expression. The teaching of these sessions is excellent – all children are included and all staff support the children's learning – the children learn how to tap rhythms and to blow simple instruments. They listen carefully to instructions and show enthusiasm and interest in the sounds that they make. In their singing, pupils learn a range of songs that carry over into other aspects of their nursery and Reception life. They wait their turn with anticipation and children with more complex difficulties engage eye contact and attend for longer periods during these music sessions. In other creative development sessions, the use of different materials and textures enables children to develop simple ideas and to learn early skills such as weaving. During these sessions the quality of teaching is very good and the staff provide a wide range of opportunities to extend the children's creative development.

### **Physical development**

106. The children's achievements and progress in this area of learning are good. Physical development is well supported in the nursery through separately timetabled sessions of physical activity and the general experiences provided using the children's outdoor and indoor play equipment and area. These are carefully planned, link well into the children's physiotherapy programmes and contribute to a good level provision for children with more profound and complex needs. Well-chosen activities allow children to develop their climbing and walking skills; dance activities allow them more conscious control of their bodies and careful staff support allows all to be included. The quality of teaching in physical development is good. In Reception the teaching by the specialist physical education staff is very good and very well informed by the children's broader learning programmes. Children are carefully challenged to control their bodies more, to make different shapes and movements and to roll over. Very good co-operation with support staff means that children try out new movements with confidence and are very proud of their success. Within the classes there are a wide range of physical needs, for example, some children are independently mobile, whilst others require a considerable amount of support for sitting and standing activities. In all teaching, the needs of all children are taken into account well. Children's fine motor skills are carefully supported and developed through a good range of copying, tracing and creative activities, and in the programmes they have for eating and self-help skills such as dressing. They are given appropriate access to technology to support these and some demonstrate good skills in manipulating the mouse on the computer to move the cursor.

### **Personal and Social Development**

107. The nursery and Reception class provide very good support for the children's personal and social development and their achievement is very good. At drinks and meal times, children are encouraged to make simple choices, for example between biscuits and crisps and they are giving careful support for feeding and independence. There is a good balance of support and freedom given in most activities, so that children are allowed to experiment and make mistakes from which they can learn. In Reception, children take responsibility for the register, and the careful use of circle and class routines expects them to be taking responsibility for their own behaviour and learning. Children in all classes are learning to wait for their turn, to attend to each other and to adults and demonstrate increasing awareness of others' needs. Those with more complex difficulties demonstrate increasing awareness of self and interest in others. Staff provide excellent role models for listening to others and in their respect for each child's contributions and the children begin to copy these behaviours, spontaneously clapping a child's attempt to greet in a greeting song, for example. There is careful and systematic support provided for children's self help skills in a range of play and dressing activities. Personal and social development is intrinsic to all activities and opportunities for the children to exercise choice, for

example, as to which leaves to stick or which textures to feel, are built into all areas of the curriculum. Through careful encouragement and use of praise the children's flexibility, co-operation and willingness to try out new things is encouraged; for example, when a child was enabled to relinquish a much loved activity with shaving foam for a new one with pasta. The quality of teaching is very good. It is well informed by the children's personal targets and the Foundation curriculum and supported by the excellent relationships which nursery and reception staff have with the children.

## **ENGLISH**

108. The school has made sound progress in developing its provision for English since the last inspection. The progress of pupils has improved. Pupil's achievement in English is satisfactory overall. In speaking and listening is very good throughout the school and in drama it is good. In reading and writing it is satisfactory. The progress of pupils against English targets stated in their individual educational plans are very good.

109. In reading, progress is satisfactory overall. It is good in Key Stage 1 and satisfactory in Key Stages 2, 3 and 4. Older pupils at the end of Key Stage 1 gain pleasure from reading, using approaches that encourage acting out the story. They turn pages and stop at something that interests them. Pupils hold the book the correct way and develop their knowledge of left and right by hitting a single switch attached to a computer that starts objects entering and leaving the screen area. They can locate a required item from a series of pictures or objects, such as a chair. They develop their understanding of prepositions like 'on' and 'under' in practical shared reading sessions. Specific, good quality work in the early stages of reading and good use of signs, symbols and electronic communication devices, support pupils' interpretation of words and symbols well. At the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils have acquired a small sight vocabulary of key words that helps them read books more fluently. They listen to stories with sustained concentration and can match letters and words that help them when writing and reading sentences on a computer. In Key Stage 3, pupils gain confidence with their independent reading skills. They know more key words and use their fingers to follow text in shared reading sessions. They know most initial letter sounds and are aware that words start with a particular letter. Autistic pupils can place an object on a symbol and vice-versa, helped by verbal prompts by the supporting adult. Older pupils can match words and read a symbol timetable. At the end of Key Stage 4 pupils know many letter sounds and can spell out simple words. They can break down simple compound words into their main parts, like 'some' and 'thing' to make 'something'. More able pupils read with some expression and find words in simple dictionaries by using the words first and second letters.

110. The school lacks reading material for older Key Stage 3 and 4 pupils that is linked more to their interests and age. Some teachers do not send reading books home frequently enough and some reading records are not regularly up-dated. The school library has a simple categorisation system and a limited range of non-fiction and fiction books. It is used regularly by teaching staff to develop pupils' independent reading and reference skills. Appropriate computer software to support the school's reading scheme has been purchased and is used regularly in classrooms.

111. Pupils' speaking and listening skills are very good overall; the progress they make and the provision for developing these are a strength of the school. At the end of Key Stage 1 they listen attentively to nursery rhymes and match these to their illustrations. Pupils carry out two simple instructions and listen carefully to stories for short periods of time. At the end of Key Stage 2, during circle time, pupils consider questions carefully and answer in short phrases. They listen to story tapes independently. Autistic pupils listen more attentively to supervising adults and

give more sustained eye contact. They offer more verbal or non-verbal contributions. By the end of Key Stage 3 pupils talk with increasing confidence in informal, and formal class and group settings. Pupils answer questions correctly and enthusiastically join in class discussions. They relate well what they have done at home and school. Pupils listen for sustained periods of time and initiate as well as respond to conversations with adults and their peers. By the end of Key stage 4 pupils listen and answer questions that focus on *'who, where, and when'* in simple sentences with limited prompts by the teacher. They listen carefully to each other and to their teachers for extended periods of time. They respect the views and opinions of others and are tolerant to each other's learning needs. Older pupils can ask each other what they bought on a shopping trip with confidence and respond appropriately to a series of verbal, symbol and signing instructions given by the teacher.

112. Overall, progress in writing is satisfactory. However, during the inspection, there was a limited range of pupils' writing in all of the lessons observed. Although some of the more able older pupils write simple sentences independently for their teacher, there is little evidence across all key stages of diary work, poems, notes, records and messages. At the end of Key Stage 1, pupils use a picture or a symbol to convey meaning. They ask the meaning of words in their immediate environment, like signposts, and know some letters of their own names. They trace and join dot-to-dot pictures and letter shapes and colour in shapes and pictures. By the end of Key Stage 2 some pupils write their own name without a model and produce letters that are neat and legible. They can copy and trace pattern shapes and form letters accurately, with close attention to size and shape. Older pupils at the end of Key Stage 3, with some adult support, are able to type sentences with symbols using appropriate computer software. They can read what they have written back to the teacher and trace difficult letter shapes with increasing confidence and hand control. Autistic pupils are becoming more confident in holding writing implements such as felt tip pens and soft colouring pencils. They develop hand and eye co-ordination skills by using a template to colour in, with help by a learning support assistant. More able Key Stage 4 pupils write most of their address and name legibly from memory. Most pupils make up their own sentences by using key words that they place on magnetic sentence makers but sometimes forget to leave spaces between words. Writing for the teacher and the pupils is commonly supported by appropriate computer software, although for those pupils who would benefit, there are too few opportunities for writing using symbols.

113. The teaching of reading and writing is satisfactory overall across the curriculum. Support assistants are well trained and work hard to improve individual reading, writing and oracy skills. However, very occasionally the support is not as effective as it could be because pupils with extremely complex needs listen to lesson introductions for too lengthy periods of time. These pupils could be working on supported guided tasks directly linked to the literacy hour or start their communication diary or other individual programme targets sooner than they sometimes do. The overall impact of the literacy training has been satisfactory. However, all the aspects of literacy are not being systematically addressed by every teacher. Teachers use lively ways of making the shared text interesting and bringing it to life through role-play and actions to support meaning. Staff develop subject vocabulary and pupils' expressive communication skills well and have a good and, occasionally, a very good understanding of how to do this. The school's judgements about the impact of the National Literacy Strategy on standards would be better informed if more time is given to establishing what the school determines as success.

114. The quality of teaching and learning in English overall is good across all key stages. In Key Stage 1 teaching ranged from satisfactory to excellent but was very good overall. The teaching of English is good in Key Stages 2, 3, and 4. Where teaching and learning is good or better the English focus of the lesson is clear and learning objectives are appropriate to meet the diverse needs of groups of pupils in the class. Teacher's use praise effectively to celebrate individual achievement, and this enhances pupils' self-esteem and increases their time working

on independent and group activities. Good open and closed questioning techniques, using appropriate language and song enables pupils to participate confidently in class discussions. Lessons are planned in detail and use a variety of sensory resources to motivate and keep pupils' interest and to sustain good concentration during the introductory parts of a lesson. The inclusion of those pupils with more complex needs has been carefully planned and visual aids are used that support their interest and involvement. Relationships are excellent between support staff, teachers and pupils. Learning support assistants are well managed and they record the pupils' achievements against pupils' learning targets effectively.

115. The teaching in one lesson in Key Stage 3 was unsatisfactory because the activity related little to any aspect of English and there was very limited planning identifying what the pupils were to learn. Weaker aspects of teaching are characterised by lesson plans with unclear learning objectives that make it difficult to assess the progress of different types of pupils during the lesson. In some lessons, teachers' introduction of what the pupils will learn and the review of the lesson and what pupils have learned is too brief. This means that there are missed opportunities to reinforce the key ideas of the lesson and to check the impact of teaching on the different types of pupils within each class. Very occasionally aspects of the work set for more able pupils are inappropriately matched.

116. The teaching of drama and dance/drama is good overall and has some very good features. It makes a very strong contribution to pupils' progress in speaking and listening, through the support given for self-expression and awareness of others. It also supports pupils' understanding of text and literature; for example, poems about autumn are used as a stimulus for movement, or classics such as *Oliver* are used for production and performance work.

117. The school is developing its assessment procedures and teachers have started to keep a portfolio of annotated work in English. This assessment portfolio does not include assessed work samples across all aspects of English to enable individual progress to be clearly monitored. Day-to-day assessment procedures related to pupils' individual learning targets are in place and operate effectively. However, the overall system for target setting needs to be rationalised to make it more manageable for each class teacher. To enable more detailed evaluation of pupil achievement in English lessons to take place, these performance targets require referencing (where appropriate) to the word, sentence and text level within the National Literacy Strategy and levelled, using appropriate grades of National Curriculum attainment. They also require clear criteria for success to ensure that all teachers are making consistent judgements. This would allow the co-ordinator and school to assess the school's performance targets with greater accuracy and set challenging but realistic group targets each year.

118. The current co-ordinator, who has only recently been appointed, is knowledgeable and committed to developing the subject throughout the school. Leadership of the subject is satisfactory overall but there are some weaknesses in lesson planning and monitoring. There is not an effective scheme of work that can be used to assist teachers in planning their literacy session. The need to set in place appropriate schemes of work for English was identified in the last inspection. The school has used the target setting approach as a way of planning for pupils to make progress but there has been slow progress to address this issue in depth and to provide a coherent programme of work for teachers to plan from. The school continues to recognise the need for more appropriate medium-term planning. As aspects of the subject are taught across the curriculum, new schemes of work will need to include direct links with other subjects to ensure all practice can be rigorously monitored. The school's long-term action plan is satisfactory. However, the absence of detailed evaluation procedures in the school's policy affects the senior manager's inability to precisely identify areas for pupil and subject improvement.

119. General teaching resources are satisfactory overall and the school has committed large amounts of funds annually to improving the library and teaching support facilities. An English technician has recently been employed to assist teachers modify and make teaching materials, and the materials produced to date for supporting both English and literacy across the curriculum for all pupils are of very high quality indeed. The school library is used daily. However, there is a limited range of reading resources for secondary aged pupils in terms of variety, breadth and reading age appropriateness. Although there is a computer in the library this has little software available for pupils to use that is directly linked to independent or supported reading activities. There is also a missed opportunity to utilise this technology to facilitate pupils searching for books using a simple database or the Internet. Reading homework is given out in the form of the reading scheme's books being sent home on a weekly or fortnightly basis. However, the frequency of work being sent home is not consistent across classes and reading records are not regularly up-dated by all teachers. The co-ordinator has recognised the need for more practical games resources to help teachers deliver the full literacy curriculum more effectively. Accreditation systems for older and more able senior pupils in Key Stage 4 is being considered by senior management to ensure that all pupils continue to receive the most relevant curriculum to meet their age-appropriate needs.

120. The school makes good use of the local environment to develop pupils' application of their reading and communication skills. Pupils are encouraged and supported to read familiar signs and shopping trips to local cafes help pupils apply their basic literacy skills to real-life situations. Pupils effectively use symbols and Big Mack messages to communicate their needs to their peers and adults. Theatre trips are open to all pupils and they go, when appropriate, to West End productions as well as to theatres in Gravesend and Dartford.

## **MATHEMATICS**

121. Pupils' achievement in mathematics is satisfactory overall. It is strongest at Key Stages 1 and 2, where the implementation of the numeracy strategy has increased the taught time for the subject and raised standards. The numeracy strategy has only just recently been introduced to Key Stage 3 and has yet to impact fully on standards and progress in Key Stages 3 and 4.

122. Improvement in mathematics since the last inspection is satisfactory overall. The planning of a scheme of work, linked to the numeracy strategy, is at an early stage of development. Planning for individuals to make progress is effective (through their individual education plans). This ensures that staff target work at appropriate levels but this system has not fully assured the breadth and balance of all elements of the subject. The school has recognised this and has begun to address its planning rationale.

123. In Key Stage 1, pupils make good progress. By the end of the key stage, when they are seven years old, a few higher-attaining pupils count and add to 10, while pupils of average ability are counting and ordering numbers to three and sometimes five and completing two piece puzzles, matching numbers to groups of objects. Pupils, who are unable to participate in group work, are supported individually when they complete simple puzzles, and number matching tasks. They record using sticker cards and are beginning to write recognisable numerals. Pupils of lower ability are matching numbers and pictures, with some help, and are making marks on paper to record their mathematics. They identify circles, triangles and squares in the soft play

room and practise counting skills throughout the day, in a range of activities, such as, how many stars they have won for good work. They sing counting songs with the support of staff, and begin to understand ideas such as biggest and smallest in relation to the story of *The Three Bears*. They sort ribbons, string and straws into long and short. They take turns to play games and match shapes on the mathematics programmes on computer.

124. During Key Stage 2, pupils continue to make good progress and by the age of eleven, at the end of the key stage, most higher-attaining pupils count to 20 and are recording with increasing accuracy. The most able pupils are measuring, using cubes and recording independently, while the middle ability groups record measurement in hand-spans. Pupils with a range of additional special educational needs make good and sometimes very good progress. The more able make at least similar progress to other pupils in the class. For example an autistic pupil asked the teacher if the numerals 'five -one' equated to 'fifty-one' and if so, was 'five-six-five', 'five hundred and sixty five'. He measures books and other objects in centimetres. In lessons in Key Stage 2, more consistent use of ICT would enhance pupils' learning further, including their practicing their number recognition and understanding of what numbers mean. The computer is often switched on but not in use. In Year 3, pupils match groups of objects up to a maximum of 10. They are building their understanding of numerical ideas such as 'bigger', 'biggest', 'smaller', 'smallest'. Pupils with MDVI or visual impairment have some developing awareness of objects, and join with others for whole group lesson introduction. Autistic pupils are either supported effectively one to one, or taught separately within the class on a one-to-one basis, when they do appropriate activities in number matching or puzzles, as part of the school specialist approach to teaching autistic pupils (the TEACCH approach). Less severely autistic pupils are included in groups, when possible, and complete the same measuring activities as the others.

125. Pupils' progress in Key Stage 3 is satisfactory. Higher-attaining pupils by the end of Key Stage 3, are counting to 40 and are able to 'count on'. They use bricks and counters to perform simple addition of small numbers and need support with writing numerals. A few manage to use a two times by two matrix to complete simple multiplication activities. They can complete a nine-piece puzzle and sort one and two penny coins. Pupils with PMLD use switches and multi-sensory stimuli to control three actions and use a Big Mack switch to count. They use a large switch on the computer to sequence the basic shapes on the screen. They go to the shops with a purse and money and collect goods from the shops. They explore big and little objects.

126. Pupils make satisfactory progress during Key Stage 4 and by the age of sixteen, more able pupils have some knowledge of addition to 10 without having to count from the beginning on a number line. They know the ordinal values of ten identical objects in a row. They can recite the days of the week and know which day is 'yesterday' and which is 'tomorrow'. They make good attempts at estimating, and find out how many cups to fill a teapot. They sort everyday containers into sets and recognise shapes in the environment. They measure in centimetres, and match, name and sort coins. They make a timetable of events through the day.

127. The quality of teaching in mathematics is satisfactory overall. It is good in Key Stages 1 and 2 and satisfactory in Key Stages 3 and 4. In only one lesson, in Key Stage 3, was the teaching unsatisfactory. The inclusion of pupils of all levels of ability in the first part of lessons can set too slow a pace, so that higher-ability pupils lose interest; and there are times when special needs support assistants have very little to do other than try to get the pupils they are supporting to listen and watch. Where teaching is at its best, teachers' expectations are high enough to challenge the most able pupils, but not so high that they cannot do the task. The structure of the lesson is well balanced; organisation is crisp, so those pupils are busy and involved; opportunities and encouragement are given for pupils to work independently. Pupils enjoy such opportunities and respond well to them, for example, taking turns in twos to play a

maths game or playing the fishing game. In the plenary session, at the end of the lesson, they evaluated their own performance, which was then rewarded with stars. Most pupils in Year 3 thought their work was excellent but a few were more reserved in their estimates, and one pupil even admitted to cheating! Where teaching is less successful, planning is inadequate, what the pupils are to learn is unclear or unsuitable and pupils are unsure of what they are to do or to learn. Opportunities to review learning are missed, as the lesson drifts towards its end. Resources are frequently of a high quality, made 'in house', and pupils have good opportunities to handle them. However, sometimes opportunities for pupils to explore in a variety of practical ways are insufficient, for example, through sand and water play and playing shops. One good example of this was seen in Year 7, where the teacher devised a 'party' scenario which involved pupils in a good range of number games, planning the party and then taking part in it. This motivated pupils, holding their interest and helping them concentrate very well.

128. The teaching of numeracy is satisfactory. Mental mathematics at the start of lessons is good in some classes, where the emphasis is on counting, singing number rhymes and fun with numbers. The pace is often lively, and pupils enjoy the quick changes of activity. Where the introductory session is focussed too much on waiting turns, pupils are rather less involved. Mental mathematics is used well at the start of the day when there are good opportunities for counting. Particularly in upper classes of Key Stage 3 and in Key Stage 4, numeracy has not yet fully made an impact at the starts to lessons, and the focus tends to be on the same mathematics as for group work.

129. There are many examples of numeracy across the curriculum, such as measuring in design and technology, recording in science, counting in music lessons and printing patterns in art lessons. The start-of-the-day activities usually have an element of counting, for example in the number rhymes, counting how many people, good work awards, the day and date, and in stories such as *Jack and the Beanstalk* where mathematical language for size is used. Older pupils, when working at Bore Place environmental centre, weigh ingredients to make bread.

130. The co-ordinator has worked effectively to raise standards in teaching and learning. There is satisfactory monitoring of teaching and of progress through the use of the school's cumulative records. Areas of weakness, such as the teaching of MDVI pupils have been adequately addressed through staff training. The staff have had training in teaching the numeracy strategy. Although curriculum planning has been identified as a focus area, the links between individual targets on the cumulative records, with 'bolt on' group targets, and the QCA differentiated performance targets ('p' levels) have yet to be clarified and confuse some teachers in their subject planning. Setting for mathematics, and further evaluation of the structure of lessons to ensure effective learning, are also areas the school is considering for development, all to raise pupils' achievements in mathematics.

## SCIENCE

131. Good improvement in the provision for science has been made since the last inspection. A new science curriculum relevant to the needs and abilities of the pupils and referenced to the National Curriculum has been introduced and a new science co-ordinator appointed. Pupils' progress is good overall and they achieve well. This represents good improvement since the last inspection. In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils now make good progress and in Key Stages 3 and 4, their progress is very good.



132. In all lessons there is an emphasis on practical activities, with work broken down into small manageable steps, enabling pupils to understand what they are expected to do and giving them the confidence to do it. With some assistance from staff, pupils learn to conduct simple investigations and, aided by the use of signs and symbols, they make good progress in their knowledge and understanding of scientific language. In response to questions, most pupils are able to talk about their work, making observations and simple predictions when prompted by the teacher. When assembling a battery torch, as part of a module on “Light and Sound”, pupils were able to say what would happen if parts were not fitted correctly, and were then able to successfully assemble and operate the torch.

133. From an analysis of pupils’ work and lesson observations, pupils at Key Stage 1 are able to name and label main body parts with assistance. They have tried different foods and can make choices about what they like to eat. They plant seeds and are able to say, or point to, what plants need to survive and grow. By the end of Key Stage 2 some pupils have the ability to identify and name the components of a circuit board. They are able to sort materials into two groups with similar properties and form conclusions.

134. Pupils build on the knowledge and skills learned previously and in Key Stages 3 and 4, they make very good progress, using scientific terms such as ‘experiment’ and ‘predict’ appropriately when prompted, and are able to understand and follow safety procedures well. At all times pupils use scientific equipment sensibly and with confidence. When working with film developer, pupils were aware of the need to wear protective clothing and equipment and did so. Pupils are able to light Bunsen Burners with tapers and adjust the flame when instructed. They do this with care, and show an understanding of the dangers involved. They respond positively to simple instructions and can give explanations as to why things happen. They take pride in their ability to explain their work and can record it in a variety of ways using tick charts, pictures and simple diagrams.

135. Pupils in Key Stage 4 can retell the science safety rules with prompts. When working on a module on ‘Light and Sound’ they are able to identify which elastic bands make high or low sounds when using sound boxes. Pupils were observed in a dark room carrying out a simple experiment by placing an object on a sheet of light sensitive paper, exposing it briefly to a light source and developing the formed image. They followed procedures well, used correct scientific terms, and were pleased with the end result. Visits to a local environmental centre in Key Stage 4 allow pupils to see the practical application of their learning.

136. The quality of teaching is good overall. In Key Stages 1 and 2 it is good and in Key Stages 3 and 4 it is very good. Lessons are usually well planned and organised, with activities chosen to match pupils’ needs and abilities. In the majority of lessons teachers have a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject, and have confidence in their delivery. They encourage pupils with positive comments and praise to answer questions and to think for themselves. They gain and maintain pupils’ interest and involvement by an appropriate emphasis on practical science and the language and ideas associated with it. This is highly effective and pupils do enjoy science, particularly the practical and experimental work. They concentrate well and remain on task for lengthy periods, because the work is interesting and the activities challenge them. They answer questions enthusiastically when prompted and respond sensibly to instructions and advice. Clear learning objectives are not identified by all teachers in their planning, however, nor is it always clear to pupils what they are expected to learn. Planning for MDVI pupils lacks sufficient detail for them to be fully involved in lessons, though some good individual teaching, undertaken by support assistants, was seen, with pupils responding well to the stimulus and prompts provided by one-to-one teaching.

137. In Key Stages 3 and 4, the specialist science teacher knows and understands very well the needs of the pupils and the subject requirements of the National Curriculum programmes of study. Activities are increasingly challenging and the teacher has very high expectations of pupils, to which they respond well. Very clear explanations and very good, effective questioning by an enthusiastic teacher are features of most lessons. The support assistants provide very good support and reinforcement of learning. Relationships between teachers, pupils and support assistants are very good. They treat one another with respect and kindness.

138. The science curriculum is well planned to meet the requirements of the National Curriculum and the pupils' needs. The scheme of work has good assessment procedures for identifying pupils' progress, both individually, and in the subject. The co-ordinator provides clear guidance for primary colleagues and monitors their teaching. However, the monitoring role is insufficiently developed with no clear criteria for observations, recording or feedback to teachers. Time for the delivery of science, a core subject, is not sufficient in Key Stage 2 to enable pupils to consolidate learning and make even better progress. In Key Stage 4, pupils in the lowest set spend insufficient time on science because the school has deemed that additional time should be spent on English, and this limits the progress they can make in science.

139. The emphasis on practical work is enhanced by the use of very good, plentiful equipment and resources. Accommodation is now of a high standard and much improved since the last inspection. The designated science room is spacious and has very good facilities, but is under-used.

140. Health and safety procedures are very well emphasised in all lessons. Through the key stages, pupils gain a growing understanding of safety rules and follow them responsibly.

## **ART**

141. Pupils' progress in art is satisfactory and their achievements are sound. They make good progress in the aspects of the subject that focus on 'investigating', 'exploring' and in developing their 'technical' skills across all key stages. However, progress across all key stages is only just satisfactory in the activities that focus on evaluating and understanding what has been produced and the work of other artists. Progress is satisfactory but strengths only just outweigh weaknesses. Since the last inspection pupils' achievements have improved in the practical aspects of the subject and are now consistently good. The knowledge and understanding elements within the subject, which refer to pupils looking critically at their own work and that of other artists is underdeveloped, in both integrated and discrete art activities.

142. By the end of Key Stage 1 pupils discuss the work of Cezanne and look carefully at his painting '*Still Life with basket.*' They are supported in making clay food from *modroc*, such as apples and oranges and use a variety of vegetables to develop simple printing skills to produce interesting colourful pictures. At the end of Key Stage 2, pupils study the work of famous artists such as William Morris and Monet. Pupils experiment with paint and use different coloured papers for collage work and develop their tactile awareness by using different textured materials, such as corrugated card and tissue paper. Pupils use and feel three dimensional materials like papier mache to make simple models. Older pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 study a variety of famous artists and are beginning to understand that patterns can be repetitive; they use paint and printing materials imaginatively to design their own. With support, they sketch objects related to ancient Egypt and the local environment. Pupils work as part of a group to find appropriately

coloured paper, paint and pencils for collage and picture-making activities. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils chose art as part of an elective system. They develop their artistic and design skills by using soft materials creatively to complete design projects, such as a cultural collage showing an American Indian with a feather and teepee. They make junk models from recyclable materials and develop their three dimensional skills by making paper sculptures of simple geometric shapes, and woven baskets for Mother's Day.

143. Only two art lessons were observed during the inspection, one in Key Stage 2 and one in Key Stage 3. Judgements related to the quality of teaching have been informed by the work scrutiny (including displays), annual reports, and interviews with the temporary teacher replacing the co-ordinator due to absence, as well as with the deputy headteacher.

144. Teaching in art is satisfactory overall. It is occasionally good in all key stages, though there is some unsatisfactory teaching in Key Stage 2. These judgements are broadly in line with those made in the last inspection report. Elements of art teaching that were seen as satisfactory included teachers' planning activities that were appropriately matched to pupils' diverse teaching needs. For example, a Year 7 pupil with severe learning difficulties understood the simple idea of 'in and out' patterns and wove a paper mat with limited adult support. Support assistants are deployed effectively, to ensure that all pupils achieve a finished product. The specific needs of pupils with multiple disabilities and limited hand control were addressed by pupils painting with the correct size and type of paint brush to enable them to complete a simple tonal colour wash. Planned on-going assessment is used by the teacher to record each pupil's progress against specified criteria during the lesson. In unsatisfactory parts of lessons, teachers had unclear objectives as the basis for their teaching. Introductions were brief and did not state clearly learning intentions. Occasionally, support assistants are over directed and teaching is too prescriptive and controlled, which limits pupils' individual creativity. Teachers do not always use the end of lessons to check out fully, and explore as a class, whether the stated learning objectives have been achieved. Art teaching is delivered throughout the school in a variety of ways and the time allocation and ways in which it is delivered are due to be reviewed when the new policy is written in-line with the new National Curriculum 2000. With such diverse provision it is essential that the new schemes of work are written in detail, outlining the skills and knowledge pupils will learn in each key stage to ensure that every pupil receives a balanced, progressive, relevant and broad art curriculum. It is also important that the new schemes of work are referenced to those aspects of art which are taught in other subjects. For example, in science pupils use the dark room and are taught how to produce photograms.

145. The school's current policy makes insufficient reference to assessment activities and methods for monitoring and evaluating practice. It also does not outline clearly enough the skills and knowledge that pupils should be learning in each key stage to enable pupil progress to be monitored and achievements recorded.

146. The co-ordinator has monitored aspects of teaching and there is an action plan for the subject which needs to be more detailed and indicate when and how issues will be addressed. The school recognises the need to up-date teachers' skills in areas such as textiles, using three-dimensional materials, and the use of information technology and art. The co-ordinator has also identified the need to increase its amount of reference sources linked with the work of other artists, crafts people and designers. Resources are good overall for practical work but weak in other areas, such as computer software to support design activities and reference sources for other artists. All art resources need to be fully audited and information made available to staff. The school has started to collate pieces of artwork as part of an assessment portfolio. This needs to be developed and related to key skills and knowledge outlined in the subject's schemes of work.

147. The standard of display work has improved and is mostly good, although a common feature across the school is a lack of labelling that informs the viewer who has done what and when. There has been an improvement in the art accommodation. There is now a designated specialist art room where Key Stage 3 pupils are taught by a specialist teacher, and class teachers in Key Stage 2 use this facility to teach art and technology lessons. There is a dark room on site, which is also well used and available to both staff and pupils.

148. The school has made a good commitment to developing the subject over recent months. The new digital camera is being used in classes to record activities such as cooking. There is now a technician available to support the subject and the kiln is due to be repaired in the near future. The school makes good use of educational visits, such as the visit by Key Stage 4 pupils to Bore Place that enables them to take part in activities to do with environmental art, where they use the materials around them to make sculptures.

## **DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY**

149. Satisfactory improvement has been made since the last inspection. This is due to the improvement in the quality of teaching and learning at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3. The school has made considerable efforts to improve provision in the senior part of the school through the introduction of specialist teaching. Specialist accommodation has also been developed and this, combined with advice from the specialist co-ordinator, has resulted in an improvement in provision. However, the achievements of the pupils could be even better if they had more time to study the subject in Key Stages 1 and 2. The topic approach used here means that it is very difficult to provide opportunities to make articles that take more than one session or to investigate fully the design process. Furthermore, the way the topic is designed, with the focus on the activity, rather than the curriculum content means that coordinator cannot identify how much of the subject they are actually teaching.

150. Across the key stages, pupils make good progress overall and achieve well. Skills in food preparation develop well. Younger pupils can, with some help, make biscuits. Older pupils can peel, chop and grate ingredients using kitchen equipment. Design skills are less well developed with few opportunities to practice them. The pupils make a small number of working models and use a variety of joining techniques such as tape, glue and metal fasteners. The pupils show great determination to complete the making challenges they have been set and always work with great care.

151. During Key Stage 1 pupils undertake simple weaving using autumnal materials and colours. They know that a loom is used for weaving and how to thread the materials through to make a recognisable pattern. During Key Stage 2, pupils are able to roll out biscuit mixture with a rolling pin and cut out shapes using cutters. They know that the mixture has to be cooked before it can be eaten and that the mixture becomes hard when it is cooked. Cutting skills are less well developed and this makes the making of models more difficult. During Key Stages 3 and 4, the pupils achieve far more because of the more extensive technology facilities. They are able to use vacuum forming techniques to make plastic trays for plants to grow in, make plaster moulds for design purposes, can use tools to smooth and shape wood and are able to follow instructions to produce a simple meal. All pupils are aware of the safety requirements of the areas they are working in.

152. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall and is particularly strong in Key Stage 3. It is the way in which the teacher integrates a variety of resources and materials which makes the subject interesting and challenges the pupils effectively. Teachers have satisfactory subject knowledge and give clear instructions to pupils. Teachers demonstrate what is to be done and

this helps the pupils to understand what they are required to do and to learn. Teachers' expectations are high, and skilful use of praise on their part makes the pupils respond by trying hard to do their best. The teacher and support assistants ask probing questions to help pupils understand what they are doing and to solve problems. The work of the support assistants is well organised and ensures that all pupils can complete the tasks set for them. However, at the end of some lessons, pupils are not sufficiently required to evaluate their work or explore critically how they could improve upon it. Teachers, also play a minimal role in evaluating pupils' work during this period.

153. The subject is well led. Resources are satisfactory across the key stages with the exception of those using ICT, which are in need of development. The school has nothing in the way of computer-controlled sewing machines and lathes, and simple ways of linking the control aspect of ICT and design and technology have not been fully explored. The monitoring of teaching and learning is undertaken but this needs to involve a more formal review of planning and observed teaching so that a clear evaluation of the effectiveness of the present provision can be undertaken. This is especially so in Key Stages 1 and 2, where the subject is taught as part of an integrated topic in which planning does not sufficiently refer to the subject learning objectives and indicate how progress will be assessed against them. Assessment is at an early stage of development and as yet has not made an impact on standards. The school is developing a method of assessing skills, use of tools and techniques such as cutting and joining materials. It is intended that this will lead to making assessments against National Curriculum levels. At present, records make little reference to National Curriculum levels and means that it is difficult for the school to track progress.

## **HUMANITIES**

### **Geography and History**

154. There has been satisfactory improvement in planning for history and geography since the previous inspection. The school has worked very hard and put a great deal of time and energy to developing the schemes of work, as there were no such guidelines for teachers when the school was last inspected in 1996. The topic-based approach considers four subject areas including geography and history. The weakness of this approach is that planning is more activity related than subject focused. However, it is well planned and organised. The plans have been in place in draft form for some time and have recently been completed. They contain clear objectives for each unit of work and are referenced against the National Curriculum programmes of study. Geography and history are now taught throughout all the key stages. However, the time allocated for studying these subjects is insufficient and this means that pupils' achievements and progress in history and geography are still unsatisfactory.

155. Pupils' achievements in history and geography are unsatisfactory because they do not have enough opportunities to learn and consolidate new skills and acquire new knowledge. The youngest pupils in the school in Key Stage 1 learn about the passage of time through the school routines on a daily and weekly basis and through major events during the year. They begin to find out about different people in the school and local community who help them and different methods of transport. Pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 have identified features of the environment (such as crops, rivers, bus stops and tractors) in two different locations (such as village and town). Higher-attaining pupils have recorded this information and then analysed it by finding which features occur in both places and which only occur in one place. Older pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 know about specific periods of history, such as the Romans, and important historical figures, such as William the Conqueror.

156. At the time of the last inspection there was insufficient evidence to make a judgement about the quality of teaching, but it was found that the learning opportunities in these subjects were not directly planned for. The teaching of history is now good. Not enough lessons were seen in geography to make a judgement on the quality of teaching, but it was very good in the one lesson seen and planning for these subjects has made a satisfactory improvement. All teaching featured good relationships and support for individuals. In the best lessons, it was clear what the teachers expected the pupils to learn, there was a good subject focus and the links with other subjects (within the topic or theme approach) were very clear. In one lesson, pupils learned about the foods that the Romans ate and the teacher presented facts in a way that the pupils could understand, such as 'they had no chips because they had no potatoes'. There were some good examples of geography and history lessons contributing to the development of the pupils' vocabulary and consolidating reading and writing skills.

157. The secondary co-ordinator has been in post for about eighteen months and is a subject specialist. There is no co-ordinator in the primary department, although there was one last year. The teachers have carried out a review of the school's timetables and topic approach to the delivery of art, design and technology, geography and history. Although the time allocated to these subjects has been increased it is still not enough to fully deliver the programmes of study. Furthermore, there is no systematic way of tracking the time given to these subjects. Teachers keep individual records but the quality of these is inconsistent. In some cases, this is no more than a description of the learning opportunities in the class over a school term. Better examples actually provide clear evidence of the new knowledge, understanding and skills gained by an individual pupil. The school needs now to look carefully at this aspect of their provision to ensure that pupils have sufficient time devoted to this aspect of the curriculum.

## **INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY**

158. Progress since the last inspection is satisfactory. A relatively new co-ordinator has satisfactory knowledge of the potential for ICT in the school and how it needs to develop. A 'communication' team has been formed to assess pupils' communication needs, which includes the use of technology such as Big Mack switches that have digitised speech (recorded by staff). Better regard could be given to pupils recording the speech for their non-vocal peers as well as consideration of more sophisticated communication aid technology. The use of overlay keyboards and software that enables pictures, words or symbols to be chosen using touch screen or switch and spoken language is limited, although the school is aware of the potential of such software. A new scheme of work has just been introduced which is planned to help pupils make the very small steps needed to develop their skills, particularly towards the earliest attainment level of the National Curriculum. Planning to meet the needs of higher-attaining pupils is not yet developed, however, and the school has no whole school plan for when the units of work should be introduced; this is largely left up to individual teachers to work out.

159. Pupils make satisfactory progress during their time in the school in ICT. This is largely because of the high degree of focus on individual pupils' progress, although there is a lack of challenge for the small number of higher attaining pupils. Because of pupils' disabilities, there is a considerable range in pupils' skills throughout the school but all pupils, including those with severe visual and physical impairments, have appropriate access and develop their skills satisfactorily. Pupils arrive in Key Stage 1 with a wide range of computer skills, many of which have been well developed through the high quality work undertaken at the Foundation Stage. Pupils are able, in Key Stage 1, to choose a programme from the screen menu, use a mouse with reasonable control (when supported) and use a touch screen (also with support), taking turns with their peers. Some pupils at the end of Key Stage 2 can 'click on' and 'drag' objects across the screen with increasing accuracy. Other use a keyboard and can locate letters although for

many this is difficult because letters have limited meaning and they mostly make use of the space bar and the 'enter key.' In the early part of Key Stage 3 pupils often use the mouse accurately and unaided and some use a word processor to type simple pieces of text. Occasionally, in history, geography and science, pupils search for information using the computer. Some pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 use the computer to select complete words or objects to produce sequences of information, although this work is generally limited. By the end of Key Stage 4, pupils have a better use of the keyboard, locate a wider range of keys and produce simple symbol sequences. Some can select the printer icon and print their work independently.

160. The school has a high commitment to using ICT to support pupils' access to the curriculum and to aid their communication. ICT is not timetabled as a separate subject but is taught in the context of other subjects. No specific ICT lessons could be seen during the inspection although ICT was used during lessons and individual pupils were often taught by support assistants. The skill with which this is done, and the access that pupils have to developing ICT capability, is determined by the knowledge, skills and understanding of each individual teacher or support assistant. This has improved since the last inspection and overall is satisfactory. Throughout the school there is better regard to the skills pupils are acquiring and the assessment and recording of these. Some opportunities are missed, however. This is because of limited staff knowledge of appropriate software; especially how software can be used to help lower attaining pupils write with symbols and for also for extending higher attaining pupils' word-processing skills. Strengths of ICT are the well-focused work which pupils undertake that is relevant to their needs and the support and the recording of pupils' skills by support staff. A weakness has been the lack of systematic planning relating to the National Curriculum programme of study, although teachers plan appropriately to support pupils towards their personal ICT targets in their individual education plans.

161. The school has chosen a training provider under the New Opportunities Fund, which can offer training appropriate to the needs of the school, and this is to begin soon. However, there is lack of knowledge by the co-ordinator about National Grid for Learning developments in the local education authority and how this may affect the school in the very near future. While there is an appropriate long-term development plan for ICT, devised before the co-ordinator took up her post, there is a lack of knowledge of how the possible acquisition of new equipment fits into that plan. However, the co-ordinator does have a general long-term view based on a sound understanding of how the provision should develop.

162. Equipment is relatively modern and generally functions well. There is some concern the by the co-ordinator over the hardware support, as this is from the manufacturer and is considered unreliable when computers break down. The library computer is used well as an additional machine for teaching and for individual pupil support during the day. However, it is used little for research using the Internet, although this is the only PC which such access in the school. There is little use of the computer to support pupils' learning in subjects; although software titles are increasing, the range is still limited. The school has much useful software which is the basis for pupils' learning of ICT skills, although this is not formulated into a 'toolkit' so that teachers have a greater awareness of how different software can support pupils' progress in a particular aspect of the subject. There is also a lack of knowledge of how ICT capability can be taught through subjects such as design and technology for 'control' and in physical education and science for 'monitoring' events such as change in heart rate or temperature. The impending appointment of a technician should help to support the efficiency of the subject. At present, much of the ICT troubleshooting is carried out by the co-ordinator which restricts her time available to curriculum development and monitoring, areas of the role which are informal and under-developed.

## MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

163. The school has made a good improvement in its provision for teaching a modern foreign language since the last inspection. All pupils at Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 are now taught French. Neither the co-ordinator nor the staff who teach French have specialist expertise in the subject but their enthusiasm for, and interest in, the subject means that both the curriculum delivered and the teaching of the subject is always satisfactory. For pupils with additional special educational needs it is very good; a range of carefully prepared activities and sensory materials capture these pupils' interest and involvement and include them very well.

164. Pupils' achievement in French is satisfactory. The use of a local education authority scheme, supported by video materials and a range of teacher made materials, ensures that lessons follow on from each other well and build on pupils' prior learning. This means that all pupils make at least satisfactory progress and individual pupils make good progress, particularly in their speaking and listening in French.

165. French is taught in ability groups across Key Stages 3 and 4. This allows the work and pace in each lesson to be appropriate for the majority of pupils. There is a strong and appropriate emphasis on oral work, songs and listening activities and the teaching of this aspect of French is often good. Older and more able pupils can ask for items in a shop or café, know the names of the week and of a range of animals. They ask each other '*Comment ça va?*' spontaneously in lessons other than French and are proud of the French they know. Individual pupils can read French phrases such as '*je m'appelle*' that they know and have a good sight vocabulary of individual words. These more able pupils are not, however, always sufficiently challenged by the written follow-up activities as they could be, and their written French is underdeveloped. ICT and symbols are used insufficiently in French, particularly to support pupils' reading and written work. The school is aware of this and is already exploring a range of resources and CD ROMs, including symbols to help them develop further their provision for French.

166. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, although in one lesson with pupils with PMLD and MDVI, the teaching was excellent. The highly creative, sensory approach and the use of electronic communicators motivated pupils extremely well. Teachers' use of routine and careful involvement of each pupil in the lesson ensures that pupils make good progress in their ability to greet each other, identification of foods, parts of the body and weather language. The teachers and learning support assistants work well together in French and this keeps all pupils involved. Their enthusiasm is reflected in the pupils' very good responses. Pupils are very supportive to each other's efforts in French, join in the songs, are always interested and try very hard to remember and use what they have learned previously.

167. French makes a very good contribution to pupils' speaking and listening skills generally; pupils attend very well to each other and to their teachers in these sessions and pay careful attention to how they say things. It also makes a good contribution to pupils' understandings of other cultures and each other. The school supports pupils' understanding of French culture through themes such as food tasting and through visits to France. The subject is adequately monitored and effectively co-ordinated. The French co-ordinator monitors the French curriculum and teaching appropriately and meets regularly with all staff who teach French to set priorities for both pupils and the subject.



## MUSIC

168. At the time of the last inspection music was a strength of the school. This area continues to be particularly strong. It makes a very good contribution to pupils' communicative and listening abilities and their cultural awareness. In conjunction with dance and drama it supports their self-confidence, creativity and awareness of self and others. School staff use music to reinforce pupils' learning. The use of songs in class routines calms and involves pupils and keeps those pupils with most complex difficulties in touch with where they are in the school day. Teachers use music and song highly effectively to support curriculum ideas in subjects such as, English, mathematics and French, and to meet pupils' specific educational needs. Music supports and reinforces pupils' learning well and keeps them highly interested and involved. All classes have at least one designated teaching session from the school's music specialist and the teaching of these sessions is very good with many excellent features.

169. The music specialist works well with all staff not only in lessons but in supporting the carry-over of the skills that the pupils are learning in other class activities. All pupils are effectively included and challenged by the careful support that is given. Music programmes are not only informed by the schools' music curriculum but also take careful account of the group's and individuals' special educational needs. This means that all pupils' achievements are very good in music, and particularly in their singing and use of a range of percussion and simple wind instruments.

170. In Key Stages 1 and 2, pupils learn a range of songs that fit in with the topics and performances that they are doing. They learn to play simple percussion instruments and pitch their voice towards a given note. Older pupils sing more tunefully and recognise a song by its introductory notes. Pupils learn to wait for their turn to clap and tap out simple rhythms and to play their instruments in accompaniment to their songs. The more able know that some notes are longer than others and use words like beat and are able to follow and remember a simple note sequence and rhythm. They know the names of instruments such as tambourine, drum and piano and by the end of Key Stage 2 can accompany a range of songs using simple rhythms and two or three key notes on the xylophone effectively. They play with enthusiasm and are keen to demonstrate to others their performance skills. Most are happy to perform in front of others and have a much more controlled vocal range.

171. Pupils in Key Stages 3 and 4 extend their performance skills well. Most play their accompanying parts to a simple range of jazz, classical and popular music with good accuracy, counting the beats with the teacher until they come in and playing the notes independently. Those with more complex difficulties show more awareness of rhythm and music and need less support for involvement and playing their instruments. A broader range of instruments and rhythms are used and this, plus the teacher's effective use of signs and symbols to support learning, means that pupils not only know more songs and instruments but also have a broader understanding of musical language, such as minim and crotchet, and of musical styles. Pupils with additional special educational needs are offered excellent opportunities through individual music tuition to develop their sensory awareness and co-operation skills, as well as their musical understanding and skills.

172. The quality of teaching in music is very good and the teacher's musical talents and enthusiasm for music learning are imparted very well to pupils. His deep understanding of the subject, the pupils' individual needs and programmes and his quiet persistence in involving all pupils, no matter what the disability, means that these sessions are highly effective. They are very well taught and learning builds very well on small steps. Skills are reinforced very well and every pupil's efforts praised and valued. Pupils and staff enjoy their music making and celebrate the pupils' developing skills and knowledge. Pupils' response in music is very good

and often excellent, reflecting the very good way the teacher develops ideas. Through set routines throughout each lesson, pupils are well prepared for what they are to do and learn next. Pupils listen and attend very well, take turns with and share and collaborate with each other. They use the teacher's comments about their efforts well and strive to improve their performance. Older pupils are beginning to evaluate their own performance effectively, for example indicating whether they have played the right notes or played too quickly.

173. The school's music curriculum meets statutory requirements, although short-term planning does not always indicate the musical skills being explored and how they tie into the National Curriculum. The curriculum is highly relevant and broad, although the balance between performance and appraisal and composition needs further reconsideration. Careful notes are kept of pupils' progress and reports to parents are good, making it clear what the pupils know and can do, as well as what they have done. The music curriculum delivered is further supported by the use of music and song as well as poetry in the high quality music, drama and dramatic dance sessions which all pupils also receive.

174. Pupils throughout the school are given the opportunity to hear and take part in a range of music making that includes contemporary, jazz and classical music. There is scope, however, for this to be developed further, so that the musical appreciation and composition are more systematically catered for and more closely planned and recorded in relation to National Curriculum programmes of study. This would ensure that the music curriculum is broader within attainment targets and that the more able, in particular, are challenged further. Although most pupils do develop some understanding of musical notation, and how rhythms are written down, the understanding and performance skills of more able pupils in these areas could be developed further. The school takes part in a range of outside musical events and receives visits from musical and dramatic groups. These enrich the pupils' understanding and experiences further.

175. Music is ably led by a very experienced co-ordinator who manages the subject well and understands the pupils' broader special needs. All other staff incorporate music into their work and he overviews this effectively. Excellent use is made of support staff and of music resources, which have been recently extended to include a range of ethnic instruments. Resources are good and the pupils' benefit from the good specialist accommodation.

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

176. Personal, social and health education is a high priority in the school and a significant amount of time is allocated to the subject. At the beginning and end of the school day, and at lunchtimes, pupils follow carefully planned and effective routines designed to support their personal development. Lessons focus on a wide range of topics intended to help pupils understand and develop the skills for everyday living.

177. Pupils are assessed on entry to the school using baseline assessment and their personal and social needs and abilities are carefully noted. Teachers use this information to produce individual education and care plans for the pupils, and set realistic targets for pupils to achieve. Teachers acquire a detailed understanding of their pupils through this process, forming the basis of the very good relationships throughout the school. Pupils are set three individual targets each term against which their progress is measured and recorded. One target is focussed on self-advocacy and being able to understand and express their own opinions, one on the development of social skills, and one on self-care.

178. Pupils' progress and their achievement in personal, social, and health education are good overall. As pupils progress through the school, they learn to co-operate with each other and be mindful of others' feelings. They develop self-care skills such as the ability to go to the toilet independently, dressing and undressing, and eating and drinking. As part of break time routines, pupils are encouraged to allow others to perform specific tasks in turns, to pour out drinks for each other and select a biscuit when offered. They are able to make choices and to express their own opinions by word or gesture. In lessons, well-planned practical activities help pupils to learn about themselves and their bodies. They can select an item from a toilet bag, indicate its use, and on which part of the body it is used. They learn how to behave appropriately in different situations, to make decisions and abide by them.

179. Sex education and information regarding drug misuse are handled sensitively. When such topics are being discussed, older pupils, in particular, are encouraged to place a notice on the classroom door so that they can work without intrusion. They discuss issues openly and are very aware of which body parts are private and which bodily functions are personal. They develop an understanding of how the body changes during puberty and are able to discuss this subject sensibly and without embarrassment. By the time they leave they are well-informed individuals and able to understand and discuss issues in a simple way relating to their personal development, in the context of being a member of a society beyond school. The school nurse plays an active part in lessons where factual information is given and discussions on sexual behaviour take place.

180. The teaching in personal, social and health education lessons is of a good quality overall. Teachers plan carefully, matching pupil's needs with appropriate tasks and activities. This enables effective learning to take place and pupils to gain confidence in what they are doing. Pupils are taught about personal safety both in the home and in the wider environment. They can identify a number of hazards and say what they would do to resolve them. They record their work well through pictures, charts and drawing with the occasional written word or sentence, this acting as a permanent reminder of what they have learned. Individual and groups of pupils receive good support from the teachers and support assistants in confronting and coping with challenging ideas. Teachers encourage pupils with praise and positive comments, helping them to make a contribution to the lessons. Teachers have a wide repertoire of games, songs, and rhymes that are used well to involve all pupils, capturing their interest and stimulating learning. Any disruptive behaviour, which occurs very infrequently, is managed calmly, quietly and firmly.

181. Progress is assessed and recorded well. Both individual and lesson targets achieved are entered on cumulative recording sheets which identify pupils' progress over time. Although a very thorough system, it is very repetitious and time consuming. The subject is well led and co-ordinated. A new curriculum and scheme of work is in place that more closely matches pupils needs and subject requirements. External consultants, experienced in working with pupils with special educational needs, are helping the school to train staff to teach the subject effectively, and to meet any additional requirements of the new National Curriculum. The co-ordinator gives good support and guidance to staff in lesson planning, and in using a wide range of resources to help pupils learn. Pupils' records are detailed and are updated regularly. Personal, social, and health education is regularly monitored and evaluated by the subject co-ordinator. The monitoring lacks the clear criteria for teaching observations and feed back to staff that are necessary to create further improvement in the subject.

## PHYSICAL EDUCATION

182. There has been good improvement since the previous inspection. At that time pupils' achievements and the quality of teaching were variable, with weaknesses in the junior department and strengths in the secondary department. Teaching is now consistently good and all pupils make good progress. This is because the current subject co-ordinator, who has been at the school since September 1999, is very effective in this role and is the teacher in the vast majority of lessons throughout the school. There is a good subject policy and scheme of work. These guidelines are well referenced against the National Curriculum programmes of study. Good records are kept on individual pupils so the school is able to track their progress well. There have been major improvements in the accommodation as a result of the move to a new building. There is a good range of resources for most physical activities. Resources are accessible to both staff and pupils. In a few areas, particularly specialist athletics equipment for older pupils, the quantity and quality of resources is only just adequate.

183. All pupils achieve well in physical education in relation to their learning difficulties and any physical disabilities they have. Pupils in Key Stage 1 learn to follow instructions, perform simple movements such as sliding and rolling and repeat simple patterns. At this stage, body awareness, control of actions and understanding a variety of simple movements are developed in both gymnastics and dance lessons. By the end of Key Stage 2, most pupils know how to move equipment such as mats and benches safely. They make good progress in performing a wider range of jumps from different positions. In the secondary department, in Key Stages 3 and 4, pupils develop their gymnastics skills, such as balancing and, in some cases, they begin to understand the effect of exercise on their body. For example, one says that his heart beats faster after exercise.

184. At some time during the school year, every pupil in the school has swimming instruction in a good sized pool on a College campus about 30 minutes drive away. All pupils work towards nationally recognised accreditation and many make very good progress. During the inspection a pupil from one of the junior classes swam 100 metres for the first time.

185. Lessons in physical education make a significant contribution to the pupils' personal development. The value that adults attach to individual's efforts and the pupils' determination are such that there are clear gains in many pupils' self-confidence. Activities such as practising passing skills in games help pupils understanding of co-operation. Showering after physical activity is built into the timetable for older pupils.

186. The quality of teaching is consistently good in gymnastics, games' skills and swimming. There is insufficient evidence to make a secure judgement on the teaching of other aspects of the subject such as athletics and team games. All lessons seen during the inspection were judged to be satisfactory or better and there were many very good features in nearly all of the lessons. All lessons include a very good introduction by the teacher and warm-up activities. Explanations, instructions and questions are all extremely clear. The teacher's simple and precise language is always supported by very good signing. Symbols, printed on cards or a dice are often used to reinforce pupils' understanding of what is going to happen during the lesson or to help them participate by choosing activities. There are very good opportunities for pupils to contribute to discussions and many answer questions clearly and politely. All lessons in the gymnasium were delivered at a good pace with a well-thought out sequence of activities to maintain the pupils' interest and develop their skills. Very good use was made of the hall and learning resources,

including special aids for pupils with particular physical needs. For example, a pupil in a wheelchair achieved the feeling of independent movement by pulling on a string. There are high expectations that pupils will enjoy and succeed and very high expectations of behaviour. It is made very clear what is and what is not acceptable and the teacher is very consistent in her responses to the occasional disruptive behaviour.

187. No lessons seen featured a significant review of what had been learned. In most lessons the teacher's interactions and ongoing observation regarding individual pupils are so clear that a whole class evaluation is not always necessary. Pupils learn well because they understand what they are expected to do, try hard and are told how successful they have been. However, in one or two lessons, particularly with older, more able pupils, this results in some opportunities being missed to consolidate what has been achieved and discuss what will be happening next time.

188. The co-ordinator has very good knowledge of the subject and the particular needs of different groups of pupils. All pupils are included in the teacher introduction and warm-up activities at the start of all lessons. During the main activity part of lessons, pupils who have the most severe physical disabilities benefit greatly from individual programmes. These are designed by the co-ordinator in consultation with a physiotherapist and taught and managed well by support teachers or assistants. There were several examples of pupils with severe physical difficulties being highly motivated by the quality of the teaching and showing tremendous effort and perseverance.

## **RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

189. Improvement since the last inspection is good. In the previous report, teaching ranged from unsatisfactory to good. Teaching is now consistently good overall across the key stages with the exception of Key Stage 2 where it is satisfactory. Pupils achieve well because of the quality of the school's schemes of work, which are based on the local authority's new local agreed syllabus for religious education. An improvement in teachers' subject knowledge and the enthusiasm of the co-ordinator have all contributed significantly to the overall improved provision.

190. In Key Stages 1 and 2 the pupils learn about the stories of the Old and New Testament. They know the story of Jonah and that it is about saying 'yes' to God. They know the story of the birth of Jesus and that the wise men brought special gifts and how Sabbath is celebrated within Judaism. Older children have also looked at events in the life of Jesus such as in the calming of the storm. In Key Stages 3 and 4 pupils have studied other religions. Within Hinduism they know the story of Rama and Sita and the celebration of Divali. They have also compared the wedding ceremonies in different religions. Pupils make good progress. As they move through the school, they gain a wider knowledge of religious beliefs and practices through a study of the six main world religions. By the end of their time in school they can retell religious stories, identify religious teaching and practices, such as prayer, fasting and know that these apply to more than one religion. They can also suggest meaning in religious symbols and start to look for similarities and differences between religions.

191. The quality of teaching and learning is good overall. The planning of lessons is good and very imaginative use is made of resources. For instance, pupils marvelled at Hindu wedding clothes and jewellery in a lesson for the oldest pupils, whilst audiotapes, water sprays, musical instruments, costumes smells and models were used extensively in story telling situations. Expectations of pupils are high and pupils respond well showing great interest and high levels of concentration on the tasks they have been asked to do. Presentations are lively and pupils are enthusiastic about what they are going to do. This motivation makes the pupils try even harder.

Lessons move at a good pace keeping the pupils interested. Where teaching is very good teachers adopt a multi-sensory approach and have briefed their support staff well as to the intended outcomes of the lesson. Information and communication technology is not used to support learning due to a lack of resources. This is a weakness. Good opportunities are taken by teachers to develop spiritual, moral, social and cultural awareness through lessons.

192. The subject is well led and managed. The scheme of work is well used and teachers' confidence and subject knowledge are growing and are supported and developed by the enthusiastic co-ordinator. The school has a narrow range of resources but further development of these is planned. Loan facilities of artefacts are used to supplement the school's resources. The school lacks ICT resources to support the teaching of religious education but some use is made of video material. The subject is monitored satisfactorily by the co-ordinator, through teacher discussions, previewing of planning and observation of some lessons, but there is no formal system of monitoring and evaluating teaching, learning and the curriculum. Assessment is at a very early stage of development and has yet to make an impact on pupils' learning. Pupils' progress is judged against the levels found in the Kent agreed syllabus at the end of each term and recorded. The time allocation for the subject has increased and is now in line with that recommended in the agreed syllabus. This is a contributory factor to the improvement seen in the subject since the last inspection.

## **POST 16**

193. The Post 16 department has significant strengths. Relationships are very good between students, and with staff. Students care about, help, and respect each other. The range of accreditation on offer, and the teaching by specialist staff, enhances learning and prepares students well for moving on from school to college. However, there is insufficient concentration on specific opportunities for the development of key skills, of numeracy and literacy and information and communication technology, due to an imbalance in the curriculum, although some of these aspects are promoted through other subjects in Post 16. Links with the local community and college resources, following the move to the new site, are steadily increasing. Students have frequent opportunities to go out shopping to improve their social and numeracy skills, visit the library to improve their communication and reading, and local sports centre for physical and sports skills development. Attainment on entry to the Post 16 department, is lower than the rest of the school, since the provision caters for students who are not yet able to take up places at colleges of further education.

194. Since the last report, the improvement in the provision for the Post 16 department is very good. Students have spacious accommodation including a common room area with several computers, access to specialist teaching rooms for food technology, science, and design and technology, as well as access to specialist rooms. Accreditation through the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) is in place for all and more able students are involved in Youth Award Scheme (YAS).

195. All students achieve well while attending the Post 16 provision. A few students come from other establishments, bringing with them different experiences and difficulties. They make significant progress in the time they are at the school, and leave with a good range of accreditation through ASDAN Challenge, for example, Sport and Leisure, World of Work, Expressive Arts, Beliefs and Values. Through the YAS, students gain accreditation in Starting

out, horticulture, meal and food preparation, money, photography, work awareness, sound, rhythm and music, Out in the Community, and Sports Studies. In addition they all reach their potential in personal and social development, and leave school with the ability to become a participating member of society and survive in the world outside school. In this the school fully meets its aims.

196. In literacy, the policy is to teach the learning objectives within the ASDAN framework of modules. Students achieve very well in listening and communication skills but progress in reading and writing are only satisfactory. The most able communicators are confident with strangers, ask questions and talk about topics of interest to them, such as their meal preparation or gardening. Students listen well to each other, and take turns in talking and listening with good awareness of others. An example of communication between peers involves spontaneously explaining and commenting in brief statements, about traditions and culture, when watching a video of a Sikh wedding, involving one of the students' families. Students who are unable to speak are especially alert in their attention in this situation. In an informal situation two more able talkers talked encouragingly and empathetically to a student with multiple physical and sight difficulties, held his hand and stroked his arm. This MDVI student answered by making vocal responses, changes in facial expression and showing an alert demeanour. In reading, a few students have a basic sight vocabulary and know initial letter sounds. They read signs and social sight words, and are aware, for example, of the range of signs for public toilets and for fire exits. Students regularly visit the school library and public library where they choose books. They enjoy sharing reading and know the kinds of books that they prefer. More able students in the course of their work, are reading and using symbols in writing on the computer. Students copy using word processing, reinforcing ideas such as 'the blue tap is for cold water' and type up lists of shopping and menus.

197. In numeracy, students make satisfactory progress overall, with some good progress in understanding and use of money, and measuring. Students identify coins and can do simple addition of money. They use money in a range of shops, where they for example purchase ingredients for cooking or meal preparation. Autistic students know they are going to the shops, and anticipate the event by taking money in their purses. Students sometimes purchase personal items that parents have asked for them to buy at the shops. Autistic students anticipate an event or activity by association of ideas or show an awareness of others' shopping through examining, touching and seeing items from a shopping expedition. In design and technology, students measure materials with varying degrees of assistance, for example when making plant boxes. When preparing food, they weigh and measure volume, and a few can estimate with some accuracy. They make little use of the computer for numeracy at present. Profound and multiple learning difficulties and autistic students learn to operate up to three switches to make music happen, or to activate a screen.

198. Students make very good progress in personal, moral and social education including sex education. This is well supported through their vocational preparation, their experiences in the college, the community, and in residential experiences. They take part in the Kent Festival in music and dance and they visit the theatre. By the time they leave school, most who are able to, take care of their personal daily needs, prepare simple meals, carry out basic shopping and cleaning, and know how to spend their leisure time. Through their out-of-school experiences, they show they have made good gains in social competency, such as ordering food, helping others within school, asking questions of others, social conversation and an good awareness of appropriate social behaviour. The higher achievers have a breadth of experience from work experience placements in local hairdressers, or from working in an old peoples' home.

199. Work experience is as inclusive as is possible. Much of it takes place in school, for example, students join other classes where they assist pupils, or in tasks, such as cleaning equipment, or helping in the office. If students are deemed ready, there are also out-of-school placements, such as at the Sports Centre. The school is engaged in building up appropriate work experience placements in the local community, following the relocation of the school. There are good links with Hadlow College of Agriculture, where students attend a National Proficiency Course over a period of two years. Students who are ready to prepare for college attend one day a week with support, the 'Pathway' course at Kent College where they are assessed over 10 weeks. Following this, they are placed on suitable courses. The higher achievers have a breadth of experience from work experience placements in local hairdressers, or from working in old peoples' home. Work experience, in all its forms, enhances student's understanding of the world of work, but it also has a significant impact on their personal and social development.

200. The teaching in Post 16 classes is good overall and often better. In a third of the lessons seen the quality of teaching was very good. The quality of the teamwork with the support assistants is of a high order so that sensitivity to the needs of pupils ensures they have positive learning experiences. An example of effective teaching of PMLD students was carefully planned in the range of activities, and the resources used to stimulate the senses of the students. They responded to music, joss sticks, lights, touches, and bubbles, by a calming, smiling, tracking movement and vocalising pleasure. Teaching is purposeful in this department and relationships are very good, with the result that students enter into learning with good attitudes, tolerance and enthusiasm. They work with good focus on the task in hand, less able students being well supported by the support assistants. In very successful lessons, opportunities to review and check learning are frequent, and students make good gains in knowledge and understanding within the lesson. Resources are usually plentiful, appropriate and used well, with the result that students' understanding is enhanced, for example use of real money, and teacher-made resources for sex education. Occasionally for PMLD or MDVI students, there are insufficient stimuli to aid their understanding, for example in drama and poetry. In less effective teaching, where planning does not identify clear learning objectives, although these may be clear as the lesson unfolds, opportunities to be aware, to extend learning or practise key skills are missed. The plenary is then not used for students to review their own learning. The planning of lessons for inclusion is effective in practical subjects because students can help each other cooperate in small groups. When the whole group is involved and the lesson is dependent on students' prior knowledge and understanding, turn taking can lead to a very slow pace and SSA's are underused in the circle for significant periods of time. Higher-ability students' opportunities to extend their knowledge through discussion are curtailed. The use of homework is fairly limited. Although there is correspondence with parents in homework books, opportunities for support from parents are not fully explored. However, parents of Asian students have good involvement in supporting learning in religious education, by sending in artefacts such as videos and wedding clothes, and providing foods for students to experience and taste.

201. The quality and range of learning opportunities is good and has a positive impact on the achievement of students. Support from links within the new community is steadily building and establishing, for example, work experience. Planning is fully tied into the accreditation programme. Students' personal progress is tracked in the cumulative record and there are also targets for each of the three groups of students within the department. The links between Key Stage 4 and Post 16, and the development of key skills in the Post 16 curriculum are not in the given sufficient focus.