

INSPECTION REPORT

Harlow Fields School

Harlow

LEA area: Essex

Unique reference number: 131838

Headteacher: Dr. Barbara Thomas

Reporting inspector: Charles Hackett
21081

Dates of inspection: 16th – 19th October 2000

Inspection number: 227102

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community Special
Age range of pupils:	3 to 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Tendring Road Harlow Essex
Postcode:	CM18 6RN
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Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr. Leo Bishop

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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C. Hackett 21081	Registered inspector	Physical Education	How high are standards? How well are pupils or students taught? Parents' summary
E Parrish 9577	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils or students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents? Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development Attendance
V. Wilkinson 18461	Team inspector	PSHE English Art	Under Fives
G. Davies 1987	Team Inspector	Design and Technology Modern Foreign Language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils or students? Careers
A. Tattersall 20466	Team Inspector	Maths Information Communication Technology Music	Post 16
G. Pirt 14563	Team inspector	Geography History	How well is the school led and managed? Special Educational Needs
M. Holohan 1769	Team Inspector	Science Religious Education	Equal Opportunities Assessment English as an additional language Pupils' attitudes, values and personal

			development
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Any concerns or complaints about the inspection or the report should be raised with the inspection contractor. Complaints that are not satisfactorily resolved by the contractor should be raised with OFSTED by writing to:

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Inspection Quality Division
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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Harlow Fields is a community special school for boys and girls between the ages of 3 and 19. It is a new school that has only been open since April 1999. It replaced three previous LEA special schools. During its first year staff and pupils faced considerable disruption; they had to work on three sites and in a new building whilst major building work was taking place. The school provides for pupils with a wide range of special needs. Pupils' Statements of Special Need show that 49% of pupils have moderate learning difficulties, 21% severe difficulties, 17% profound and multiple learning difficulties, 10% are on the autistic spectrum and 3% have behaviour problems. One boy's Statement refers specifically to physical difficulties. As a result of pupils' special educational needs their attainment when they enter the school is well below average. There are currently 129 pupils on roll, which is large in comparison with similar types of schools. Only a small number of pupils are of an ethnic minority background. 33 % of pupils are entitled to free school meals.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Harlow Fields has made an impressive start. A great deal has been achieved in the short time the school has been open. Evidence shows that before joining the school many pupils' achievements were unsatisfactory. They are now satisfactory and they are making good progress because the overall quality of teaching is good. The leadership and management of the school has been effective in raising the quality of teaching and ensuring the school is well placed to develop into a high quality educational provision. At present it provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Provides good teaching which ensures pupils over the age of seven are making good progress.
- Offers a good education to Post 16 students.
- Has a commitment to establishing good relationships with parents; it provides them with very good reports on their children's progress.
- Monitors and supports pupils' attendance very well.
- Offers very good careers and social support in preparation for pupils leaving school.
- Ensures it has a very good range of policies in place upon which to develop its work.
- Has developed very good teamwork amongst staff.

What could be improved

- Opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology.
- Procedures and guidance for staff in the management of a small number of pupils with specific behaviour difficulties.
- Staff knowledge and expertise in meeting the wide range of special needs within the school.
- The teaching of pupils between the ages of 5 and 7.
- Opportunities for pupils' spiritual and cultural development.

The areas for improvement will form the basis of the action plan prepared by the governing body.

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has not previously been inspected.

STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	By age 7	by age 11	By age 16	by age 19	Key very good A Good B Satisfactory C Unsatisfactory D Poor E
Speaking and listening	C	B	B	B	
Reading	C	B	B	B	
Writing	C	B	B	B	
Mathematics	C	B	B	B	
Personal, social and health education	C	B	B	B	
Other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	C	B	B	B	

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

The school has made good progress in reaching the targets it has set itself within its development plan. This has resulted in pupils making good progress. Progress in art, design and technology, science, geography and religious education is good. It is also good in most aspects of physical education. Progress is satisfactory in music. It is only in information and communication technology where pupils are making unsatisfactory progress.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils' attitudes towards school are good; many show real enjoyment and enthusiasm for their work.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Behaviour is often good in and out of school. The vast majority of pupils understand the difference between right and wrong. There are, though, a few occasions when the behaviour of a small number of pupils disrupts the work of others.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils show an increasing maturity as they progress through the school. Many are keen to take responsibility both for their work and in undertaking tasks around the school.
Attendance	Good. Pupils are keen to come into school.

Pupils get on well with staff. There are examples of pupils on the autistic spectrum relating very well to the individual staff who work with them. When this occurs in lessons it means all pupils can make progress. The attitudes of Post 16 students when off-site are very good; they relate well to the members of public they meet in the shops and sports centre.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Aged up to 7	Aged 8-11	aged 11-16	aged over 16
Lessons seen overall	Satisfactory	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.

During the inspection in 19% of lessons teaching and learning was very good or excellent, in 41% it was good, 33% was satisfactory and 7% unsatisfactory or poor. Teaching in the class for the youngest pupils, although its overall quality is satisfactory, does not always effectively meet the needs of all pupils. The planning of lessons does not ensure all will make progress. In the rest of the school teaching is successful in supporting pupils learning. Planning is effective. For example, literacy hour lessons have a clear framework that carefully match pupils' assessed ability levels and ensure their progress is good. In a small number of classes the teaching of pupils with special needs that the teacher is unfamiliar with, for example pupils with profound and multiple needs, often relies on the expertise of more specialist staff. When these are not available the quality of teaching can be unsatisfactory. Staff, though, are working hard at developing their skills to enable them to teach pupils with a wide range of special educational needs.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. The curriculum offers a suitable range of subjects and is relevant for the needs of all pupils. Opportunities for support from a range of therapists are well integrated. Post 16 students are given good support to prepare them for the demands of life after school.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Good. Well planned lessons and effective specialist support ensures pupils make good progress
Provision for pupils' personal development, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Satisfactory. Provision for pupils' social and moral education is good, but there are weaknesses in the opportunities provided for pupils' spiritual and cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Satisfactory. Harlow Fields is a caring environment, where staff know the pupils well. Although there is a good behaviour policy it needs to be extended to provide staff with increased guidance and support to deal with pupils who show challenging behaviour.

The partnership established with the majority of parents is good. The school works very hard at developing positive links and the reports provided on pupils' progress are good. There are the beginnings of good links with other schools and colleges, which should see the development of increased opportunities for pupils to mix with more pupils in mainstream education. Staff show considerable care towards pupils and inspectors had no concerns about the way staff manage pupils with challenging behaviour. However there is a need to ensure staff are consistent in their approach to moving pupils (manual handling) , recording

occasions when it becomes necessary to physically hold a pupil and in the development and use of behaviour programmes for those pupils with significant behaviour difficulties.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Good. The headteacher and senior staff provide strong leadership and have a clear vision as to how they see the school developing. They have worked very hard to ensure that in such a short time there are a wide range of school policies and procedures firmly in place.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Satisfactory. Policies and committee structures are in place and governors have made appropriate plans to increase their involvement.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Monitoring of teaching and learning by senior staff is good but monitoring by governors and subject co-ordinators are not yet fully developed.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Resources and specific grants are being used well.

The school has sufficient staff and their qualifications to teach all the subjects of the curriculum are good. However, staff are still developing their expertise to work with the wide range of special educational needs within the school. The accommodation and resources are very good. Given the difficult circumstances surrounding the closure of three schools the senior management team have been very resilient and determined in ensuring the school is being developed with the clear aim of providing a good quality of education for all its pupils. The principals of best value have been applied well.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The help given to ensure pupils make progress • How comfortable it is to approach the school • Their children like coming to school • The school works hard to involve them • Teaching is good and the teachers have high expectations 	** see note below

*** A very small group of parents are openly critical of the school. They are unhappy with the headteacher, annual meeting with governors, the physical control of pupils (including the use of time-out rooms) and the progress of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. A much larger group of parents expressed concern at the damaging effect of this small group of parents.*

The inspection team found evidence that supported the many positive views put forward by parents. Inspectors, although recognising that some aspects of the school need further development, believe the school has made a very encouraging start. Therefore, inspectors

agree with the majority of parents' view that the criticisms of the very small group of parents are not valid.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

- 1 Pupils' ability levels are well below average. However, given their Statements of Special Educational Need and the unsatisfactory achievements of many before they joined the school, their achievements are satisfactory. Assessment data and a scrutiny of work show that achievements of pupils of all types of special need are at least on a par with those of pupils attending other schools. The achievements of boys and girls show no differences. Progress for all pupils against targets within their individual education plans (IEPS) is good.
- 2 For the majority of pupils progress, since the school, began has been good. These pupils include all those with moderate and severe learning difficulties. During the inspection in 55% of lessons pupils were making at least good progress; in 18% progress was very good or excellent. Progress was satisfactory in 32 % of lessons. It was unsatisfactory in 13% of lessons. However, in a few lessons where progress for the majority of pupils is satisfactory or better, for one or two pupils with more specialised needs progress is unsatisfactory. For example, in a religious education lesson for pupils aged fourteen the majority of pupils made very good progress because of very good teaching. However, for two pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties progress was unsatisfactory because they were not given sufficient support to join in the session.
- 3 The progress of pupils under 7 is satisfactory. Better progress occurs in developing communication skills and science but progress is less evident in other subject areas. Pupils with autism and behaviour difficulties in this group make less progress than those in other classes in the school. This is because staff have difficulty in managing their behaviour.
- 4 Progress is good in English, mathematics, science, design and technology, art, geography, religious education, personal, social and health education and generally in physical education. It is satisfactory in music but unsatisfactory in information and communication technology. Although no lessons were seen in history and French, a scrutiny of work shows progress to be at least satisfactory.
- 5 In English pupils are making good progress against their targets in speaking and listening, writing and reading. For 10 and 11 year olds this good progress is linked to the particularly good skills teachers have in developing these areas. Progress in reading is good for older pupils because of the expertise of teachers in using a structured reading programme. Pupils make very good progress in literacy hour lessons and progress here has had a positive impact on pupils' literacy skills in other areas of the curriculum. For example in work undertaken in personal, social and health education.
- 6 The national numeracy strategy has had a positive effect on progress in mathematics. Pupils enjoy the mental arithmetic parts of lessons and use skills developed in other subjects, for example, design and technology and science.
- 7 The overall progress of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties is at least satisfactory and there are examples of lessons where they make good progress. These occur when the teacher and support assistants are familiar with meeting the needs of

such pupils. Examples included physical education for Year 11 pupils where pupils enjoy the challenge of moving on apparatus. They show real recognition and pleasure in their achievements. Similarly twelve year old pupils enjoy success in PHSE lessons. On a few occasions progress for these pupils is not as good when teachers lack the skills to fully involve them in the lesson

- 8 Progress of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders varies. For a few individuals who receive regular support from specialist staff their progress can be very good. Staff work very well in developing pupils' ability to listen to instructions and join other pupils in activities. There are though occasions when the lack of staff expertise in working with these pupils has a negative impact on their progress.
- 9 For the small number of pupils whose significant special need is related to behaviour, progress varies. It can be good when the teacher has the skills to manage behavioural difficulties well. This was seen in a class for older primary pupils when undertaking literacy, numeracy and science lessons. However, in an older class group pupils made unsatisfactory progress when teaching strategies failed to deal with their behaviour difficulties. This was the case in a few physical education and geography lessons.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

- 10 Pupils enjoy attending school. They often show a good attitude to lessons and like participating in a wide range of activities. Examples of this positive response include a science practical on the manufacture of fabrics, involvement in paired reading with pupils from a neighbouring school and swimming sessions. A significant majority of parents recognise their children enjoy school and many drew the attention of the inspection team to the social benefits their children have derived from attending Harlow Fields. During the inspection the majority of pupils were seen to be keen to work hard. This is all the more creditable to the pupils coming, as it does, after a lengthy period of disruption caused by the reorganisation of the school. Pupils' positive attitudes are further illustrated by their willingness to take part in tasks which require both concentration and self-confidence. This was effectively demonstrated in older pupils participation in a performance of Macbeth in which they showed an ability to deliver lines to an audience. This developing self-confidence is also illustrated by year 6 pupils' participation in a paired reading lesson with pupils from a neighbouring school and their ability to form good working relationships.
- 11 Overall, pupils' behaviour is satisfactory but there are significant variations. In lessons, such as in a year 6 religious education lesson on Hinduism or a year 11 mathematics lesson where pupils are undertaking a data handling project on school transport, behaviour is very good. The positive behaviour in classes is often a consequence of the good relationships that exist between staff and pupils, which is characterised by mutual respect and good humour. However, when there is a lack of effective plans to help pupils behave appropriately their behaviour can be unsatisfactory or even poor. An example of this was in a music lesson for year 4 pupils where, despite the majority of pupils behaving well, the lack of suitable plans to control the behaviour of two pupils meant they were disruptive and achieved little. The same difficulty occurred in a basketball lesson for 14-year-old pupils. Pupils failed to pay sufficient attention to the teacher and displayed silly behaviour rather than develop their skills. On occasions the lack of staff expertise in dealing with the few pupils who display challenging behaviour can result in them being disruptive and achieving little in class. Their behaviour can then have a negative effect on others in the class.
- 12 In the school's early days the level of exclusions was high but this was partly as a

consequence of the disruption to everyday routines for older pupils with behaviour difficulties. Currently, reflecting the more settled atmosphere in the school, the level has shown a marked decline. Whilst a small number of instances of pupils bullying each other does occur, they are met with speedy and appropriate action by staff and do not represent a significant feature in the life of the school.

- 13 Harlow Fields is developing a sense of being a community. In the short time in which it has been established pupils have come together in sharing a growing sense of purpose and concern for each other. Examples of this are seen in lessons, such as a Year 11 maths lesson where pupils supported each other in their group work and in a Year 7 lesson where pupils showed a keen team spirit in the playing of basket ball. This is also effectively illustrated by the pupils' response to the recently formed School's Council where the major concern of the pupil representatives was that those pupils with additional needs were represented and their opinions heard. Pupils of all ages show a willingness to take responsibility for tasks such as returning registers or carrying messages. The successful completion of work experience and participation in outdoor education activities is a further illustration of the good levels of pupils' personal development.
- 14 Attendance is good. Pupils enjoy coming to school and usually arrive promptly. The school's record of attendance is sometimes distorted by absences due to the very poor health of a few pupils.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

- 15 The overall quality of teaching is good. During the inspection the quality of teaching and learning was very good or excellent in 19% of lessons, in 41% good and in 33% satisfactory. In 7% of lessons the overall quality of teaching was unsatisfactory or poor. However, in a few lessons where teaching for almost all pupils was deemed to be at least satisfactory, the quality of teaching for a small number of pupils in the class was unsatisfactory. This was usually because the teachers have limited experience and knowledge of pupils with either profound and multiple learning difficulties or with significant behaviour difficulties and as a result failed to include them sufficiently in the lesson.
- 16 For pupils over the age of 7, the teaching of English, mathematics, science, art, design and technology, geography, PSHE and religious education is good. Most of the teaching of physical education, particularly that of the subject co-ordinator, is good, or very good. However there are examples of weaker teaching when the teachers either give pupils insufficient opportunity to engage in physical activities or fail to manage the unsatisfactory behaviour of a few pupils who disrupt others. The teaching of music is satisfactory but the overall quality of the teaching of information and communication technology (ICT) is unsatisfactory. During the inspection there were examples of good ICT teaching but overall teachers fail to provide pupils with appropriate support to develop their skills. As a result pupils' learning is unsatisfactory.
- 17 The overall expectations of teachers are high. Teachers seek to ensure that classrooms are appropriate learning environments and that pupils have suitable individual learning targets. These targets are written and evaluated effectively to ensure pupils' are making progress. In the best lessons teachers plan clearly to ensure work planned in lessons is linked to pupils' targets.
- 18 The quality of teaching for pupils under 7 is satisfactory. Strengths include the warmth of relationships and the acceptance of pupils as individuals. Weaknesses include the insufficient strategies to manage the different special needs within the group. As a

result there are lessons where pupils are not making sufficient progress. During the inspection these occurred in music and mathematics sessions.

- 19 The overall quality of teaching for all pupils over the age of 7 is good. As a result pupils rate of learning is also good. This applies to pupils no matter what their significant special needs are, although there are examples where the teaching of pupils with autism and those with profound and multiple learning difficulties varies from unsatisfactory to excellent. An example of excellent teaching of pupils on the autistic spectrum was seen when the teacher responsible for these pupils took a group of eleven to fourteen year olds for English. Her planning and approach towards the pupils was outstanding.
- 20 Often where the teaching of such pupils is less effective is when the teacher and support assistants lack skills and experience in this area. Example of this occurred in music and geography lessons for mixed secondary groups.
- 21 The teaching of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties can be very good. Examples of this were seen in food technology and science for secondary pupils. Here teachers plan well to ensure all pupils are involved. Pupils clearly enjoy the experiences and get a great deal from them. However, there are examples of teachers failing to plan for the inclusion of these pupils in lessons. When this occurs pupils are only on the periphery of the lesson and their learning is unsatisfactory.
- 22 An important positive element in the quality of teaching is the good relationship between staff and pupils. As a result of this pupils often listen carefully to teachers as they explain particular aspects. This was the case in badminton where older pupils clearly have considerable respect for the teacher and listen and followed advice on different shots with considerable interest.
- 23 Teachers and the whole range of support assistants work well together as teams. This is at its most effective when support staff assist individual pupils on the autistic spectrum to join in lesson activities. This enhances greatly the quality of learning of these pupils. Throughout the school support staff play a key role in assisting the quality of teaching and learning. Many examples in the classes for each age group were seen of very effective teamwork between teachers and support staff.
- 24 In the few lessons where the overall quality of teaching is unsatisfactory, the teachers often fail to manage the behaviour of all pupils appropriately. For example, in a physical education lesson for younger secondary pupils the disruptive behaviour of pupils is allowed to spoil the learning opportunities of others. Teachers either fail to use behaviour programmes agreed or there are no behaviour management strategies in place.

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

- 25 The school is successful in its aim of providing a broad, balanced and relevant curriculum that reflects pupils' and students special educational needs. The quality and range of learning opportunities is good for pupils under the age of five years, for all pupils over the age of seven and for Post 16 students. It is satisfactory for pupils aged between 5 and 7 years. With the exception of provision for information and

communication technology (ICT) the requirements of the National Curriculum are met in all subjects. Insufficient use is made of ICT across the curriculum. Appropriate arrangements for sex education and religious education are offered.

- 26 Both the National Literacy and National Numeracy strategies have been appropriately implemented and are being effectively used in the teaching of all age groups. Good opportunities to use literacy and numeracy skills are also being provided in other subjects of the curriculum. Examples include science and design and technology.
- 27 The overall quality of subject policies is good. They reflect the aims of the school and National Curriculum guidelines. Long term plans for each subject are appropriate, as they provide pupils with a good range of learning experiences and seek to ensure they make progress as they move through the school.
- 28 The planning and organisation of the timetable ensures that, with the exception of ICT, sufficient time is allocated for each subject for all age groups. A great deal of thought has been given to the development of the options system for the oldest pupils. This system enables pupils to have the opportunity to make choices from a balanced range of activities, which reflect their post school needs. Options include; art, music, food technology, design and technology and land studies. These subjects are studied by all pupils and lead to Asdan accreditation as Bronze Award, Transition Challenge or ALL (accreditation for life and living). Post 16 students attend the local college for further education. Here they have had experience of brick laying and photography and visits to look at a variety of sculptures in the town centre. Appropriately the school is currently negotiating with the college for the provision of courses, including accredited vocationally based skills courses, for pupils in their last two years at school.
- 29 Special programmes for physiotherapy, occupational and speech and language therapy are provided and integrated well with the whole school curriculum. They ensure minimum disruption to the overall balance of the timetable for each individual pupil. The same consideration for balance has been given to the provision of sensory programmes for individuals or small groups, who benefit from time in the multi-sensory studio.
- 30 The provision for careers education and guidance is a strength of the school. It is underpinned by a clear policy that stresses that not only does careers education prepare pupils and students for the world of work, but also helps their smooth transition to adult life, builds confidence and self esteem and increases their awareness of themselves and the local community. Pupils and students take part in a very well structured programme that includes work experience, taster days at work or college and visits to work places. There are also good links with a specialist careers adviser.
- 31 Provision for extra-curricular activities are good. A good range of activities is available during the school day. These include lunch-time clubs for football, music, indoor activities, books and stories and weight training. Some pupils also take part in after school physical training and visit the nearby outdoor pursuit centre. It is good that residential visits are also being planned.
- 32 The provision for the spiritual, moral, social and cultural development of the pupils is satisfactory overall. Although provision for moral and social development of pupils is good, there are weaknesses in both spiritual and cultural development.
- 33 Provision for spiritual development is unsatisfactory. Assemblies are held regularly in both upper and lower schools and they are used appropriately to bring pupils together and celebrate achievements. There is a programme of assembly themes based on the

RE and PSHE syllabus, but only one of the assemblies observed fulfilled the requirements of an act of collective worship. In lessons and assemblies there are few opportunities for pupils to pause and reflect upon what they have heard. There is little evidence of a planned provision for spiritual development in many aspects of the curriculum. However, in music pupils are often enthralled by the wide variety of sounds and rhythms they experience and frequently indicate deep enjoyment and pleasure in the activity. Although most pupils are aware of different Christian festivals such as Easter and Christmas, the school is not using opportunities to involve visiting clergy or other adults from different faith communities.

- 34 The school's provision for moral development is good and this makes a strong contribution to the caring and secure atmosphere of the school. All staff share a commitment to providing clear guidance about what is right and wrong and act as good role models. Teachers give clear messages about moral values and take care to explain the need for rules. Pupils are taught to develop mutual respect for everyone in the school, regardless of gender and ability. In a developing PHSE programme, pupils are being taught to respect different viewpoints. Caring attitudes are encouraged in all aspects of school life and pupils learn to be kind and consider other people's feelings. The school has recently formed a School Council which will give pupils an opportunity to contribute towards shaping the school as a community.
- 35 There is good provision for social development. Teachers, support staff and many pupils play a key role as models of courteous and considerate behaviour. The school actively promotes the importance of good relationships and pupils are encouraged to show consideration to adults and each other. As soon as they start school, they are helped to understand the need to consider others, for example, by waiting patiently in a queue and allowing other people to pass. Several pupils help fellow pupils to get around the school. During lessons, pupils are encouraged to help less able classmates and to smile and applaud when something goes well. Several pupils were observed offering to help their teachers at break by running errands and helping to tidy up. Many parents commented on the improvements in their children's social skills since attending the school.
- 36 Cultural development is unsatisfactory. Although pupils are taught to appreciate a few of their own cultural traditions, there are very limited opportunities to increase their awareness of life in a multi-racial society. There are few, if any, direct links with ethnic minority cultural organisations or faith communities. There are limited contributions to promoting pupils' enjoyment of their own cultural heritage from areas of the curriculum or from extra-curricular activities. However, there are some opportunities to draw upon the traditions of other cultures in art and music.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

- 37 The steps that the school takes to ensure pupils' welfare, health and safety are satisfactory. The school is a caring environment in which staff show genuine affection for their pupils. Teachers, and support staff know pupils very well and do their level best to respond to their physical and emotional needs as quickly as possible. This is well illustrated by the calm and gentle way staff respond to the behavioural needs of pupils with autistic spectrum disorders. Staff are very conscious of the need to pay close attention to protecting pupils from harm and to promoting their health, safety and general well-being.
- 38 The school has done well to provide training courses and procedures in such a short space of time to enable staff to cope with the complex needs of the pupils. However, in

spite of these good efforts, there are occasions when a few members of staff lack awareness of potential hazards. For example, although staff have received training on how to handle and move pupils, it is unsatisfactory that some staff do not always use a hoist to move pupils and attempt to move them unaided. The school has not yet completed a risk assessment for each pupil.

- 39 The school has developed a detailed behaviour management policy, which effectively meets the needs of the majority of the pupils. The positive approach of the behaviour policy, with its emphasis on rewards such as merit stars and certificates together with rewards such as using the computer or the trampoline at the sports centre, gives clear goals for pupils to work towards. The good role models provided by staff, together with effective working between teachers' and support staff also helps to develop and maintain acceptable levels of behaviour in the majority of lessons. Similarly, the involvement of pupils and parents in the development of behavioural targets gives all involved a shared sense of purpose.
- 40 However, the school has yet to develop its behaviour policy to ensure that it is equally effective in meeting the needs of pupils with significant behaviour difficulties. Whilst pupils' behaviour is well monitored through a comprehensive system of review sheets, the information gathered is not always used to develop effective behaviour plans. Where behaviour plans are in place not all staff are aware of these and consequently this does not ensure their consistent application. This can be especially significant for secondary aged pupils who have a range of specialist subject teachers.
- 41 The assessment of pupils' academic progress is extremely detailed involving a range of comparative assessment scales in each subject, together with comparison with progress in the National Curriculum. Supporting tests are used well in English and mathematics to measure progress. The quality of assessment procedures currently differs between subjects, reflecting the recent establishment of these procedures. In religious education, for example, recording tends to be descriptive of the work covered rather than recording what has been learnt whereas in science the assessment of the skills necessary for the pupils to undertake experimental and investigative work are better developed. In some subjects, the procedures are too recently established for their effectiveness to be evaluated. Opportunities are available for external accreditation for pupils leaving school. The Certificate of Educational Achievement is available in a number of subjects including English, mathematics and science. All pupils are following either the Asdan Youth Award or the ALL programme.
- 42 The Code of Practice procedures for the annual review of pupils' progress and Statements are followed appropriately. Medium term plans are established at the Annual Review and these are translated into targets. The school has given much thought to the involvement of both pupils and parents in the development of these targets. The care taken by the school to ensure the use of language that is readily understood by both parents and pupils is a praiseworthy feature of the system.
- 43 Child protection procedures meet requirements and are covered by policies that are known to all staff who handle issues in a sensitive manner. The health and safety policy is well documented but does not yet have a direct input from the governing body. A few minor health and safety concerns were noted during the inspection and were drawn to the attention of the deputy headteacher. There are good arrangements for first aid and for administering medicines, and fire drills are held regularly. Staff supervising school meals make a very good contribution to the harmonious life of the school through their good humoured and supportive help. The arrangements for pupils' arrival and departure by organised transport are good.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

- 44 The school shows a strong commitment to building close and effective links with parents. This makes a positive contribution to the progress pupils make and the quality of life within the school. In the inspection questionnaires, which a high percentage of parents returned, and at the pre-inspection meeting with parents, the majority registered their strong support for the school. Only a very small minority expressed any concerns. Inspection evidence supports parents' high levels of satisfaction with the way in which the school works in partnership with them.
- 45 The school has put a great deal of thought into developing a constructive partnership with parents and the quality of information it provides for them is very good. The home/school diaries promote good communications and are used very effectively by staff to tell parents about what aspects of the day have gone well and if any difficulties have arisen. All letters are written in a clear and accessible style and they keep parents up to date with current topics and with school activities. The prospectus and a helpful induction programme give useful information about school routines, and introduce ways in which parents can support their child's learning at home. There are termly consultation evenings where parents discuss the progress their child has made. There is a parents' room in school which parents are free to use during the school day, and particularly on a Friday, when there is a regular coffee morning. Parents like the way this enables them to give each other practical help and support and the way staff pop in to talk to them.
- 46 The school actively encourages parents to become involved in the life of the school and provides a welcoming environment for them. School policies encourage teachers to involve parents and several make a regular commitment to help in school, for example by helping in classrooms, with swimming, at lunchtimes, and in the library. These volunteers told inspectors that they felt appreciated and valued by staff. Many more help the school occasionally, for example, by accompanying the children on outside trips. Parents have already signed the home/school partnership agreement and the vast majority co-operate readily, for example by helping their children reach their targets and by reporting absences promptly. Parents demonstrate their interest in the school by supporting school activities and responding to questionnaires.
- 47 A Harlow Fields Association has been established which helps to raise school funds and which builds good relationships between parents and staff at social events. Pupils have benefited from the funds raised on their behalf and by the quality of relationships formed between home and the school. Parents appreciate the support given by the school to the Association's events and see this as good evidence of the school's commitment to building a strong home/school partnership.
- 48 A number of parents told inspectors of their concerns about a very small minority of parents who continually complain about the school. Inspectors feel the criticisms put forward are not valid. Many parents asked to be disassociated with the views of this very small minority who they see as damaging the school's good name. They felt concerned that the school was spending a disproportionate amount of time dealing with them and worried about the effect this was having on teachers.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

- 49 The headteacher and senior staff provide strong leadership and have a clear vision as to how they see the school developing in the future. They recognise that in the future

the school may take less pupils but that the pupils may have more specialist needs. They have achieved much in the short time since the school was founded, putting policies and procedures in place and creating a team commitment to becoming a successful school. The school's aims are clear and satisfactorily influence the ethos and expectations within most of the school, largely in relation to teaching and learning. However, they do not satisfactorily cover spiritual aspects nor is the achievement of cultural aims satisfactorily met.

- 50 In a short time the school has moved into a position where the requirements of the National Curriculum are in place. Although some still need to be modified in the light of recent national recommended changes this is accounted for in the school development plan. Policies and guidelines for subjects throughout the school are in place, comprehensive and well implemented. Subject co-ordinators understand their roles and contribute to the management of their subjects and to the school development plan. However, as yet they are not monitoring the teaching of their subjects by other teachers.
- 51 The school development plan itself is a very thorough document that includes clear targets, tasks and success criteria with responsibilities, time scales and monitoring arrangements well described. The school has used specific grants for a number of areas through the Standards Fund.
- 52 Day to day management is good and leads to the smooth running of the school through the work of a committed team. Financial administration is good with all processes working well and securely. The administrative manager is very knowledgeable about the financial aspects of the school and provides appropriate reports and information for the governors and the headteacher. The use of modern technology in administrative matters is well developed.
- 53 The governing body fulfils its statutory responsibilities satisfactorily. All necessary policies are in place and an effective committee structure established. Governors have a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the school and are made aware of the educational standards that the school achieves. Some governors visit classes in the school and monitoring formats are being developed for wider use. However, the governing body has not, as yet, developed strategies for monitoring aspects of school management and performance or holding accountable those with management responsibilities. However, plans for the commencement of these responsibilities are in hand.
- 54 The monitoring of teaching and learning, undertaken by the headteacher and senior staff is very good and leads to targets to raise standards and to identify development needs for staff. The school has started to monitor its effectiveness in order to compare results obtained from their assessments with other schools. Preparations are underway for the introduction of performance management procedures with the draft policy in place and the governing body having appointed the appropriate committee.
- 55 There is a very large under-spend of the school budget that has been carried forward. The accruing of this large amount of money has been out of the control of the school and is a result of initial funding to set up the school and staffing issues that could not have been predicted. The school has accounted to the LEA for the allocation of these accumulated surpluses within planned expenditure. Financial management is good and well accounted for in the school development plan.
- 56 The application of the principles of best value is satisfactorily employed. Governors assure themselves that they achieve good value for money on purchases made by the

school but as yet they have not implemented systems in order to evaluate the effect of how spending has improved pupils' learning. Governors show a very good understanding of areas for development and are in a position to take the school forward.

- 57 The school is well staffed by teachers who have good qualifications to lead specialist subjects, particularly for pupils over the age of eleven. However they lack sufficient expertise overall to teach the range of pupils' special educational needs. The school is experiencing difficulty recruiting staff to fill senior posts, and currently relies on temporary staff. There is very good provision of classroom support staff. They work well with teachers to support pupils' learning.
- 58 The school has inducted new staff to the school well. Teachers have had good opportunities to receive training. But training is still required, especially for information and communications technology and in working with the wide range of special educational needs within the school.
- 59 The accommodation is very good, particularly for science, art, design and technology and other facilities such as swimming pools. Maintenance staff work to a common purpose to keep the buildings clean and attractive. The design of the building is attractive, although there are still items to complete such as the replacement of old window frames. The outside has already very pleasant features such as the sensory garden. There are good plans to remove old portable buildings and fences and to incorporate a football field.
- 60 Resources for learning are good and subject leaders have good plans to improve them further. There is already good provision of resources for information and communications technology but the installation is incomplete. This means that teachers do not have enough access to computers to support pupils' learning in subjects.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

The senior management team and the governors should;

- * Improve the teaching of pupils aged between 5 and 7. (Paragraph 18)**

- * Extend the knowledge and skills of staff in working with pupils whose special educational needs they are not familiar with. (Paragraphs 24, 8, 9)**

- * Improve opportunities for pupils to use information and communication technology.**

This should include a more consistent and planned approach to developing pupils' skills in using computers and increasing the use of them in their work in all subjects. (Paragraphs 16, 110)

- * Improve procedures and guidance for staff for dealing with the small number**

of pupils who display significant behaviour problems. This should include;

Extending the current behaviour policy to provide clear guidance on the strategies staff should employ when pupils are showing challenging behaviour.

Ensuring there is a whole school policy for holding pupils and that all incidents where this is necessary are recorded and monitored by senior staff. (Paragraph 40)

*** Provide a structured programme of opportunities to extend pupils' spiritual and cultural development.**

** These items have been identified by the school and are included in the School Development Plan.*

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed

97

Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils

57

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
3	16	42	32	6	1	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

No of pupils

Number of pupils on the school's roll	129
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	42

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	4

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	6
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	6

Attendance

Authorised absence		%	Unauthorised absence		%
School data	7.2		School data	2.1	

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

Key Stage 1 - School Results - 1999

Teacher Assessment Percentage at each level 10 pupils

	Working Towards	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Dis.	Abs
ENGLISH	80	20	0	0	0	0	0
Speaking and Listening	80	20	0	0	0	0	0
Reading	80	20	0	0	0	0	0
Writing	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Mathematics	80	20	0	0	0	0	0
Science	70	20	10	0	0	0	0

Teacher Assessment Percentage at each level

	Working Towards	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Dis.	Abs

	s						
Reading Task	90	10	0	0	0	0	0
Reading Com. Tests			0	0	0	0	0
Writing Task	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
Spelling Test			0	0	0	0	0
Mathematics	90	10	0	0	0	0	0

Key Stage 1 - National Results - 1999

Teacher Assessment Percentage at each level

	Working Towards	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Dis.	Abs
ENGLISH				0	0	0	0
Speaking and Listening	2	13	628	22	0	0	0
Reading	3	15	54	28	0	0	0
Writing	5	15	68	12	0	0	0
MATHS	2	12	64	22	0	0	0
SCIENCE	2	11	67	20	0	0	0

Teacher Assessment Percentage at each level

	Working Towards	Level 1	Level 2 C B A	Level 3	Level 4	Dis.	Abs
Reading Task	3	15	16 21 16	0	0	0	0
Reading Com. Tests			16 18 16	29	0	0	0
Writing Task	6	11	29 29 17	8	0	0	0
Spelling Test				47	24	0	0
Mathematics	3	10	23 22 20	21	0	0	0

W = Working towards Level 1

D = Disapplied

Abs = Absent

KEY STAGE 2 - SCHOOL RESULTS - 1999

Teacher Assessment Percentage at each level

5 pupils

	Working Towards	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Dis.	Abs
Speaking and Listening	80	20	0	0	0	0	0
Reading	80	20	0	0	0	0	0
Writing	100	0	0	0	0	0	0
MATHS	60	40	0	0	0	0	0
SCIENCE	100	0	0	0	0	0	0

Teacher Assessment Percentage at each level

No Tests Taken

	Working	Level	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Dis.	Abs
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	Towards	1					
Reading Task			0	0	0	0	0
Reading Com. Tests			0	0	0	0	0
Writing Task			0	0	0	0	0
Spelling Test			0	0	0	0	0
Mathematics			0	0	0	0	0

Key Stage 2 - National Results - 1999

Teacher Assessment Percentage at each level

	Working Towards	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Dis.	Abs
English	0	1	6	25	48	19	0	0	0
Maths	0	1	5	24	48	21	0	0	0
Science	0	1	3	20	52	23	0	0	0

Test Results Percentage at each level

	Below Level 3	Level 3	Level 4	Level 5	Level 6	Dis.	Abs
English	7	20	48	22	0	0	2
Reading	5	13	49	32	0	0	1
Writing	6	37	42	14	0	0	1
Maths	6	23	45	24	0	0	2
Science	3	16	51	27	0	0	2

W = Working towards Level 1

D = Disapplied

Abs = Absent

* = pupils who were not entered for the tests because they were working below level 3 in English, mathematics or science; pupils awarded a compensatory level from tests; and pupils not achieving a level from the tests.

Key Stage 3 - School Results - 2000

Teacher Assessment Percentage at each level 15 pupils

	Working towards	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Dis.	Abs.
English	37	16	37	10	0	0	0
Mathematics	26	48	5	16	5	0	0
Science	20	32	32	16	0	0	0

Teacher Assessment Percentage at each level 15 pupils

	Working towards	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Dis.	Abs.
English	37	16	37	10	0	0	0
Mathematics	26	48	5	16	5	0	0

Science	20	32	32	16	0	0	0
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Teacher Assessment Percentage at each level

15 pupils

	Working towards	Level 1	Level 2	Level 3	Level 4	Dis.	Abs.
Design & Tech.	11	21	16	47	5	0	0
Geography	16	47	26	11	0	0	0
History	11	57	16	16	0	0	0
I.T.	11	47	42	0	0	0	0
MFL	11	79	10	0	0	0	0

Key Stage 3 - National Results

Teacher Assessment Percentage at each level

	W	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	Dis	Abs
English	0	1	3	9	23	33	22	8	1	0	1
Maths	0	0	2	10	23	27	23	12	2	0	1
Science	0	0	2	11	26	31	21	7	0	0	1

Test Results Percentage at each level

	Below Level 3 / 4	3	4	5	6	7	8	Dis	Abs
English	12		20	36	21	6	1	0	4
Maths	3	9	21	24	24	12	2	0	5
Science	2	9	28	31	18	5	0	0	5

W = Working towards Level 1

D = Disapplied

Abs = Absent

* = pupils who were not entered for the tests because they were working below level 3 in mathematics or science; and below Level 4 in English; pupils awarded a compensatory level from tests; and pupils entered for but not achieving a level from the tests.

ACCREDITATION 1999

Associated Examination Board Results - Summer 1999

Literacy

LEVEL 1

4 pupils achieved results ranging from 20 - 55%

Level 2

4 pupils achieved results ranging from 35 - 75%

Level 3

1 pupils achieved 45%

Numeracy

Paper 1 Level 1

8 pupils achieved results ranging from 45 - 85%

Level 2

2 pupils achieved between 35 - 50%

Graphicacy

10 pupils achieved results ranging from 5 - 45%

Certificate of Achievement

Many pupils in Years 10 and 11 are following 2 year courses in Maths, English and Science and this year 10 pupils sat the Science course of whom all passed, 8 with merits and one with a distinction

ASDAN Youth Awards

Six pupils gained their Bronze Award in Year 11

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	2
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0

White	127
Any other minority ethnic group	0

White	10	1
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)	21.6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6
Average class size	9

Education support staff: YN – Y13

Total number of education support staff	32
Total aggregate hours worked per week	927

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	1999-2000
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	£
Total income	1387793
Total expenditure	1611295
Expenditure per pupil	12490
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	331662

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	129
Number of questionnaires returned	79

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	54	30	5	1	5
My child is making good progress in school.	39	39	9	3	5
Behaviour in the school is good.	24	47	0	0	15
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	27	41	13	6	5
The teaching is good.	47	33	5	4	5
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	43	38	8	9	1
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	56	25	9	6	1
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	47	39	3	1	5
The school works closely with parents.	39	41	5	6	3
The school is well led and managed.	34	39	8	6	9
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	38	35	5	3	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	22	30	8	11	24

A very small group of parents are openly critical of the school. They are unhappy with the headteacher, annual meeting with governors, the physical control of pupils (including the use of time-out rooms) and the progress of pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties. A much larger group of parents expressed concern at the damaging effect of this small group of parents.

The inspection team found evidence that supported the many positive views put forward by parents. Inspectors, although recognising that some aspects of the school need further development, believe the school has made a very encouraging start. Therefore, inspectors agree with the majority of parents' view that the criticisms of the very small group of parents are not valid.

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

Provision for pupils in the foundation stage.

(it is not possible to make judgements on teaching and learning at this stage because of the very small number of pupils in this key stage)

- 61 The provision planned for children under five is good. The curriculum has been appropriately developed with reference to the early learning goals recommended for young children and is enhanced by a commercial curriculum, which has been specifically developed for children with severe and complex learning difficulties. As a result the curriculum is well planned to meet the needs of all pupils. The learning opportunities planned for children appropriately address the early learning goals and by the time they are five children are well prepared to experience the National Curriculum.
- 62 Procedures for assessing children's achievement are good. They are appropriately linked to the commercial curriculum that has been implemented and to nationally recognised assessment materials which are used across the school. Any significant responses that children make to activities or to adult interaction are noted and these records provide good information about children's achievement. The teacher appropriately uses this information to plan work and is particularly effective in matching work to the needs of pupils with complex difficulties. A comprehensive assessment profile is completed when children are five.
- 63 The accommodation is very good. It is spacious and flexible allowing the teacher to create three separate work areas. This enables a wide range of activities to be planned. There is enough space for children to work in large or small groups or to work individually with an adult. There are good bathroom facilities and children have access to a suitable outdoor play area. There are sufficient resources to support teaching and learning and these are being developed further.
- 64 There are good procedures to support children when they start school. Parents visit the school to meet with key staff and there is a home visit by the class teacher before the child comes into school. Parents are encouraged to stay with their child during their early days at school and this helps them to settle quickly. The number of days that children attend school varies and depends on their needs. The pattern of attendance is discussed and agreed with parents appropriately taking their views into consideration.

Post-16 provision

- 65 The provision for post-16 students is good. Students achieve well and make good and often very good progress in lessons. The quality of teaching is good and often very good. There are high expectations for students to learn, with effective planning to provide work matched to attainment. Students are pleased to be in school at the beginning of the day, reacting positively to the warm welcome they receive. Staff attend to students' personal needs unobtrusively, ensuring dignity so that students are relaxed and confident during the day.
- 66 Students make good progress in literacy. During a lesson in personal and social

education, they discuss and record the events of the day. Higher attaining students write or record their work using the computer, referring to their own dictionaries to complete their work with some independence. Lower attaining students follow signed instructions well to arrange their timetable using symbols. Staff are patient, encouraging students to complete as much work as they are able. In English, students select photographs of their completed college work to arrange in their record of achievement files. Staff ensure that lower attaining students understand questions and have plenty of time to respond to the photographs. Higher attaining students can describe the activities in the record, such as studying sculpture and mending cars. They write the captions to photographs, using a dictionary to help to spell correctly. The activity builds well on college experiences and provides pupils with opportunities to make progress in communication skills.

- 67 Lesson planning is good; it ensures that tasks set are realistic and have practical value for students. For example students handle real money during numeracy lessons, recognising the appearance and value of coins. There is a strong link with life-skills lessons where students understand that they can use a bank to look after their money and use money to make purchases. Students gain good experience handling money when they shop for the food items required for lunch for the class. Students prepare lunch, selecting quantities and developing independence skills to prepare them for life after school.
- 68 The provision of personal and social education makes a strong contribution to preparing pupils for life beyond the school. Students have regular opportunities to develop life-skills, such as care of the body and hair as part of an accredited course. Through careful explanations, they learn about the washing and care of clothes. The teacher encourages pupils to take part in activities and to try to be as independent as possible. For example, they make satisfactory progress learning how to plant tree seeds, understanding the need to follow instructions and share tasks.
- 69 Students are excited when it is time to go to college. The regular visits provide very good opportunities for students to meet other adults and young people. This prepares them well for future opportunities for further training. Visits in the community provide good opportunities for them to know about their local area.
- 70 There are good arrangements to promote students' physical development when they engage in keep fit at a local sports club. They achieve well and enjoy using fitness machines. Higher attaining students can set the machines themselves and work alongside members of the public. The teacher plans effectively to promote a wider range of skills, where students shower and change, gaining valuable experience in using a public leisure facility.

ENGLISH

- 71 Overall the progress of pupils in English is good. By the age of seven achievements for the majority of pupils are satisfactory in speaking and listening, reading and writing. In relation to the short-term targets set for them pupils with more complex learning difficulties make good progress in developing communication skills but the development of speaking and listening for other pupils, particularly those with autism and those who have behaviour difficulties, is not as good. By the age of eleven pupils' achievements are satisfactory in reading and writing and good in speaking and listening. Pupils of all abilities in Year 6 make good progress in both speaking and listening and reading. In the primary department there is an appropriate emphasis on the development of early

communication skills and this is an area in which teachers demonstrate particularly good skills. These two factors are reflected in pupils' achievements. By the age of fourteen and later at the age of sixteen pupils' achievements are satisfactory in speaking and listening and writing and good in reading. This is because the school effectively uses structured reading programmes to support pupils' learning and teachers in the secondary department are generally more experienced in their use.

- 72 The school is aware of the differences in pupils' achievements throughout the school because it has analysed the outcomes of recent assessments. The English co-ordinator for the secondary department acknowledges that these need to be addressed. Pupils make good progress in relation to the learning planned for lessons and in relation to the short-term targets set for them in their individual education plans. Because pupils come from a number of different schools their past learning is not always sufficiently related to the present curriculum. This situation is being addressed as the school develops and pupils' learning is planned continuously from the same curriculum.
- 73 Teaching and pupils' learning are good. During the inspection teaching was satisfactory for pupils up to the age of seven, good for pupils aged between seven and fourteen and very good for pupils between fourteen and sixteen. Where teaching and learning is less successful, teachers do not have the skills to match work to the wide range of abilities in their class. A minority of pupils, generally those with more complex needs are not actively engaged in learning because work and teaching methods do not sufficiently meet their needs. There are also a small number of occasions when teachers do not manage the inappropriate behaviour of pupils. When this occurs pupils can disrupt learning for themselves and for others.
- 74 Pupils throughout the school show a wide range of achievement. Those in the primary department demonstrate an early understanding of communication when they respond to sounds made by the teacher, clearly waiting to take turns in a conversation. Pupils with complex difficulties make eye contact, give attention and reach out for objects. Teachers effectively develop these responses into consistent and meaningful communication. Other pupils communicate by copying what has been signed to them. Teachers consistently sign key words and simple instructions and this helps younger pupils, in particular, to make good progress. Pupils also communicate simple choices by using photographs and symbols. Teachers effectively encourage pupils to answer questions and talk about what they have been doing; pupils in a class for eleven year olds talk confidently to students from the local comprehensive school during a paired reading session. Teachers use questioning well to test pupils understanding and to encourage their participation. Pupils in Year 8 provide good information about the story 'Charlie and the Chocolate Factory.'
- 75 Pupils with autism are extremely well supported to communicate simple instructions. During a lesson observed they developed a very good understanding of how short, simple instructions are easier to understand. Teachers provide appropriate opportunities for pupils to take part in discussions about their work and this enables them to clarify their thinking. Pupils in Year 11 talk with enthusiasm about the plot and characters in Macbeth; they provide relevant information about the key features of the story and learn simple lines for a drama production.
- 76 Teachers plan activities, which enable pupils with complex difficulties to develop early reading skills. They are encouraged to look at photographs of familiar people and objects and to make choices by eye pointing. The use of symbols reinforces early reading skills as pupils begin to understand that they provide information. The youngest pupils recognise the symbols used to identify the different activities for the day and

select the correct one when asked. This understanding is not always used effectively by teachers to help pupils manage their behaviour. Pupils are not always cued into or out of activities using these symbols and they often become frustrated because they do not understand what is expected of them or what is going to happen next. Eleven year old pupils are provided with good opportunities to read simple texts; they are confident to use initial letter sounds and phonics to spell out unfamiliar words.

- 77 Teachers, particularly in the secondary department, effectively use a structured reading programme and a reading recovery programme to support the development of pupils' skills. As a result many secondary age pupils read with confidence. Pupils in a class for fourteen year olds take turns to read aloud from the story 'James and the giant peach'. Many of them find the text difficult but sensitive support from the teacher gives them the confidence to try. Pupils capable of higher attainment read for pleasure. They refer to particular parts of a story, which they have enjoyed, identifying what has appealed to them. Teachers ensure that work is well matched to pupils' abilities and that it reflects their age and interests. For example, the oldest pupils are given examples of advertisements. They read them carefully and identify the key information within them. Pupils read the work sheets they are given and demonstrate a good understanding of the content by answering questions about the text or by putting key words in the correct place.
- 78 Teachers encourage the development of early writing skills through activities, which require pupils with complex difficulties to hold and release objects that are placed in their hands. Teachers also plan a wide range of activities, which provide opportunities for pupils to make marks on paper, to copy simple handwriting patterns and to copy over and under words and sentences. Teachers ensure that pupils capable of higher attainment write independently. Pupils are taught to be independent and many confidently use dictionaries and wordbooks to help them. Pupils demonstrate an understanding of simple punctuation, such as capital letters and full stops and they form letters accurately. A few pupils are beginning to develop joined writing. Teachers use a structured programme to teach handwriting skills and this has enabled older pupils to develop neat, well-formed and joined handwriting. Pupils are provided with an appropriate range of opportunities to write for different purposes including recording their work in other subjects. The oldest pupils demonstrate good word processing skills when they copy text about sprains and electric shock during a personal and social education lesson.
- 79 The provision for English is good. The school has implemented a good curriculum, which addresses the six skills outlined in Curriculum 2000. The curriculum is enhanced by the implementation of a commercial scheme, which has been specifically developed for pupils with severe and complex learning difficulties. This provides additional guidance for teachers when they plan work for these pupils. The National Literacy Strategy has been appropriately implemented for pupils in the primary department and elements of the strategy are used effectively to plan work for older pupils. The oldest pupils follow a nationally recognised examination syllabus and have appropriate opportunities for their work to be accredited by an external examination board.
- 80 The subject is well led and managed for the secondary department but the primary department is currently without a co-ordinator. This is hindering some aspects of development particularly those that require a whole approach. For example, further development of the library including the cataloguing of books cannot be completed until the needs of the primary department are known. The secondary co-ordinator has an overview of the subject and has established a subject development plan, which should address some of the primary departments short-term development needs. Staff in the

primary department have worked hard to ensure continued development of the subject but a clear direction and priorities for the future need to be established.

- 81 The library is satisfactory. It is small for the number of pupils in the school and the library furniture is inappropriate for older pupils and pupils in wheelchairs. It is not currently being used effectively as a resource to enhance pupils' learning. There are a good range of resources to support teaching but the school has not yet developed a wide range of sensory materials to support the National Literacy Strategy so that pupils with more complex difficulties can be effectively included in the literacy hour. Book stocks are generally good.

MATHEMATICS

- 82 Pupils' achievement is satisfactory. The school has worked very hard to establish good planning for mathematics in a very short time and this has enabled most pupils to make good or very good progress in lessons. The quality of teaching is mainly good, with staff committed to promoting numeracy well through other subjects on the timetable. They use number songs and rhymes effectively to reinforce pupils' understanding. The school has made very good progress in implementing the National Numeracy Strategy and this seems to be having a significant impact on raising standards in numeracy. Pupils particularly enjoy the mental arithmetic parts of lessons, demonstrating a growing understanding of number order, addition and subtractions.
- 83 Pupils up to the age of seven make satisfactory progress. They make better progress during individual work. Higher attaining pupils make good progress recognising numbers to six and writing them. Lower attaining pupils begin to respond more to objects, looking at them and reaching out to select. When progress is evident staff appropriately record significant moments of learning. Pupils make less progress in group lessons. They find it difficult to concentrate and co-operate. Strategies to manage pupils' behaviour are not effective to meet the wide range of needs in class for pupils to make better progress. The school has identified the need to provide more support and training in this area.
- 84 Pupils aged between seven and eleven make good progress overall. They make the best progress in lessons where pupils with additional special needs receive individual support. Teachers make expectations for learning very clear. They remind pupils of class codes of conduct and personal targets for good behaviour, reinforced through signs and symbols. Pupils can state what their individual targets are for the lesson, such as counting to twenty. Higher attaining pupils discuss dates, spelling months and recognising the difference between sixteen and 'the sixteenth'. Relationships are very positive; the enthusiasm projected by the teacher and support staff encourages pupils to strive to learn more.
- 85 Pupils aged up to fourteen continue to build on their learning. They use real money to match lower and higher value coins. Teachers make effective use of the very good accommodation to enable pupils to work in groups, according to their assessed ability levels. There are excellent features to lessons, for instance when providing pupils with opportunities for self-assessment. They decide where to place a decimal point in a line of numbers to provide the estimated price of a radio asking each other if this price seems sensible. Teachers have developed some very good resources, such as pictures and labels for pupils to record the names and prices of shopping items. This enables them to work productively, finding solutions to problems.
- 86 Teaching methods are highly effective to enable pupils over the age of fourteen to make very good progress in preparation for external accreditation. For instance, teachers

recognise pupils' increasing maturity and provide opportunities for pupils to be more independent in their learning. This is evident in the class for the oldest pupils when they discuss investigating the distances and routes that pupils travel to school, deciding to divide into teams to complete work more efficiently. They choose to investigate different districts in the local area and then pool their findings. Teachers and classroom staff provide effective support, continually monitoring progress and asking questions to encourage pupils to improve their surveys. Pupils begin to draw inferences from their work to suggest ways to try to find the shortest and quickest routes for school transport to follow. In this class the teacher plans well for pupils to use computers to illustrate their results in class discussion. However, teachers throughout the school make insufficient use of new technology to support pupils' learning in numeracy.

- 87 The subject leader and staff have worked very hard as an effective team to establish a good programme of work in a short time. The school has good plans to monitor the standard of accreditation to ensure that it continues to provide a suitable challenge for pupils of differing attainment.

SCIENCE

- 88 Since the opening of the school pupils' achievements in science have been satisfactory. Pupils make good progress in lessons developing the skills of observation, experimentation and recording. Pupils are enthusiastic about science and this is a significant element in their good progress in lessons. By the age of seven pupils develop observation skills through tactile experience of materials, such as water, and can register differences, such as the water being warm, bubbly or coloured. Observation and enquiry skills are also developed through further tactile experiences showing the relationships between materials. By the age of eleven pupils' knowledge is extended to include an understanding of plant growth and to develop an awareness of the importance of growth factors such as light and water. Experimental skills are effectively developed through growing plants in a range of conditions. Lower attaining pupils develop observational skills through comparisons of differing shades of light and shadow.
- 89 By the age of fourteen higher attaining pupils are aware of the effects of pushing and pulling on a range of objects, using the results to develop recording skills by completing work sheets and recording information on graphs. Lower attaining pupils make good use of tactile materials, such as sponge, to identify the effect of pressure in changing the shape of objects. By the age of sixteen pupils complete an externally accredited course, the Certificate of Achievement, in which higher attaining pupils have developed an understanding of the factors involved in healthy living as well as experimental work on magnets and the boiling and freezing of liquids. Lower attaining pupils have the same opportunities to develop scientific skills and carry out experiments, their success contributes significantly to their self-esteem and confidence.
- 90 The quality of teaching is good overall. Teachers set a range of interesting tasks, which require pupils to apply the skills of observation, experimentation and recording to a range of situations. Questioning is used well to develop independent learning. An example of this occurred in a lesson for the oldest pupils. The teacher asked pupils what would make the experiment a "fair test"; this required them to consider and apply the information gathered in the experiment. Good use is made of support staff especially for secondary aged pupils. An example of good teaching and learning was seen in a lesson for eleven year-olds; the group were undertaking an insect hunt and the well structured lesson gave pupils the opportunity to work independently by identifying and

naming the insects they found, as well as recording their findings. Questioning was used well and carefully matched to the pupils' abilities; higher attaining pupils were asked to name the insect and lower attaining pupils to describe the colour. In a lesson for the oldest pupils they worked independently on experiments, measuring the elasticity of twine and the water-proof properties of a range of materials. The age appropriate teaching styles of the teacher and the support assistant gave pupils good opportunities to work either independently or in groups to solve problems independently. Pupils were actively encouraged to devise solutions for themselves and use computers to record their data. The efficiency with which the pupils applied themselves to their work demonstrated the effectiveness of the approach.

- 91 Good progress has been made in the management of the subject. Policies, lesson planning and assessment procedures are all in place. There is a very good science room in the upper school, which is used efficiently, and a good range of resources has been developed for the school. Whilst the number of computers requires further development, effective use is made of the existing machines.

ART

- 92 The provision for art is satisfactory. The curriculum ensures that teachers plan a suitable range of learning opportunities, which enable pupils to acquire knowledge and skills. Older pupils follow a nationally recognised examination syllabus and have appropriate opportunities for their work to be accredited by an external examination board. The curriculum is enhanced by trips to places such as the Saffron Walden Museum, where secondary age pupils visited an exhibition of African Art. There are also visitors to the school and pupils have recently had the opportunity to work with an artist in residence. During this they produced very effective pieces of 3 dimensional art representing 'outer space'.
- 93 Only three lessons were observed during the inspection but scrutiny of pupils' work indicates that achievement for all pupils is satisfactory. Pupils with more complex difficulties make the same progress as others, particularly when teachers are experienced at planning a sensory approach for their learning. The implementation of a commercial curriculum developed specifically for pupils with more complex needs is helping teachers to plan appropriate experiences for them. It is also being used effectively to plan work for other primary age pupils. Lesson observations indicate that the progress made by pupils' of all abilities is frequently good when taught by a subject specialist teacher. Progress was good for a group of primary pupils involved in printing using fruit and vegetables. The activity was used well by the teacher to reinforce pupils' understanding of the colour green and it successfully builds on a past experience when they created a collage picture using different green materials. Pupils make good eye contact when they look at the objects they are shown and they clearly demonstrate preferences for some of the fruit and vegetables. One pupil pushes away the brussel sprout and frowns. Pupils, the majority of whom have complex learning difficulties or autism, accept adult help to hold different pieces of vegetable. They place them into the paint and watch carefully as they are helped to make a mark on the paper.
- 94 A well-planned lesson enables pupils in Year 4 to make good progress. They investigate the size, shape and colour of different umbrellas. The teacher uses resources very well to help pupils design an umbrella for themselves. The teacher has high expectations of pupils and they are effectively encouraged to concentrate and persevere. Very good use of questions enables pupils to explain the reasons behind their designs and to describe the key features of them. It is clear that they have taken different types of weather into account and understand that an umbrella provides protection. By the end of the lesson

pupils capable of higher attainment have clearly understood how to use a triangle template to create a repeat pattern. The teacher and support staff work well together. Pupils are well supported and are able to participate effectively, they make good progress regardless of their ability. Pupils in Year 7 work with clay to produce a 3 dimensional tile. They use designs they have created following a trip to Hatfield Forest to look at natural forms. Very clear explanations and an effective demonstration by the teacher enables pupils to get on with the task independently. They use the techniques they have been shown effectively. They roll out the clay and cut out a tile using a template. Pupils are very keen to take part in the activity and they work hard. They are pleased with their efforts and are keen to share what they have done. Pupils offer each other support with ideas and techniques, one pupil helping another to roll out the clay to the right thickness. The teacher makes very good use of the activity to reinforce pupils numeracy and literacy skills. New vocabulary is effectively emphasised and pupils are expected to listen carefully to explanations and describe what they have done. Pupils' knowledge of shape is reinforced when the teacher describes the shape of the tile and reminds them of the work they have been doing in mathematics.

- 95 The co-ordinator was only appointed at the beginning of the term. However, leadership and management of the subject is good and improvements have already been made to the curriculum so that it better meets the needs of younger pupils and those with complex needs. The scheme of work has been further developed so that it provides detailed information about learning for pupils during their time at school. It effectively supports lesson planning for those who teach art although the co-ordinator has already identified that it could be over-prescriptive for those who are confident and experienced in teaching the subject. The subject development plan is satisfactory and identifies appropriate priorities for the future, these include a review of the curriculum and the further development of the schools range of artefacts. These are both appropriate priorities. There are well-displayed examples of pupils' work around the school. These demonstrate the use of a wide range of different techniques and materials. For example, fabric painting, which has been used to create underwater designs on the front of tee shirts, 3 dimensional models made to support pupils' science work on mini-beasts and large collaborative pieces of work such as a scene from the big top created by primary age pupils using collage techniques. There are also displays showing how teachers use art to enhance pupils learning in subjects such as English and pictures depicting R. Dahl's story 'James And The Giant Peach' are displayed effectively in the corridor. There are, however, no displays of work by famous artists and pupils exposure to the cultural aspects of great art works are limited to lessons. The contribution art makes to the development of pupils cultural awareness is not sufficiently planned. The accommodation is very good. There is a specialist art room with adjustable height tables and a kiln. Learning resources are also good and support the wide range of experiences that pupils are given.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

- 96 Overall pupils' achievements in design and technology are good and never less than satisfactory. They make good progress over time and respond very well to lessons that are well planned and provide challenge levels that are achievable within the time available. All lessons demonstrate that pupils understand the health and safety requirements of the subject.
- 97 By the age of seven pupils have gained the very early skills of tearing and cutting paper with help; they make marks on materials with more control and confidence and are beginning to understand the processes involved in building and disassembling small

constructions. In food technology they experience the process of preparing a fish for cooking and are introduced to healthy eating through simple work on milk and cheese including their packaging.

- 98 By the age of eleven pupils have progressed to working with a wider range of materials. They use different types of card, paper and paint textures to make 3D masks; use coloured cotton to weave patterns in for their special mats and are more imaginative in their use of “unusual” materials when producing finishes to their work such as using pasta, peas, rice and beads. Natural resistant and compliant materials are used in their constructions with pupils with more complex learning difficulties showing marked enjoyment as they handled different natural and synthetic materials when working with textiles. Pupils use simple tools, such as hand drills, small saws and marking tools, with more confidence and accuracy. They identify the difference between glues suitable for paper and acrylic and are developing a better understanding of the design and make approach to technology. This element of their learning and progress was demonstrated well when they made a Christmas shape incorporating a simple circuit, which was used to light bulbs in the eyes of their object. In food technology pupils have progressed to using a liquidiser to prepare a fruit punch. They prepare and produce simple meals made up of cups of soup, sandwiches and fruit salads and are able to list some of the principles of healthy eating.
- 99 By the age of fourteen pupils understand how to use a recipe – written or made up of symbols. They handle a wider range of kitchen utensils with skill and care, particularly cutting tools, and name most of the items of equipment that they use on a regular basis such as mixing bowl, chopping board, cooling rack, scales, hob and oven. Additionally they listen to and retain a longer sequence of instructions. Higher attaining pupils work independently with very little help while lower attaining pupils and those with more complex learning difficulties achieve a desired outcome through following simple instructions supported by prompts and help. Pupils working with resistant materials equally make gains as they handle a wider range of tools with skill. They use a vibra-saw with care and accuracy; they solder wires and position resistors with precision and explain the reasons for the techniques that they use with confidence and pleasure. A higher attaining pupil can explain and demonstrate why a certain type of bulb flashes on and off and lower attaining pupil kneads dough to the correct consistency. Design sheets involving choice of design, materials and technique are a common feature of pupils’ work at this key stage and accurate measurements are seen to be essential.
- 100 By the age of sixteen, during which pupils are working towards accreditation, they prepare design sheets which show evidence of independent research and use a wide range of tools with greater skill. Pupils are more knowledgeable of the health and safety issues associated with the work place and work independently for longer periods of time. They are more accurate when marking for cutting and shaping and these skills, in conjunction with their skills in the use of tools such as chisels, tenon saws, power drills, and a variety of shaping tools enable them to produce work of a higher standard. Containers made of items such as wood are made, constructions involving electrical circuits designed by themselves are built. Pupils disassemble and assemble commercial products as an aid to their understanding of how they work and why certain design decisions have been taken, including cost factors. In food technology pupils have progressed to the level of being able to apply previously acquired skills and techniques. They prepare healthy meals, snacks and individual dishes and are familiar with the need for and what constitutes a healthy diet.
- 101 Overall teaching and learning in design and technology is good. It is never less than satisfactory and is sometimes very good. The teachers’ very good knowledge and

understanding of the subject and their detailed understanding of their pupils' and students ensures that there are optimum opportunities to succeed. Well planned and carefully structured lessons mean that pupils and students enjoy design and technology and attend with a willingness to face the challenges set. It is rare to hear pupils say that they cannot perform a task but it is normal to hear them ask for help from the staff or their peers. A very good example of collaboration was seen when one pupil helped his peers with their soldering and when another pupil helped a friend with lower ability to knead dough when making a pizza. The quality of the pizzas produced in this lesson was in line with national standards. The methods and organisation employed fosters independent working; one pupil demonstrated perseverance as he carefully cut a piece of hard board into a complex shape deserving the praise that he received. Staff have established very good routines for working in the design and technology areas with the result that pupils arrive at lessons knowing exactly what to do in terms of hygiene in the food technology room and health and safety in the resistant materials area. Additionally, pupils move around both areas with a sense of purpose and awareness of safe working practices. No time is wasted, resources are used effectively and projects are completed by the end of the lesson if such completion is a lesson objective. Teachers deploy support staff very sensitively and effectively. They make a very positive contribution to the pace and sense of purpose that is present in all lessons.

- 102 Design and technology is well led. Policies for work with resistant materials, food technology and textiles reflect the aims of the school and National Curriculum guidelines. They provide clear long term plans that ensure pupils make progress as they move through the school with a framework for the development of detailed medium term plans. The units of work that have already been created are written to a good common school pattern and provide sufficient information for detailed lesson planning. Additionally, medium term plans provide the objectives for lessons which in turn serve as the basis for assessment of progress within the subject.
- 103 Resources for the subject are very good with a great deal of thought having been given to the provision of equipment and furniture that ensures optimum access for all pupils.

GEOGRAPHY

- 104 Pupils' achievements in geography are satisfactory between the ages of five and fourteen. In some lessons they are good. An important factor in this achievement is that teachers plan well so that, along with learning support assistants, they work well to encourage basic skills of communication. This includes the successful use of signing and symbols. To support pupils' achievements teachers make good use of the school premises, especially in the area of the sensory garden. Pupils show development in the acquisition of geographical skills relating to climate and to mapping.
- 105 The quality of teaching and learning is often good. They ensure that resources and activities are well considered. However, objectives for what pupils are to learn are not always sufficiently specific. Younger pupils are becoming more aware of the weather and are able to recognise aspects of climate and the words use to describe aspects familiar to the pupils. They examine differences between windy and calm areas of the school and start to use words such as "sheltered" to recognise the effect that buildings can have. Previous work done by pupils between the ages of seven and eleven shows how they have studied aspects of the local community including the work that people do. Some are starting to develop work on maps showing their route to school and indicating features on the map that they pass when coming to school. Older pupils have studied the water cycle and looked at river systems both in this and other

countries. When studying climate they look at more advanced aspects considering climates in other countries and using thermometers to measure the outside temperature.

- 106 Teachers have high expectations and work hard to keep pupils involved in their work. They use good questions that help pupils to develop their learning and understand the content of the work. Where lessons are not satisfactory there is poor management of the difficult behaviour of some pupils and this interferes with the learning that is taking place.
- 107 The subject is managed satisfactorily although resources need enhancing. As yet there is no monitoring of the subject by the co-ordinator although this is planned for in the near future. A subject development plan is produced and this is carried through to the school development plan. The co-ordinator manages the budget for the subject.

HISTORY

- 108 No history was seen being taught during the inspection as geography and history are taught in alternate half terms. Judgements about pupils' achievements and the progress that they make are based upon discussions with the co-ordinator, an analysis of pupils' records and a detailed scrutiny of the pupils' work and displays around the school. Pupils make satisfactory progress. They are taught an appropriate range of topics. For example they have studied Ancient Greece and have made comparisons between features at that time and today. In Years 7, 8 and 9 pupils describe differences between the costumes and food in Tudor times and those that are seen and used now. Other work, about the Victorians, shows an understanding of the work that people did and assessments show how some pupils have remembered facts about chimney sweeps from one week to the next.
- 109 The recently appointed co-ordinator for the subject has started to review the scheme of work and the policy that is in place. The subject is managed satisfactorily although monitoring has not yet commenced. Plans are in place to extend the use of outside visits to provide learning experiences. Resources are satisfactory although there are insufficient artefacts for some of the planned courses. The co-ordinator completes a development plan that helps to inform the school development plan and also manages the subject budget.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

- 110 Achievement in information and communication technology is unsatisfactory. There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to use information and communications technology to ensure that they all make at least satisfactory progress. Although the provision of equipment is good, the school has had very limited time to complete the installation. The subject leader has drawn up very detailed and appropriate priorities for subject development but has limited time to undertake co-ordination responsibilities. Some staff have good expertise, but overall, there is a lack of training. This means that staff are unable to plan consistently to use computers, for instance to support learning. The library has very good provision of computers but pupils seldom use them for research.
- 111 There was insufficient teaching taking place during the inspection week to make an overall judgement of standards of teaching. However, in the lessons observed across the school, the quality of teaching was at least satisfactory. On the limited number of occasions when pupils up to the age of eleven were observed using equipment, they demonstrated appropriate skills such as using the mouse to select items on the screen

during number work. However, there is insufficient recording of pupils' skills to inform planning for pupils to make further progress.

- 112 Planning is better for pupils over the age of eleven. They are beginning to make satisfactory progress, although they have a lot of ground to make up. Pupils begin to develop independence using computers during whole-class lessons in the library. Some pupils can load their discs and begin working with some independence, composing sentences to relate what makes them happy such as, 'I am happy because I like school'. Lower attaining pupils learn how to record and play back voices when they use large switches to operate the tape recorder. They work in pairs to make and record animal noises, playing them back as sound effects when the whole class sings a song about a farm.
- 113 Pupils over the age of fourteen receive specific lessons to prepare them for accreditation. They can select and open their files, entering details and numbers to complete a table to compare reading test results. Some pupils are reluctant to follow instructions but staff intervene very well to encourage them and ensure that pupils make satisfactory progress, completing their databases. As pupils learn more, their interest increases. They begin to enjoy applying new skills to select different graphs to display their results.
- 114 There are limited opportunities for pupils to use computers to enhance their learning in other subjects. However, one class made particularly good use of computers to draw graphs of their transport surveys, in mathematics lessons. This enabled them to explain their findings more clearly.
- 115 The subject leader has undertaken much work with colleagues to develop current provision. There are, however, many tasks to complete, such as developing whole school planning to raise standards in teaching and learning.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

- 116 No lessons of French were seen during the week of the inspection and as such it is not possible to provide judgements about the quality of teaching. Judgements about pupils' achievements and the progress that they make are based upon discussions with the co-ordinator, an analysis of pupils' records and a detailed scrutiny of the pupils' work and displays around the school. French is taught in Years 7, 8 and 9 for one lesson of 60 minutes per week.
- 117 Pupils make good progress in French. They have experience of using the language to talk about themselves as boys and girls and as pupils in school. They extend this initial simple vocabulary through using words that encompass their families and further add to this by learning to describe how their homes are made up of a variety of different types of rooms. Common salutations are used at the start, during and end of lessons and every opportunity is taken to have pupils respond to simple class management instructions in French. Their use of the correct numbers in French helps to promote the key skill of number and they make further progress as they count and name the days of the week and the months of the year. French number skills are further used as they learn to tell the time. A very well organised French area is regularly used to support their learning in French with visits to the class Café providing them with opportunities to sit at a gingham draped table and order a variety of drinks – coffee, tea, orange juice and other soft drinks. The same café enables them to identify and name different containers – carafe, bottles and glasses – and they identify foods that go to make up simple

snacks – models of a baguette, rolls, eggs and a beef burger. The same area converts into a shop where they have opportunities to see, handle and name different packages of common French food products. Additionally, pupils extend their French experiences through knowing where France is located; studying a large scale map of the country and exploring the different ways of travelling there – plane, ferry and tunnel. Their progress in French and learning about France is further enhanced as they look at a variety of post cards depicting French life and the countryside and linking these to a large map of the country.

- 118 The subject is well managed. The policy for French reflects the aims of the school and National Curriculum guidelines and is directly linked to a long-term plan that identifies the continuity and progression that is required. A long-term plan is developed into a very well structured medium term plan with this in turn providing sufficient information for detailed lesson planning. A good balance is achieved between the acquisition of skills and areas of experience with activities focussing primarily, but not exclusively, upon listening and responding and speaking. However, some opportunities for reading and writing have been built into the programme. Opportunities for pupils of different abilities to have success are created through providing different activities at different levels or through accepting different outcomes to common activities. Overall assessment procedures are satisfactory while ongoing assessment is good. The subject is well resourced. A good range of very relevant audio/visual and reference materials, including programmes for use with the class based computer, is supplemented by a good range of teacher “generated” materials such as papier-mache models and French packaging.

PERSONAL, SOCIAL AND HEALTH EDUCATION.

- 119 The school has established a good personal, social and health education programme. It includes a commercial scheme specifically developed to meet the needs of pupils with learning difficulties. The work completed by older pupils is appropriately accredited by an external moderation board and during the inspection pupils in Year 11 were working towards the bronze Youth Award. They were learning about basic first aid techniques for injuries such as sprains and electric shock and through discussion they were exploring the concept of ‘belonging. Pupils clearly understood the need for structure and rules within a community. Pupils in Year 7 were involved in a discussion about feelings. A wide range of topics such as friendships, healthy eating, making choices and coping with change are covered and these units of work make a good contribution to the development of pupils’ social and moral awareness.
- 120 The subject is well led and managed and a good subject development plan has been established. This clearly identifies future priorities and enables the co-ordinator to plan appropriate improvements. The curriculum has been implemented for just over a year and a review of the provision is planned. Documentation and learning resources can be reviewed easily but the co-ordinator does not currently monitor teaching so has little information about how effectively teachers translated the curriculum into learning. This has already been acknowledged as an area of development by the school and opportunities for the co-ordinator to monitor teaching are planned for the near future. This will provide additional information and will enable more effective evaluation of the curriculum.

MUSIC

- 121 Achievement in music is satisfactory. Pupils make satisfactory progress overall in lessons. The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall, although there is a small minority

of unsatisfactory teaching.

- 122 Pupils up to the age of seven do not make enough progress. Planning and evaluation is good so that pupils build upon their past learning to explore instruments following the theme of the circus. They sing familiar songs such as 'Pitter patter raindrops', where they join in with actions. Pupils listen well to music such as 'The carnival of the animals', and this helps them to sit together for a group activity. However, pupils exhibit significant behavioural difficulties and only attend and participate for part of the lesson. Teachers do not have sufficient strategies to engage them in the activities and so pupils are unable to make enough progress.
- 123 Pupils make satisfactory progress up to the age of eleven, selecting and playing percussion instruments along to familiar songs such as, 'The music man'. Lower attaining pupils join in through effective staff support. Although the teaching of music skills is good, teachers do not have sufficient strategies to support pupils in class who display challenging behaviour. This reduces progress. The significant strength of music provision for pupils up to the age of eleven is the enthusiasm and expertise the subject leader brings to assemblies. Pupils achieve well, singing and playing percussion instruments to guitar accompaniment. Pupils respond very well when the teacher and senior pupils demonstrate a wide range of string, wind and percussion instruments. This increases their motivation to take part in music.
- 124 Pupils over the age of eleven make satisfactory progress. The teacher uses very good musical skills to enable higher attaining pupils to understand how to write the blues. They identify notes by the letter and sound, singing them into the microphone. Pupils do not progress as well as they should. There are a small number of pupils in class who have challenging behaviour, or who need additional support. Strategies are not fully in place to manage this behaviour or provide sufficient support and this reduces progress for part of lessons. The school recognises the need to provide whole school training and support in managing the behaviour of more challenging pupils and to provide appropriately for the wide range of needs in class.
- 125 Pupils enjoy attending the popular lunchtime music clubs, furthering their interest in music. Some pupils take the opportunity to continue with their class work, sharing keyboards to play blues music. The accommodation in the music room is very good, with good provision of instruments. Some pupils have formed a vocal group, singing along to tapes and gradually including their own instruments such as drums. This extra-curricular activity provides an important opportunity for pupils to pursue their interest in music.
- 126 The school makes very good arrangements to employ a music therapist. This provides identified pupils with the benefits of regular therapy. There are good plans for pupils to participate in music at Christmas concerts and to involve musicians from the community to deepen pupils' understanding of music. This includes visits to the African Cultural Centre. The subject leader has a strong influence in promoting music throughout the school, for instance to work with pupils to compose the school song. There have been limited opportunities for the subject specialist to provide support and training for colleagues to raise standards.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

- 127 Achievements in physical education are satisfactory. Progress is good in swimming, gymnastics and badminton. In swimming the youngest pupils in the school are making good progress in gaining confidence in the water; they enjoy their experiences in

swimming and are beginning to develop ways of travelling across the pool. In gymnastics pupils are taking full advantage of the excellent equipment available. They can move around using different parts of their body and perform a wide range of balances. During the inspection pupils in Years 7 and 8 were seen confidently making use of the equipment. In badminton the older pupils in the school take advantage of the good quality of coaching from the teacher and the facilities of the local sports centre. The better players can engage in long rallies and are developing their skills to play more difficult shots, such as the overhead smash. They enjoy playing and show a very positive attitude towards lessons.

- 128 Progress for pupils with profound and multiple difficulties is less advanced because staff are still developing their expertise in working with pupils with these difficulties. However good sessions were seen for the oldest pupils when using the gymnastics equipment. Pupils recognised the equipment and were able to gain a lot of satisfaction from, for example, stretching to reach a wall bar.
- 129 Pupils with autism make good progress when given appropriate support. This was the case for Year 3 and 4 pupils engaged in a gym session using large shaped balls. They followed instructions and enjoyed the sensation of bouncing, holding and rolling them. They were making clear progress in developing their physical skills.
- 130 Progress for pupils with autism and those with behavioural difficulties is less satisfactory when they received insufficient support to meet their specific needs. Weaknesses were observed in lessons in basketball for pupils aged between 11 and 14 and in gym work for 10 year olds. In basketball the poor behaviour of a small number of pupils disrupts others and therefore progress is unsatisfactory. Teaching strategies that mean pupils are waiting their turn to undertake an activity are not effective and result in pupils irritating each other and losing concentration. In gym work for a group of ten year olds the rate of progress is reduced because the teacher uses excessive control to manage the group. This reduces the level of physical activity the pupils undertake.
- 131 Post 16 students take advantage of facilities within the local sports center. They use the keep fit equipment competently and relate well to members of the public using the facilities at the same time. They show obvious enjoyment at being able to participate and the experience greatly benefits their social development.
- 132 As a subject physical education makes a valuable contribution to the work of the school. The subject co-ordinator is very enthusiastic and sees the need to develop resources and teaching strategies even further to accommodate the wide range of different physical abilities.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

- 133 Religious education is still at an early stage of development. However, pupils already make good progress in lessons and have achieved satisfactory levels of knowledge since the opening of the school. By the age of seven pupils are developing both an awareness of themselves as people and, for the more able pupils, an understanding of the impact of their actions on others. By the age of eleven pupils have an understanding of the major Christian festivals, such as Christmas and Easter and of major biblical stories such as Noah's Ark and the flood. Participation in drama, such as a class Christmas play, and art, such as making a mural depicting the story of Noah's Ark and a paper lantern for Chinese new year, are significant elements in the pupils' experiences of religious education. By the age of 14 pupils have developed an understanding of the symbols of the major faiths, such as biblical stories in Christianity and the story of Shiva

in Hinduism. By the age of 16 pupils have consolidated their work on the major faiths and also participate in discussion of themselves as young adults, considering, for example, their personal strengths and weaknesses and the meaning of relationships.

- 134 Overall the teaching of religious education is good. A significant feature is the good relationships that exist between staff and pupils that enable pupils to participate confidently in discussion and self-awareness exercises. Lesson planning is good. Complex topics are presented in ways that are readily understood by the pupils. A wide range of activities is used which ensure the participation of pupils of all levels of ability. Two lessons, one in year six and the other in year ten give examples of this approach. The lesson in year six, which dealt with Hinduism, gave all pupils the chance to handle artefacts, use religious bells, participate in wearing a turban and prepare and taste appropriate food. The participation of pupils with profound learning difficulties was made possible by effective support from the classroom assistants and the task, the preparation of flower garlands for use by other pupils, ensured their full participation. The consequence of the wide range of activities was a sense of sharing and enjoyment that enhanced the pupils' knowledge of Hinduism as well as creating a genuine sense of spirituality. In the year 10 class, a discussion on the subject of pupils' strengths and weaknesses was handled sensitively, giving pupils the confidence to be both open and honest about themselves. The use of the pupils' own learning targets as a basis for discussion was an imaginative way of enabling pupils to arrive at an understanding of their own strengths and weaknesses.
- 135 Despite the subject's early stage of development, much has been achieved. The locally approved Syllabus is followed and an effective policy and scheme of work have been developed. The recently appointed co-ordinator has established links with the local authority advisor to ensure further progress. Some links have been established with the school assemblies so those similar themes, such as the lives of the saints, may be further explored. The school has yet to establish links with the wider community but has plans to do so.