

INSPECTION REPORT

BRAMFIELD HOUSE SCHOOL

Bramfield, Halesworth

LEA area: Suffolk

Unique reference number: 124879

Headteacher: Mr M Read

Reporting inspector: Mr G Watson

Dates of inspection: 11th - 15th June 2001

Inspection number: 230082

Full 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:	Independent
Age range of pupils:	10 to 16 years
Gender of pupils:	Boys
School address:	Walpole Road Bramfield Halesworth Suffolk
Postcode:	IP19 9AB
Telephone number:	01986 784235
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Appropriate authority:	The proprietor
Name of proprietor	Mr K Anstes
Date of previous inspection:	17 th May 1999

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
19996	G Watson	Registered inspector	Mathematics Art and design Modern foreign language Religious education Equal opportunities	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught? What should the school do to improve further?
16472	C Stormonth	Lay inspector		Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
22821	L Wolstencroft	Team inspector	English Information and communication technology Design and technology Music English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils?
30142	J T Morris	Team inspector	Science Geography History Physical education Special educational needs	How well is the school led and managed?

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Bramfield House is an independent school for boys, the majority of whom (90 per cent) are resident during the week. There are 39 pupils on roll, aged between eleven and 16, all of whom have statements of special educational need reflecting their emotional and behavioural difficulties. Some pupils have moderate learning difficulties, and a significant proportion (25 per cent) have additional, complex individual needs. All bar two are white, and there is one traveller on roll. No pupils come from families for whom English is a second language. Pupils are taught in year groups and the school's catchment area focuses on East Anglia, with pupils coming from as far afield as north-west Norfolk and north-east London.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Bramfield House is a caring, supportive community that successfully helps pupils overcome their emotional and behavioural difficulties. Good quality teaching, allied to a wide range of relevant opportunities for learning, results in pupils' levels of achievement being satisfactory and often good, particularly at Key Stage 4. The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory. As a result of these factors, the school provides satisfactory value for money.

What the school does well

- Provides good quality teaching, underpinned by very positive relationships, particularly at Key Stage 4.
- Promotes good behaviour very successfully and monitors it well.
- There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities.
- The residential provision is very good.
- Pupils are very enthusiastic and show good personal development.

What could be improved

- The clarification and promotion of the educational aims of the school through a written whole-school development plan.
- The monitoring and development of the curriculum, particularly in science, information and communication technology, music, and the pupils' cultural development.
- There is no clear, coherent whole-school system for assessing what pupils actually learn.
- Parents are insufficiently involved in their children's learning and in the life of the school.
- There is no clear approach to identifying and addressing the training needs of staff.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school was last inspected in May 1999 when it was judged to provide an acceptable standard of education for its pupils and therefore no longer required special measures. Since that time, the departure of key members of the senior management team has meant that some of the momentum for improvement has been lost. Nevertheless, the school has made good progress in broadening the curriculum and developing the range of accredited courses through specialist teaching, and there has been a satisfactory consolidation of the quality of teaching. As a result, the pupils' levels of achievement are now satisfactory and often good, particularly at Key Stage 4. The proprietor has delegated management and

control of the budget to the headteacher and, whilst there is still no whole-school development plan and the extension of the teaching accommodation has yet to be completed, the school now gives satisfactory value for money. However, the quality of the residential provision has been enhanced.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

The school sets targets for individual pupils in English, particularly communication, the application of number, and behaviour and personal development. Pupils' progress towards these targets is good. Their levels of achievement in other areas of the curriculum are largely satisfactory, and good at Key Stage 4 in English, mathematics, information and communication technology, art, geography and physical education. In science and French, however, it is satisfactory within a limited range of opportunities, and in music, it is unsatisfactory due to a lack of expertise amongst staff. The school does not set targets for whole-school improvement but the numbers of pupils taking accredited courses is rising.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Pupils are very eager to come to school and keen to be involved in all activities.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good, particularly during social occasions and after-school activities. There is no evidence of bullying or racism.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Relationships are very positive between pupils and staff, whilst those between pupils are satisfactory. Pupils show maturity when reflecting on their personal circumstances.
Attendance	Satisfactory.

Pupils enjoy coming to school, and relish the challenges and activities both in the classroom and during their leisure time. They behave well, particularly in social occasions such as lunch-times and after-school activities, and they respond well to the consistent

support and prompting from staff. The very good relationships that they enjoy with staff are crucial in

this respect. Older pupils in particular, show good personal development in coming to terms with their individual difficulties and reflecting on their lives and personal circumstances in ways that demonstrate their development as young adults. Attendance is satisfactory and absence is largely attributable to specific, individual circumstances.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is satisfactory or better in 91 per cent of lessons, good or better in 56 per cent and very good or excellent in 26 per cent. In nine per cent, it is unsatisfactory. The quality of learning closely matches the quality of teaching irrespective of the pupils' individual needs or social or ethnic backgrounds. It is notably stronger at Key Stage 4, due to the firm framework for teachers' planning provided by the structure of the accredited courses, and the approach by staff that reflects the pupils' growing maturity as young adults. This means that pupils see the lesson as relevant and become more interested. The teaching of basic skills in literacy, numeracy and personal and social education is generally effective; the teaching of skills such as information and communication technology is also satisfactory and means that pupils are able to learn in other areas of the curriculum. Key weaknesses within teaching, however, are a lack of knowledge in some subjects by some teachers, lesson plans that do not take account of what pupils have actually learned and a lack of homework. As a result of these factors, opportunities to consolidate pupils' knowledge and understanding are lost.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Satisfactory overall; the curriculum is broad, relevant to the pupils' needs and enhanced by a very good range of extra-curricular activities.
Provision for pupils with English as an additional language	Does not apply to this school.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good, particularly in respect of the pupils' personal, moral and social development. Provision for their spiritual development is satisfactory, but there are too few opportunities to promote their cultural development.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. The school promotes good behaviour very successfully and monitors it very effectively. The residential provision is very good.
How well the school works in partnership with parents	The effectiveness of the school's links and the quality of information for parents are satisfactory. Parents' contributions to their children's learning and the life of the school are poor.

There is a broad range of activities in most subjects, although the provision in science, information and communication technology, French and music is more limited. The curriculum is enhanced by a good range of accredited courses at Key Stage 4, effective careers provision and a very good range of extra-curricular activities. In the majority of subjects, though, the school cannot be sure that what pupils are going to learn builds effectively on what they already know, understand and can do. Opportunities to promote pupils' cultural development are overlooked, although the provision for their spiritual development is satisfactory; provision for their personal, moral and social development is good, and firmly based upon the good relationships between staff and pupils. The school cares well for the pupils, particularly in respect of promoting and monitoring good behaviour, and the residential provision is very good. However, there is no coherent, whole-school approach to assessment, and targets on pupils' individual education plans are not always written in terms that clearly identify what pupils have actually learned. The effectiveness of the school's links with parents and the quality of information provided for them are satisfactory. However, the school makes insufficient effort to involve parents in their children's learning and in the life of the school.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Satisfactory, particularly in respect of maintaining good standards of care. The school's aims and values are clearly understood by all staff and parents.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Satisfactory. The proprietor plays an effective, appropriate part in shaping the direction of the school.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Unsatisfactory. There are no coherent systems for monitoring, evaluating and developing the quality of teaching or the curriculum.
The strategic use of resources	Satisfactory overall, but there is no written, whole-school development plan.
The adequacy of staffing, accommodation and resources.	Good in respect of staffing and satisfactory in respect of the accommodation and resources.

The school's aims and values, in terms of maintaining a caring, supportive community for the pupils, are clearly understood and woven into the everyday life of the school. However, the educational aspects of provision do not share the same high profile; procedures for monitoring, evaluating and developing the curriculum are unsatisfactory, and there are no formal systems for monitoring and supporting teachers in their work. The proprietor has delegated control of the budget to the headteacher but there is no development plan to make sure that available resources are used to the very best effect. There are good levels of staffing and teamwork is very effective; resources and accommodation are adequate, although the new teaching rooms have yet to be completed.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Children like the school.• The quality of teaching.• The information available on their children's progress.	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The amount of homework.• The behaviour of some pupils.• The way in which the school promotes maturity amongst pupils.

The inspection team endorses the positive views expressed by parents and carers. Pupils are very enthusiastic about their school, the quality of teaching is good and the quality of information for parents on their children's progress is satisfactory. Homework is not often used to reinforce pupils' learning but pupils behave well and the school successfully promotes their personal development.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Pupils' standards of attainment are well below national expectations. However, all the pupils have emotional and behavioural difficulties, as identified on their statements of special educational need. Furthermore, a significant proportion of pupils have additional, individual, complex needs, whilst others have additional learning difficulties. Comparison with national norms is, therefore, inappropriate and judgements regarding pupils' achievements reflect what pupils know, understand and can do in relation to targets identified on their individual education plans.
2. Pupils' levels of achievement across the school are satisfactory. They are, almost without exception, satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and often good at Key Stage 4. This level of consistency represents a positive response to the findings of the last inspection in May 1999, and is directly related to the development of a broader, more relevant curriculum. This in turn allows pupils to have their achievements recognised through an increasingly wide range of academic and vocational courses, accredited through the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA) and the Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN). It is also related to improvements in the quality of teaching, particularly in the way in which positive relationships between all concerned ensure that the management of pupils' behaviour is very effective. Pupils' levels of achievement improve as they grow older and respond well to the consistent pastoral support provided by staff. Parents are pleased with the gains in learning made by their children.
3. These levels of achievement apply to all pupils, irrespective of the complexity of their individual learning difficulties or their ethnic or social background. This is a direct reflection of the school's strong commitment to equality of opportunity and to the staff's concern to treat all pupils as individuals.
4. In English, mathematics, information and communication technology, art, geography and physical education, pupils' gains in learning are satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. In religious education, design and technology and personal and social education, pupils' levels of achievement are satisfactory at both key stages, whilst in science they are satisfactory within the limited range of opportunities available at both key stages. At Key Stage 3, pupils' gains in learning are satisfactory in both history and, within the limited range of opportunities available, French; they are unsatisfactory in music due to a lack of expertise within the school. None of these three subjects is taught at Key Stage 4.
5. The school sets suitably challenging targets for individual pupils and reviews these each term. Pupils throughout the school make good progress towards achieving the targets identified in their individual education plans, particularly in those areas of communication, number, personal and social development and, for the relevant pupils, behaviour. The school is aware of this progress made by individual pupils and carries out regular tests on pupils' skills in English and mathematics. The numbers of pupils taking the accredited courses is rising but the school does not set targets within other areas of the curriculum, nor does it collect data in ways that allow it to evaluate trends

over time, and has yet to begin setting appropriate targets for whole-school improvement. **(Key issue 1b)**

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

6. The attitudes and behaviour of pupils, when compared with the findings of the last inspection, remain good. There are very good relationships with staff and relationships with other pupils are mostly satisfactory. Pupils' personal development is good and they emerge at the end of their school career as more mature and responsible individuals.
7. Pupils enjoy school life and relish the challenges and activities both in the classroom and during their leisure time. Parents gave an overwhelmingly positive endorsement on how much their children like school. In most lessons, pupils have good attitudes to learning, particularly when the teaching is good, whilst those at Key Stage 4 have the best attitudes to learning when working to gain qualifications on the accredited courses. These pupils work largely independently, organise themselves, enjoy using computers to present their work well and work hard to achieve their goals. They relish success and show obvious pride and pleasure in showing off good pieces of work such as poetry and intensive writing for their GCSE English course-work. Attitudes are consistently good in physical education when, for example, pupils show determination in improving their skills in athletics. Attitudes are usually good when the subject is taught in a way that captures the interest of pupils, such the Year 9 work on the Aztecs. Pupils listened well to the information, used the pictures and book resources carefully and were enthusiastic to link this study to their art work. Pupils who are new to the school are often more unpredictable and a small number find it hard to concentrate and get frustrated when they find work challenging or too hard. In such instances, pupils usually respond positively to humour, praise and encouragement. On occasion, pupils' behavioural difficulties result in their withdrawal from the classroom to the day room, but they usually respond well to the prompting and support of the duty care staff, and return to class in a better frame of mind than when they left it.
8. Behaviour is generally good and most pupils are polite and friendly, both to staff and visitors. Pupils establish good friendships and usually behave well both in the classroom and around the school. There are occasional instances of poor behaviour when pupils argue and swear, or when pupils get into fights and lash out at others. When such incidents occur, pupils react well to the clear, consistent intervention from staff. Behaviour is good in the dining room, and meal times are relaxed, sociable occasions. Pupils sit alongside staff and are treated as equals. Pupils really value this and justifiably feel there is mutual respect. They enjoy very good relationships with staff and appreciate the fairness with which they are treated. Records indicate a low frequency of serious behavioural incidents, and this reflects the positive way pupils respond to correction. There is no evidence of bullying or racism. The number of exclusions is high when compared with similar schools; however, all times away from school are recorded, even if it is only for a few hours for a pupil to calm down and reflect on the consequences of his behaviour, and so the basic figures are, in this case, misleading.
9. Personal development is good and pupils are aware of the impact of their actions on others. Records show good improvements in the behaviour of individuals and this improves the quality of all pupils' lives. Pupils respond well to guidance on how they can meet their personal development targets. One particularly notable feature is the way in which older pupils reflect on their lives and circumstances, and understand how

they have developed since coming to the school. Older pupils take responsibility for organising and looking after elements of their course-work; they also use their initiative when, for example, preparing the meal table and set a good example for younger pupils. They also help in such settings as physical education and cooking lessons; for example, one Year 11 pupil played a useful role in a Year 7 lesson when he helped with the long jump activities. Older pupils initiate appropriate evening activities and help younger boys when they are struggling with the demands of life away from home.

10. Attendance is satisfactory overall. Absence is largely attributable to some specific, individual circumstances. For example, one pupil gets very homesick and his refusal to come to school is responsible for most of the unauthorised absence. The punctuality of the day pupils is good and they are keen to arrive in good time for breakfast. Punctuality to lessons is satisfactory and most lessons start on time.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

11. The quality of teaching is good throughout the school. It is often very good, particularly at Key Stage 4, and this quality is recognised by parents. Just over half the lessons are good or better, and over a quarter of lessons are very good or excellent. The majority of the remainder are satisfactory; unsatisfactory lessons are rare and, although those observed all occurred at Key Stage 3, they reflect different teachers teaching different subjects to different groups of pupils. The quality of teaching is good in all subjects except French, music and religious education where it is satisfactory. This overall consistency and quality represents a satisfactory consolidation of provision when compared with the findings of the last inspection when far fewer lessons were observed. The quality of learning closely reflects the quality of teaching throughout the school; this is the case for all pupils irrespective of their various individual difficulties or their ethnic or social background.
12. All staff know the pupils as individuals and understand their particular learning difficulties well. There is a positive, sensitive approach to managing pupils' behaviour and, as a result, all pupils can concentrate, do what is expected of them and become increasingly independent. In these respects, the way in which staff work with pupils embodies the aims of the school well. Lessons are underpinned by good relationships between all concerned, and staff successfully adopt an approach that reflects the pupils' growing maturity as young adults, particularly at Key Stage 4 where the structure of the accredited courses actively promotes their independent learning. As a result, pupils see the activities as relevant and want to be involved. In a very good religious education lesson with Year 11 pupils on the life and work of Martin Luther King for example, the way in which the teacher both expected and encouraged sensible discussion meant that pupils rose to the occasion and had the confidence to voice their opinions. Consequently, all students consolidated their learning, and opportunities to promote students' personal and social development were both created and exploited.
13. Practical activities are well organised and there is effective teamwork between teachers and support assistants. This is particularly the case where the skills and expertise of support staff are used actively to promote pupils' practical skills in subjects such as design and technology, information and communication technology and physical education, and external professionals such as instructors at local activity centres, also play a positive part. Where subjects are largely taught by a specialist, as in physical education for example, the teacher's expertise in the subject means that activities are planned and presented in ways that actively promote the pupils' skills

and understanding, resources are used well and no time is wasted. In art, although the subject is largely taught by non-specialists, their planning is guided effectively by the framework put in place by the nominated teacher, with the result that the class teachers' relative lack of subject expertise does not adversely affect pupils' learning. A similar situation occurs at Key Stage 4 where the structure of the accredited academic and vocational courses in subjects such as mathematics and information and communication technology helps not only to guide teachers' planning but also to promote independent learning by the pupils. However, where teachers are less knowledgeable about the subject, as in music for example, planning is less effective and often simply indicates what pupils will do rather than identifying what they will actually learn. In such instances, activities become more of a routine, with the result that pupils' interest is not captured, time is not used to best effect and little learning takes place. **(Key issue 2a)**

14. Class teachers record individual pupil's participation and attitude to activities, and support staff are sometimes used to particularly good effect in this respect as in, for example, the Year 7 class. However, because it is not always clear what pupils are meant to achieve, these records do not necessarily identify what pupils have actually learned, and sometimes merely note the ways in which pupils respond to the activities in question. Teachers, particularly those at Key Stage 3, tend to have their own systems for assessment in addition to the whole-school ones, but they use both inconsistently. As a result, the way in which assessment guides teachers' subsequent lesson plans is not as effective as it should be, and little consideration is given to addressing a pupil's individual targets in a variety of lessons. In the best practice, in Year 9, the teacher annotates lesson evaluations on her lesson plans. She takes on board the pupils' individual targets and adjusts her future plans to accommodate the pupils' previous learning. However, there is no system for sharing this effective practice throughout the school. The situation at Key Stage 4 is better, partly because of the opportunities for assessment that are built into the structure of the accredited courses, but also because pupils following vocational courses are more actively involved in evaluating their own work. There is no consistent use of homework, even though many of the residential activities lend themselves to the development of pupils' practical skills, with the result that opportunities to reinforce pupils' learning, for example in physical education, are lost. Again, the situation is better at Key Stage 4 where pupils are more committed to building up their course-work portfolios. **(Key issues 4; 5b)**
15. The teaching of basic skills in literacy and numeracy is generally effective, although the school has not formally adopted either the National Literacy Strategy or the National Numeracy Strategy. Pupils do, however, practise their information control technology skills to good effect in a satisfactory range of lessons and activities, and vocational educational core skills, such as problem solving or working with others, are satisfactorily addressed through the vocational courses at Key Stage 4. However, whilst subject teachers recognise the need for pupils to develop their basic skills across the curriculum, these skills are not always addressed in a coherent way that reflects the targets identified on the pupils' individual education plans.

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

16. The breadth of the curriculum reflects the considerable work the school has undertaken in addressing the issues raised in the last inspection. All National Curriculum subjects are now taught and there is a good range of opportunities that are

relevant to the needs of all the pupils. Provision for personal, social and health education (PSHE) is satisfactory, whilst sex education and drugs awareness are taught as part of this programme and also in science. The provision for careers education and other areas of work-related learning is good. Provision for most other subjects is satisfactory. However, the range of learning opportunities in science and French are limited when compared with the breadth available in other subjects, and a lack of resources and expertise compromises the school's ability to teach information and communication technology at Key Stage 3. In addition, music has only recently been introduced into the curriculum and what is taught is not sufficiently well matched to the National Curriculum Programmes of Study.

17. Schemes of work are in place for all subjects, but the majority have largely been developed within year groups and do not always ensure that what pupils learn builds effectively on their previous work as they grow up and progress through the school. This is particularly the case at Key Stage 3. Co-ordination of the whole-school curriculum is still at an early stage of development and the roles and responsibilities of the nominated teachers are not clearly defined and understood. They do not have the opportunity to observe their subjects being taught, there is no expectation that they will review and guide their colleagues' lesson plans, and in some areas, notably science and music, they do not have a clear grasp of what is involved in the subject. Currently, there is no effective system of monitoring the curriculum in order to ensure that the school knows what is being taught and when, although mathematics and physical education are notable exceptions in this respect. The recently appointed deputy headteacher, who currently has responsibility for curriculum development, is aware of the situation, and is devising appropriate systems to address these issues. **(Key issues 2a; 3)**

18. Curriculum planning at Key Stage 4, however, has been strengthened by a good range of externally accredited courses. All pupils follow courses in English, mathematics and art that lead to the General Certificate of Education (GCSE), and/or undertake a range of modules which are accredited by the Assessment and Qualifications Alliance (AQA). Courses in geography have been introduced this year, but similar plans to accredit pupils' work in science have been delayed due to a lack of expertise amongst staff, although plans are in place to address this. The school makes good provision for addressing the key skills of literacy and numeracy. The curriculum has been further enhanced by a good range of relevant, accredited vocational courses, such as the Youth Award Scheme, that provide all pupils with the opportunity to become competent in skills they will need in the adult world.

19. The provision for careers and work-related education is good and most pupils go on to college placements. There is an effective partnership between the school and the careers service that provides good advice and support for pupils from Year 9 until they leave school. All boys participate in work experience both in Year 10 and Year 11; placements are carefully researched in order that they meet the needs and interests of the individual pupils and local employers, such as the local farmer, are used to good effect. During Year 11, pupils receive further effective support from one of the school's learning support assistants in considering their post-school options.

20. The school liaises well with other schools that are to receive pupils back into mainstream education, but there are no regular curricular links with local schools, nor any link courses with local further education colleges. There is, however, a very good range of extra-curricular activities which is enhanced by residential visits to adventure centres and by opportunities such as skiing trips. A wide variety of options is

organised on- and off-site, both during the lunch-break and after school, and school and residential care staff work very closely together to support these. Pupils use the computers and play football, snooker and table tennis. After-school trips such as roller skating, canoeing and swimming at nearby centres are arranged, and there is a satisfactory range of sporting links with other schools. These activities make a significant contribution to pupils' personal development through the use of the school's

points system, since pupils clearly understand that involvement in these activities is related to their behaviour. However, although opportunities to accredit pupils' learning within activities such as sporting and leisure pursuits are present, they are not exploited.

21. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is satisfactory. The school does not have a regular act of collective worship but pupils gather together each morning before breakfast and say 'Grace'. Some opportunities are created in personal, social and health education, and in religious education, to reflect on a variety of issues relating to the lives of the pupils and the wider community, for example equal opportunities in a multi-ethnic society. Other opportunities to reflect on national, local or school events, for example during the school's daily meetings, remain unexploited. Art makes a particularly positive contribution to the pupils' spiritual development in the way their ideas and contributions are received and valued, but music's contribution in this respect is not as significant as it should be.
22. Provision for pupils' moral development is good and firmly based upon the positive relationships between staff and pupils. The systems within the school to support pupils in managing their behaviour ensure that there is always an adult available to talk with pupils about anything that has happened. Staff provide consistently good role models for pupils and the close working relationship between school and care staff ensures a consistent response to pupils.
23. The provision for pupils' social development is good. Organisation at meal-times involves both care and school staff, and encourages a pleasant and social atmosphere where everyone is considerate of others' needs. Pupils queue sensibly for meals and engage in relaxed, sensible conversations at the table. There is a well-established routine for clearing away. The wide range of activities which take place, both in school and further afield, support pupils' social development well, and pupils are now taking more responsibility for their surroundings by, for example organising and decorating their residential accommodation. There are, however, few opportunities for pupils to take more responsibility in the life of the school, for example by participating in the work of a school council.
24. The provision for pupils' cultural development is unsatisfactory. Opportunities to develop an awareness of the pupils' own culture, or that of others, are not planned within the curriculum; nor are they developed as part of the range of out-of-school activities and there are few visitors such as artists or musicians to the school. **(Key issue 2b)**

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

25. The school makes good provision for the pastoral care of pupils. This remains a strength of the school. Good attendance, good behaviour and good work habits are actively encouraged, promote good personal development and effectively enable pupils to address their emotional and behavioural difficulties.
26. The residential provision is very good and there is a very effective 24-hour curriculum. Care staff provide high quality personal care, social support and close supervision. There is a good range of activities and resources to keep pupils busy and happy. Pupils feel safe and secure and can use the school phone for regular contact with home. Pupils are allocated to a key worker who establishes close links with their families through regular phone calls and home visits. The head of care is appropriately qualified and other care workers have had some suitable training to help them fulfil their roles effectively.

27. The procedures for monitoring attendance are good. The school goes out of its way to find out why pupils have been absent and works closely with parents to encourage good attendance. Registers are well maintained to record attendance but reasons for absence are not always logged.
28. The procedures for monitoring and promoting good behaviour are very good and in this respect, the school has consolidated on the findings of the last inspection. Records are comprehensive, and every serious behaviour incident is logged in great detail together with the follow-up action and eventual outcomes. Pupils value the system whereby they gain points for good work and behaviour; it works effectively as an incentive for them to study hard and behave themselves. Those pupils who lose points are denied privileges but can redeem themselves by taking on jobs or working especially hard. Pupils recognise this as a fair system and realise that the onus is on them to behave and work well. Staff know pupils very well and treat them as individuals. This approach enables staff to anticipate difficulties and proactively manage situations, thereby preventing incidents from escalating. The effectiveness of the school's procedures is seen in the way pupils calm down, return to the classroom and settle back to their work. Most situations do not require any physical restraint, but there are a few occasions when a lack of physical restraint training has meant that staff are not always absolutely confident in the way they deal with a minority of extreme incidents.
29. The arrangements for child protection are very good. Recent staff training and reminders at whole-staff meetings about procedures mean that staff are vigilant and all statutory requirements are met. Pupils have a high degree of confidence and trust in staff to help them in the event of any difficulty, and the independent listener has also been helpful in this regard. The day matron manages all aspects of pupils' health and medical needs very well, and the security and administration of drugs is a model of good practice. All pupils' medical conditions are well catered for and staff have received appropriate training in particular conditions such as epilepsy and diabetes. There are clear, well-established routines for personal hygiene and bedtimes with which pupils easily and happily conform. The planning is particularly impressive when pupils return from activities at different times aligned to their bedtimes. Pupils are able to have supper and use the washing facilities in a calm and orderly way. The bedroom arrangements are good and pupils enjoy sharing for the most part. Pupils keep the bedrooms tidy and appreciate the new lockers that allow them to store their possessions safely.
30. Staff are very mindful of the importance of maintaining a safe environment, but the school's arrangements for managing health and safety are too lax. The previous head of care had the responsibility for maintaining an overview until his departure in the summer of 2000, but there are no records of any previous risk assessment. The new health and safety co-ordinator has not had the training to enable him to carry out relevant risk assessments across the school, either for learning and leisure time activities or for general school security, although appropriate training has been arranged for later in the summer of 2001. The arrangements for routine fire safety are satisfactory but there is no life-saving equipment available in the swimming pool. However, when the school is clear as to what is required, for example with regard to an electrical equipment safety check, staff act both rapidly and responsibly. **(Minor issue 2)**
31. The school's procedures for assessing pupils' levels of achievement are, overall, adequate, but they contain several significant weaknesses. At Key Stage 4,

assessment is built into the structure of the accredited courses, notably in the vocational courses where pupils are closely involved in assessing their own work. In other lessons, however, and particularly at Key Stage 3, assessment tends to focus on pupils' attitudes and diligence rather than on what they have actually learned. In addition, whole-school procedures are applied inconsistently; there is, for example, an agreed system for marking pupils' work but not all staff adhere to it. Assessment information is not sent to, nor gathered by, the nominated person responsible for managing each subject and its use, therefore, in guiding curriculum planning, is unsatisfactory. There are no whole-school systems for using information to improve the quality of pupils' learning, although in some subject areas, such as art and physical education, specialist teachers are able to maintain an effective, informal overview. **(Key issues 3; 4)**

32. The school has a good format for individual education plans, but the targets identified on these plans do not always identify what pupils will actually achieve, nor are they always expressed in terms that pupils and their parents are likely to understand. The targets for personal development are clear and relevant, but academic targets are usually too imprecise to allow staff and pupils to be clear when they have been achieved. It is not always made clear how the target will be addressed, nor in what context it will be considered. The arrangements for reviewing individual education plans are also inconsistent. In the best practice, Year 9 targets are reviewed half-termly and judgements are made as to how much progress has been made. New plans and targets are drawn up on the basis of this review and the pupil's progress can be 'moved on' in a way that the pupil can recognise. However, the systems involving other year groups are not as effective and pupils are not always involved in negotiating and agreeing targets. As a result, opportunities to gain the pupils' understanding and commitment are lost. **(Key issues 4; 5a)**
33. The procedures for monitoring and supporting pupils' personal development are good. The school gives a high priority to tracking pupils' personal development, and school reports and annual reviews have a great deal of good information in them, both on how much progress pupils are making and how to develop this further. The arrangements for annual reviews are very good and relevant; external agencies make a positive contribution in building a full picture of achievement over the last year. The Friday afternoon meetings between residential and school staff help to review the week's work and help the school prepare for the week ahead in terms of dealing with any immediate issues that hinder learning. Communications between care and teaching staff are very good; much of this is informal but it works very well.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

34. The partnership with parents has both strengths and weaknesses and remains relatively unchanged since the last inspection. However, the parents who responded to the questionnaire, who attended the parents' meeting and who were interviewed during the inspection, are very happy with most aspects of the school. They give a very positive endorsement on what the school provides for their children.
35. The partnership with parents is maintained very effectively through regular phone calls and visits from key workers. All families are visited, most recently during the Easter break, and staff are able to get to know families better and find out whether there are any concerns. The school responds quickly to any incidents as they arise, and parents are kept well informed. During the inspection, for example, one father came into school in support of his son and the matter was resolved promptly to the satisfaction

of all concerned. Parents are not, however, given the opportunity to be involved with pupils' individual education plans; nor do they help to agree and set targets for their children's personal development and learning. As a result, parents have difficulty in continuing the good work that happens in school whilst their child is at home at weekends or during the holidays. The arrangements for annual reviews, though, are very good and parents contribute their own views. They discuss targets and have a good opportunity to hear about progress first hand from both the teacher and any external agencies involved. The school goes beyond the normal call of duty to help parents so that they can attend; transport may be provided and the location of the review changed to suit family circumstances. **(Key issues 5a; 5b)**

36. Annual school reports provide good quality information about pupils' personal development, and these contain a great deal of useful information about many aspects of pupils' attitudes to learning and their behaviour. These reports, however, have insufficient information on the new knowledge, skills and understanding pupils have acquired during the previous year, and there is little advice on how parents can support and encourage learning at home. There are no consultation meetings and no open days for parents to come to school and see work. As a result of these various factors, parents make a poor contribution to their children's learning at home and at school. The quality of other information is unsatisfactory. Newsletters are brief and contain little information or news about school activities. The prospectus is a large, unwieldy document, full of policies and procedures that, whilst relevant, use educational jargon and are not written in a 'parent friendly' way. **(Key issues 5b; 5c)**
37. Overall, parents' involvement in the life of the school is minimal. Although there is an open invitation to visit the school at any time, most parents seldom do so, primarily because distance is a problem and many parents do not have their own transport. Parents' visits are usually associated with behaviour management and medical issues. There are no parent support groups or home-school associations and no formal social events. **(Key issue 5c)**

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

38. In the period since the last inspection, the school has experienced two significant staffing changes, with the head of education who had a responsibility for developing the curriculum, and head of care who was in charge of the residential provision, moving on to other schools. Delays in appointing replacements have meant that some of the momentum for improvement has been lost. Leadership of the school by the headteacher has many positive aspects, in particular with reference to maintaining a warm, caring environment. The educational aspects of provision though, despite being valued by the pupils, do not have the same high profile. Nevertheless, leadership in terms both of care and giving educational direction is, overall, satisfactory. **(Key issue 1a)**
39. The proprietor takes an active role in the life of the school. Pupils of all ages will greet him, saying 'Good morning Ken, how are you?', illustrating the positive relationships established between them and the owner. Funding has been allocated to maintain and develop the very good residential and care provision and to upgrade educational aspects of the accommodation as recommended in the previous inspection report. This has resulted in a temporary overspend and, in order to save money, the owner is using the skills of the school handyman to build a new science block. Progress has, of necessity, been slow, and in this respect the school's response to the findings of the last inspection have been unsatisfactory. In addition, there is still no formal, whole-

school development plan with costings and time-scales, with the result that the school cannot be sure that it is on course to build upon the many positive aspects of its work, or that resources available now are used to best effect. However, the proprietor accepts that there is a need for a written development plan identifying priorities and targets for development, and has delegated overall management and control of the budget, excepting site costs, to the headteacher who in turn, is rising to the challenge of his new role as financial manager. This arrangement is in its first year of operation and has yet to have an impact on the efficiency of the school, but the proprietor's action demonstrates a positive response to the findings of the last inspection. Resources within subjects are generally satisfactory, although there is a shortage of equipment in both information and communication technology and music, and the school uses them effectively. **(Key issue 1b; minor issue 1)**

40. Other aspects of the monitoring and evaluation of the school's performance, though, are unsatisfactory. The number of teaching staff and learning support staff is sufficient to deliver the curriculum; however, several of the teachers are relatively inexperienced and many have little expertise in teaching certain subjects. Teachers have a nominal responsibility for several areas of the curriculum, but their roles are not clearly defined. Specific training, together with appraisal and practical support to ensure that staff are effective in these roles, rarely takes place. The headteacher is aware of these problems, and the recently appointed deputy headteacher, who currently has responsibility for curriculum development, is actively setting up appropriate systems and programmes to address and manage these issues. **(Key issues 1c; 3)**
41. The lack of an effective strategy for appraisal and performance management also affects teachers' classroom practice. It is evident that the headteacher knows his staff well, but there are no formal systems of monitoring and support to enable teachers to improve their personal effectiveness. There are instances when staff have been supported in applying for and attending appropriate courses, for example the forthcoming health and safety training; however, the school is over-reliant on staff using their initiative and there is no clear, coherent approach to identifying and addressing the training needs of staff. **(Key issue 1c)**
42. The school's aims and values, however, are evident in the day-to-day life of the school and staff morale is high. There is a very positive, but informal, working relationship between all staff and between staff and pupils, which is a strength of the school. Teamwork is consequently very effective, and there is a strong commitment from staff to develop what is on offer to the pupils. Many staff have personal strengths and interests that they are keen to utilise in supporting pupils, both within the care and educational settings. Learning support staff play a positive part, not only by supporting pupils in their work, but also by using their expertise in delivering aspects of the curriculum such as design and technology. The work of the residential care staff in providing support during the day and, in particular, their team work in supporting options during the 24 hour curriculum, is very good. The cooks, cleaners and maintenance staff, together with the administrative staff, also make a valuable and effective contribution, both to the orderly running of the school and to the care of the pupils.
43. Bramfield House is a caring, supportive community that successfully helps pupils overcome their emotional and behavioural difficulties. Good quality teaching, allied to a satisfactory range of learning opportunities, ensures that pupils' levels of achievement are satisfactory and sometimes good. This is achieved at a cost per

pupil that is reasonable for a school of this type. The school, therefore, provides satisfactory value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

44. In order to maintain the improved standards, and enable the school to develop further, the proprietor, headteacher and staff should:
 1. Draw up a school development plan with costings and timescales that:
 - a raises the profile of the educational work of the school; (paragraph 38)
 - b ensures resources available now are used to best effect; (paragraphs 5, 39)
 - c identifies and addresses the training needs of all staff, particularly those of the nominated teachers. (paragraphs 40, 41)
 2. Refine and develop the range of learning opportunities, especially for pupils at Key Stage 3, to make sure that:
 - a all pupils learn the right things at the right time, and that all staff are clear as to how pupils will build on their previous learning; (paragraphs 13, 17, 60, 68, 71, 79, 82, 85, 93)
 - b opportunities to promote the pupils' cultural development are created. (paragraphs 24, 64, 75, 85)
 3. Develop and support the role of the nominated teacher for subjects to ensure that the school has a clear overview of what is being taught and when. (paragraphs 17, 31, 40; 50, 55, 60, 68, 71, 79, 82, 85, 93)
 4. Devise and implement coherent, whole-school systems for assessment that make it clear what pupils have actually learned, and provides information to guide teachers in their subsequent planning. (paragraphs 14, 31, 32, 50, 68, 71, 79)
 5. Actively involve parents in their children's education by:
 - a the discussion and negotiation of targets on individual education plans; (paragraphs 32, 35)
 - b developing the use of homework to support pupils' learning; (paragraphs 14, 35, 36)
 - c developing occasions such as open days and social events when parents are invited into the school. (paragraphs 36, 37)

When drawing up their action plan, the proprietor and headteacher should also give consideration to the following minor issues:

- 1 The completion of building work already in hand. (paragraphs 39, 60, 79)
- 2 Health and safety issues highlighted during the inspection. (paragraph 30)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	46
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	38

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
4	22	30	35	9	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	39
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	N/a

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	0

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	10
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	8

Attendance

Authorised absence	%	Unauthorised absence	%
School data	12.0	School data	0.3

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

Ethnic background of pupils

	No of pupils
Black – Caribbean heritage	1
Black – African heritage	1
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	37
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	1
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	18	2
Other minority ethnic groups	1	1

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y6 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	6
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6.5
Average class size	7.8

Education support staff: Y6 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	7
Total aggregate hours worked per week	213

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/01
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	£
Total income	1,175,000
Total expenditure	1,155,048
Expenditure per pupil	29,617
Balance brought forward from previous year	-21,678
Balance carried forward to next year	-1,726

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	39
Number of questionnaires returned	17

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	65	24	6	0	6
My child is making good progress in school.	47	35	12	0	6
Behaviour in the school is good.	18	59	18	0	6
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	6	18	12	24	41
The teaching is good.	59	35	0	0	6
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	65	29	6	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	82	12	6	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	71	24	6	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	71	29	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	88	6	0	0	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	47	35	18	0	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	53	41	0	0	6

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

ENGLISH

45. There has been a satisfactory improvement in the teaching and learning of English since the last inspection. Pupils' levels of achievement are satisfactory by the end of Key Stage 3 and good by the end of Key Stage 4. The improved levels of achievement made by older pupils reflect their increased maturity, together with the framework for learning provided by their accredited courses.
46. Pupils throughout the school have satisfactory listening skills and are generally confident speakers. Pupils at Key Stage 3 contribute to lessons; they listen carefully to what is to be done and respond well when asked to discuss their work with the teacher or the class. Pupils at Key Stage 4 discuss the qualities of characters in the texts they are studying and confidently talk about what they have read. In one personal, social and health education lesson, for example, pupils in Year 11 contributed to a discussion on their responsibilities as future electors and demonstrated a range of views and opinions on the outcome of the recent General Election.
47. Pupils achieve well in reading. Whilst few are enthusiastic and many join the school with little experience of reading, the school's own regular testing shows that they make good gains in their reading skills. At Key Stage 3, pupils study a wide range of texts from Gobbelino the Witch's Cat and The Iron Man to articles from current newspapers. Many pupils do not read fluently but are nonetheless confident enough to read aloud in lessons. Pupils at Key Stage 4 study the novel *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck as part of their accredited GCSE course-work. They put their reading skills to good use in 'real situations', for example when reading a recipe in food technology. Pupils also read a good range of magazines in their leisure time, and use the books that are available in classrooms to support their learning in other subjects.
48. Pupils' levels of achievement in writing are satisfactory. As they progress through the school, pupils produce an increasing quantity of written work for a variety of audiences. Older pupils begin to extend their work, for instance in writing reports on novels they have read, character studies and both formal and informal letters. Throughout the school, pupils make good use of information and communication technology in drafting and presenting their work.
49. Teaching in English is good across both key stages, and is underpinned by the good relationships between staff and pupils. Teachers have good subject knowledge and make lessons interesting with the result that pupils usually co-operate and concentrate well. Where teaching is lively, pupils are enthusiastic about their work. Learning support assistants provide effective and sensitive support which, in turn, helps pupils learn well, but homework is not used to reinforce pupils' gains in learning.
50. Schemes of work are in place across the school but, although they contain all elements of the National Curriculum Programmes of Study, they have been developed within year groups and do not sufficiently guide the work of teachers across the key stages. There is, however, a satisfactory range of learning opportunities. The introduction of a number of courses, including GCSE, has strengthened the framework for teachers' planning and assessment at Key Stage 4, and the number of pupils having their work accredited by these means is steadily rising. A number of approaches to the teaching of reading have been considered and currently work is

based on The Teaching of Handwriting, Reading and Spelling Skills (THRASS) scheme. The school uses some elements of the National Literacy Strategy to good effect, but does not use the strategy in a formal way. There is no consistent approach to the assessment of pupils' work at Key Stage 3 and, consequently, the school cannot be clear that what is to be taught builds upon what pupils have actually learned. The nominated teacher is knowledgeable and enthusiastic about the subject but time is not made available for him to monitor his colleagues' work, or pupils' progress, in English. There is an adequate range of good quality, appropriate books, but the current building work has restricted pupils' access to, and use of, the library.
(Key issues 2a; 4)

MATHEMATICS

51. Provision for mathematics is now good, and in this respect the school has made a positive response to the findings of the last inspection.
52. At Key Stage 3, pupils' levels of achievement are satisfactory. Pupils are familiar with the conventions of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, and can apply them (though not always correctly) when working out the mean of, for example 15, 18, 19 and 4. More able pupils handle numbers with confidence. They can add and subtract fractions and can convert the answer to a percentage. Pupils quickly grasp the principle of moving the decimal point when dividing four by ten, but show some uncertainty as to whether the answer should be 0.40 or 0.04. They gain a basic understanding of algebra by substituting symbols for numbers and using reasoning to work out what those symbols stand for. Less able pupils can calculate the perimeter of a rectangle and can plot co-ordinates to construct simple line drawings. They record the frequency with which different numbers on dice are thrown and can convert the information into simple bar charts.
53. At Key Stage 4, pupils' levels of achievement are good. They consolidate and apply what they have already learned to good effect, and an increasing number of pupils have their work accredited through relevant, academic and vocational courses, including GCSE. They have a good understanding of simple symmetry and can identify missing elements in patterns. More able pupils also show a clear understanding of simple trigonometry, use their knowledge of proportion to calculate the angles in a triangle and use terms such as 'sine' and 'tangent' correctly. They know how to use calculators and learn to handle data by using information and communication technology software such as Excel. They also apply their skills readily in the context of other subjects such as design and technology. Throughout the school, pupils are generally careful with their work; they concentrate well and try hard, accepting and recognising their own errors with good humour and refraining from commenting on the mistakes of their classmates. In these respects, their personal and social development is good.
54. The teaching of mathematics throughout the school is good and often very good, particularly at Key Stage 4 where the accredited courses provide both a clear framework for teachers' planning and built-in opportunities for teachers to assess pupils' work. Lessons are well organised and little time is wasted. On occasion, the behaviour of individual pupils can disrupt the smooth flow of the lesson, but staff work well together as a team, particularly when considering the needs of individual pupils, and the supportive, positive relationships between all concerned ensure that lessons are purposeful. As a result, most pupils clearly understand what is expected of them and settle to work quickly. Where teaching is less successful, as in a Key Stage 3

lesson on plotting graphs, staff do not always make such expectations clear, and do not take opportunities to assess what pupils have learned or relate it to the numeracy targets on the pupils' individual education plans. In the most successful lessons, as in for example one for Key Stage 4 pupils completing their course-work, staff adopt an approach which recognises the boys' development as young adults, with the consequence that the pupils take more responsibility for their own learning and become increasingly independent. In this respect, the subject makes a very positive contribution to the pupils' personal development.

55. Two nominated teachers, one for each key stage, share an overview of mathematics, but have no formal opportunity to liaise, nor are they allowed any time to monitor the school's provision in mathematics. As a result, they do not have a clear overview of the subject and teachers tend to plan for their respective year groups in isolation. However, this planning is well supported, both by commercial schemes and by the framework provided by the accredited courses. The school has not adopted the National Numeracy Strategy, but there is a suitable emphasis on the practical use and application of mathematics in everyday life, for example in design and technology, with the result that activities clearly provide relevant opportunities for pupils to build upon what they have already learned. **(Key issue 3)**

SCIENCE

56. The school's provision for science remains unsatisfactory. In this respect there has been insufficient improvement since the last inspection.
57. Throughout the school, pupils' gains in learning are satisfactory within the limited range of opportunities available particularly with regard to their knowledge of living things, the properties of materials, and physical forces. However, their understanding of how to approach things in a scientific way, for example how to research lines of enquiry and conduct experiments, is relatively weak.
58. At the end of Key Stage 3, pupils know how living things adapt to their environment. They know how the main systems of the human body such as the digestive system work, and understand how living things contribute to a food chain. They understand that heat will make materials melt, and that more heat will make them vaporise. They know that electrical coils can create magnetic fields, and have some understanding of how this is applied in everyday life. At the end of Key Stage 4, pupils extend and apply such knowledge in the context of their relevant, accredited course-work. For example, they know how drugs may be absorbed into the bloodstream and relate such issues to their work on healthy living. In this respect, the subject makes a positive contribution to their personal and social development. Pupils experience difficulty, however, in following all elements of these courses due to a lack of expertise in delivering the subject at that level by staff, and by the continuing lack of specialist facilities for conducting experiments.
59. Despite these constraints, the quality of teaching is generally good. Where teaching is more successful, as in a very effective Year 10 lesson on the effect of drugs on the human body, the teachers' plans are based on a sound knowledge of the subject, with the result that pupils are motivated to improve their understanding and become engaged in the activities. Where teaching is less successful, poor subject knowledge compromises the effectiveness of the planning. Pupils are not clear what is expected of them and lose concentration, with the result that some start to misbehave. Teachers recognise this difficulty, one stating that his lack of subject knowledge did

not enable him to 'think on his feet'. In addition, strategies that would help to check what pupils had actually learned, such as a review at the end of the lesson, are not used, work is not consistently marked and opportunities to use homework to reinforce pupils' learning are not taken.

60. There is a satisfactory framework for teachers' planning, based on a commercial scheme, although teachers tend to plan for their respective year groups in isolation. However, neither of the two nominated teachers for science are allowed any time to monitor the success of the school's provision. As a result, they have no clear overview of what is being taught, and the school cannot assess whether the pupils are learning the right things at the right time as a result. Furthermore, opportunities to address and reinforce some aspects of science through other subjects, such as design and technology and physical education, are not exploited. A science graduate has been appointed to commence work in September, but progress in building the specialist science block remains slow. **(Key issues 2a; 3; minor issue 1)**

ART AND DESIGN

61. Pupils' levels of achievement in art are satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4, particularly in practical activities. The improvement made by older pupils reflects their growing maturity and also the way in which they use their accredited course-work to apply and develop their ideas. Pupils enjoy the subject, concentrate well and often become increasingly absorbed in their work. In this respect, the subject makes a positive contribution towards their personal and spiritual development.
62. Pupils of all ages use a satisfactory range of simple media to create simple, colourful illustrations of their work in other subject areas. For example, in English, pupils at Key Stage 3 draw characters from fantasy stories in firm, bold outlines and colour them in with care and precision. Such work tends to lack expression, but other pieces, based on The Iron Man, effectively capture the mechanical aspect of the character. Pupils also capture the appearance of distance very well when creating delicate, misty, collage landscapes. At Key Stage 4, pupils develop such practical skills well, producing sensitive, delicate drawings of plants in pencil and crayon, and apply their observational skills to good effect when depicting everyday articles such as paint brushes standing in jars of water. Their sense of humour is evident in unsettling, surreal collage work based on the human figure, and in such pieces as the three-dimensional figure of Mickey Mouse that lurches out of a television set towards the viewer. Pupils produce vibrant, individual designs for printing on to T-shirts and take a passing interest in the work of their classmates, although there is little critical self-evaluation. They do, however, take a pride in their work, and the respect they show for the often delicate work that brightens the classrooms and communal areas demonstrates that the subject is helping them address their individual emotional and behavioural difficulties very effectively. In all these various ways, art makes a significant contribution to the pupils' personal development.
63. The quality of teaching in art is good throughout the school. Lessons are well organised, with the result that pupils know what is expected of them, settle down and gradually become absorbed in their work. Little time is wasted and a wide range of simple resources, such as ink, chalk and watercolour, is used to good effect. Staff successfully adopt a consistent, patient approach and use quiet, supportive questioning very effectively, not only to help pupils decide what they need to do next in order to achieve the effect that they want, but also to reflect on the consequences of their own behaviour. There are relaxed, good-humoured relationships between all

concerned, notably at Key Stage 4, and staff clearly value the pupils' ideas, with the result that pupils gain in confidence and become more independent in developing their own work. In this respect, the subject embodies the aims of the school well, and the informal way in which the nominated teacher ensures that he is aware of what work the pupils have done, means that he is well placed to assess progress within the subject.

64. The nominated teacher for art is both knowledgeable and experienced in art but is not allowed any time to monitor the quality of his colleagues' teaching in the subject. He has, though, developed an effective framework for teachers' planning. This both reflects the National Curriculum Programmes of Study as well as ensuring pupils build on what they have already learned as they grow up and progress through the school. These plans, however, are relatively weak in the way that the work of other artists, styles and cultures may be used to enhance pupils' understanding of art and, therefore, the subject's contribution to the pupils' cultural development, is not as strong as it should be. The introduction of relevant, accredited courses at Key Stage 4, though, is a positive response to the findings of the last inspection, when the lack of such opportunities across the curriculum was identified as a key issue. **(Key issue 2b)**

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

65. Provision for design and technology is satisfactory and reflects an appropriate response to the findings of the last inspection.
66. Pupils' levels of achievement are satisfactory at both key stages. Pupils at Key Stage 3 learn a wide range of skills involved in food preparation and make lemon cheesecake. They are competent in using the equipment and understand the need for clean hands and protective clothing. With support, they follow the recipe and work at a good pace, clearly enjoying the activity. In the workshop, pupils develop and practice skills such as sawing wood, and make a range of constructions from simple toys to bookcases. By the time they are 14, pupils have cooked a wide range of food in, for example, Italian and Indian styles, and can produce complete meals. They also make picnic food such as quiches and carrot cake with minimal supervision, settling to work quickly and competently weighing and measuring the ingredients needed for pastry. At Key Stage 4, pupils have their work in technology accredited through their vocational course-work, making more demanding dishes such as choux buns. They also learn to apply their skills to good effect, for example learning about the mechanism for headlamp washers whilst helping to service the school minibus.
67. Teaching in design and technology is good. A particularly positive feature is the ways in which support staff and residential staff are used as instructors to help pupils become competent, using their expertise in the kitchen and workshop to very good effect and providing good support for pupils. Activities are relevant and appropriately planned with the result that pupils are keen and enthusiastic and work well. Staff give clear instructions and demonstrations to pupils and use questions effectively to make sure all pupils understand what they are doing. Where teaching is less successful, though, staff do not assess what pupils have actually learned, and simply record pupils' participation in activities. In addition, opportunities to reinforce pupils' learning through homework are not exploited.
68. Satisfactory schemes of work are in place and these provide an effective framework for teachers' planning. Much of this is informal, however, and co-ordination of the subject is not sufficiently well developed to give the school a clear overview of how

well the subject is taught and whether pupils' learning builds on their previous work. Assessment systems are also underdeveloped in that they focus on the completion of tasks rather than the development of skills. Resources are satisfactory although the workshop facilities limit the range of materials with which pupils can work. **(Key issues 2a; 3; 4)**

GEOGRAPHY

69. At Key Stage 3, pupils' progress is satisfactory. Pupils compare developed and under-developed countries, and consider the merits of different energy sources. They study India, and show how human activity can affect the environment. At Key Stage 4, pupils achieve well, applying their skills and extending their knowledge to good effect in the context of the accredited courses introduced last year. Students in Year 11 are currently completing one unit of the course, and their levels of achievement in this respect are good. Pupils prepare leaflets to raise awareness of coastal erosion and sea-defences, and they consider the impact of the recent foot and mouth epidemic on Britain's farming and tourism industries. Pupils are interested in the issues and actively involved in discussions. They listen to others and respond well to questions. In these various ways, the subject makes a positive contribution to the pupils' personal and social development; pupils' work is neat, and their presentation skills show satisfactory improvement.
70. The quality of teaching in geography is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. Where teaching is more successful, the lesson is closely related to the framework that guides teachers' planning, and the teacher has good subject knowledge. The lesson follows on well from previous work with the result that pupils consolidate their learning well by recalling key points. The teacher focuses on key words well to develop understanding and build upon pupils' previous learning. Where teaching is less successful, lessons are organised as isolated activities, with no link to previous work, and insufficient consideration is given to using geographical facts in ways which promote pupils' understanding in the subject. Work is not always marked. Teaching strategies, such as the use of the white-board, are limited and resources are not used well to capture pupils' imagination. As a result, pupils lose concentration and some become disruptive.
71. There is an adequate framework to guide teachers' planning, reinforced by an appropriate course, accredited through AQA, at Key Stage 4. In these respects, the school has made a satisfactory response to the findings of the last inspection and is developing provision in the subject well. Individual teachers plan for their respective year groups, but the nominated teacher for geography, though keen, is inexperienced in the subject and has no clear overview of what is being taught and when. In addition, there is no consistent approach to marking and assessing pupils' work. As a result of these factors, the school cannot be sure that pupils are learning the right things at the right time. **(Key issues 2a; 3; 4)**

HISTORY

72. History is only taught up to the age of 14 and pupils have satisfactory levels of achievement. This represents a satisfactory improvement when compared with the findings of the last report.
73. Pupils have a satisfactory knowledge of Medieval England and the Black Death. They learn about how Britain developed after 1750 and gain some understanding of the impact of the French Revolution. They study the rise and fall of the Roman Empire, and the life and times of native peoples of the Americas such as the Aztecs. More able pupils show increasing factual knowledge and understanding of historical events and see their influence upon life today. In this respect, the subject makes a positive contribution to their social development. Pupils use a variety of learning styles, including word processing, and improve their setting out and neatness of presentation.

74. Teaching of history is good and on occasion very good. Effective questioning by the teacher involves all pupils, consolidates their learning and attempts to bring history to life. Strategies such as drama and role-play are used successfully to capture pupils' attention and to stimulate pupils' imagination. Resources such as CD-Roms and wall displays are also used very well, as in a very successful lesson on the Aztecs. However, work is not consistently marked and comments do not always guide learning. Teachers seldom keep records of work completed and progress made in relation to pupils' individual targets.
75. The nominated teacher for history has an informal overview of teachers' yearly planning, but does not monitor lessons and there are currently no co-ordination meetings. There are also very few external visits undertaken that promote pupils' knowledge and understanding in history, and the subject makes an unsatisfactory contribution to the pupils' cultural development as a result. **(Key issue 2b)**

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

76. Pupils' levels of achievement are satisfactory throughout the school, and often good at Key Stage 4, as they apply the skills they have acquired in using computers for recreation to the work that they undertake in class. This reflects the satisfactory response the school has made to the findings of the last inspection.
77. At Key Stage 3, pupils use ICT in a range of activities, developing skills in the context of other subjects such as mathematics and French. They can enter information in the form of text and use a spell check and thesaurus to make changes to their work. Pupils can load the appropriate program, and use the mouse confidently and accurately to access menus and open files. Pupils enjoy working on the computers and generally behave well in lessons and concentrate on the tasks they are set. They treat the equipment with respect and show confidence when using it, handling data through appropriate programs such as Excel. At Key Stage 4, pupils' work is externally accredited through AQA, and they also have their key skills recognised through their vocational course-work. Through Year 10 and into Year 11, pupils become more confident in handling data, and use ICT to produce a range of work such as letters of thanks following work experience.
78. Teaching in ICT is good. Where teaching is more successful, notably at Key Stage 4, work is well organised and teachers have a good understanding of the elements of the curriculum under consideration. This good understanding ensures that any difficulties are dealt with quickly, with the result that pupils remain interested and concentrate well. Teachers effectively assess and develop pupils' understanding through the use of questions, and support staff, especially those who also have good subject knowledge, are used well. Staff work well together as a team and have high expectations of pupils. In less successful lessons, however, a lack of subject knowledge means that the teacher cannot respond to the pupils' difficulties, with the result that they become bored and begin to use the equipment for their amusement rather than as an aid to learning.
79. ICT is used across the school in a wide range of subjects. All classrooms have sufficient computers for pupils to use, but control equipment, such as turtles, are lacking. Appropriate schemes of work are in place but these have been developed by individual teachers for the respective year groups and do not provide a satisfactory structure to inform and guide teachers' planning. In addition, pupils at Key Stage 3 do

not study those elements of the curriculum which involve control, due to a lack of expertise and resources. The school is aware of this difficulty and has made plans to address it in the 2001/2 academic year. The accredited courses at Key Stage 4 provide a stronger framework to guide teachers' planning, and make a positive contribution to the pupils' preparation for the adult world. However, co-ordination across the key stages is not sufficiently developed to ensure the school knows whether the pupils are learning the right things at the right time. Although assessment and recording procedures are beginning to be put in place using a commercial system, they are not yet used consistently across all classes. The school has plans for the development of a computer suite to be sited in the accommodation currently under construction. **(Key issues 2a; 3; 4; minor issue 1)**

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

80. French is taught only to pupils at Key Stage 3, but pupils' levels of achievement are satisfactory within the limited range of opportunities available. They speak French with English accents, but their pronunciation is clear and all pupils pay attention, including those who are more reticent. They understand simple, everyday terms to describe, for example, themselves and the weather and, although they use the language haltingly, they do so without any apparent self-consciousness. Pupils know the French words for such things as colours, numbers and the landmarks of Paris, using them in simple phrases as part of their project work producing a brochure for tourists. Pupils understand some of the features that make French everyday life different to life in England and, in these various ways, the subject makes an adequate contribution to the pupils' personal and cultural development.
81. The subject has a low profile within the school and there was only one opportunity to observe French being taught during the inspection period. In that lesson, though, the quality of teaching was satisfactory. Well-established routines and clear instructions meant that the pupils understood what was expected of them, settled to work quickly, and a good working atmosphere was established as a result. Patient, persistent prompting by the teacher, underpinned by very positive relationships and the effective use of support staff, meant that pupils stuck to their task, but opportunities to reinforce pupils' understanding of French, for example through classroom instructions and general conversation, though created, were not exploited. Assessment tended to reflect levels of participation, rather than what the pupils had actually learned, and homework was not set.
82. Teachers' planning for their respective year groups is satisfactory, and in this respect, the school has consolidated the positive findings of the last inspection. However, the nominated teacher has little expertise in French and has no clear overview of the subject. As a result, the school is not well placed to make sure that pupils do not end up with gaps in their learning or repeat work unnecessarily. The vocational courses, which are already in place at Key Stage 4, would allow pupils the opportunity to develop their understanding of French in a relevant, accredited context. This opportunity, however, is not currently exploited despite the fact that some pupils have gained a basic knowledge of another modern foreign language, in this case Italian.
(Key issues 2a; 3)

MUSIC

83. The school has responded appropriately to the findings of the recent inspection and music now features in the curriculum. It is only taught up to the age of 14, but the school's provision in the subject is limited, and pupils' levels of achievement are unsatisfactory as a result. Pupils are beginning to develop some understanding of musical notation and of different forms of music such as folk singing. They are interested in music and confident when singing in a group. They enjoy performing but do not have an opportunity to show others what they can do or to discuss how their work could be improved.
84. Teaching in music is satisfactory. In more successful lessons, planning is related both to the needs of pupils and to elements of the music curriculum such as listening skills and notation. In lessons that are less successful, though, plans do not clearly show what pupils are to learn, activities are not well organised, with the result that pupils are not clear what is expected of them and wander off task. When pupils have the opportunity to practice skills during the lessons, however, they show good levels of concentration. In one lesson, for example, a pupil worked hard at practising a piece of music on the keyboard, persevering until he could play it without stopping. He was effectively supported and encouraged in his work by a learning support assistant. Information and communication technology is used to extend pupils' experiences of music but is not sufficiently well planned to build on what pupils already know.
85. The framework that guides teachers' planning does not reflect the full range of elements from the National Curriculum Programmes of Study; neither are activities co-ordinated across the key stage. As a result, the school cannot be sure that pupils learn everything they should learn at the right time, and the subject's contribution to the pupils' spiritual and cultural development is not as significant as it should be. Teachers discuss what pupils are to learn but this is done informally and does not ensure that what is to be taught builds effectively on pupils' existing skills. Some residential activities, such as discos, have a musical aspect, but these are not exploited as part of pupils' learning, nor is there a system in place to record pupils' achievement. Classrooms are adequate for the delivery of the subject, but there are insufficient instruments and other resources to meet the needs of the pupils and to teach all elements of the curriculum. **(Key issues 2a; 2b; 3)**

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

86. The school makes good provision for physical education; this reflects a positive response to the findings of the last report. Pupils at Key Stage 3 have satisfactory levels of achievement, and pupils at Key Stage 4 build on this foundation and achieve well in a wide range of activities that focus on a variety of team games, swimming, athletics and outdoor pursuits. Pupils are keen to participate, and understand the importance of warming-up and stretching out. They develop a good-humoured, competitive attitude, and try hard, notably when racing against their teacher. Pupils have good ball skills, and apply them well in a variety of games such as football, basketball and rounders.
87. There is a wide range of physical activities available to pupils, both in school and as part of the residential programme. Day pupils are encouraged to participate in the additional activities and arrangements are made to transport them home afterwards. Activities offered include swimming, go-karting, golf, ten-pin bowling, fishing, table-tennis and, more recently, canoeing and climbing. There is an adventure week in Thurrock for pupils in Key Stage 3, and last year a group of pupils and staff went skiing to Bulgaria. The school has teams for football and table-tennis and has entered

groups in road running events. The trophies won by pupils at the school are prominently displayed within the games room, and the school is hosting a five-a-side football tournament involving three other special schools later this month. In all these various ways, the subject makes a very positive contribution to the pupils' personal and social development and actively helps them address some of their individual difficulties. There is currently no provision for gymnastics, due to maintenance problems with the accommodation, or dance.

88. The quality of teaching in physical education is good. Where teaching is more successful, teachers have very clear expectations, and the resulting positive attitudes and behaviour from the pupils enable them to learn well. In practical sessions, detailed planning by both the teacher and the learning support assistant, identifies the skills the pupils will acquire in stages, and there are good warm-up and stretch-out routines. Both the teacher and learning support assistant are very enthusiastic, have good subject knowledge and encourage pupils of all levels of ability to improve their performance with the result that pupils stay actively involved. When lessons are less successful, there is insufficient emphasis on aspects of safety, for example when throwing the discus, or developing skills. In addition, insufficient time is left for a review of what has been learned and stretch out sessions.
89. The nominated teacher for physical education is very enthusiastic and largely responsible for teaching the subject, which means he is well placed to monitor provision and thus provide satisfactory leadership. He has no formal qualifications in the subject, but he is assisted by a member of the care staff who is a qualified coach for football and athletics, and their teamwork is very effective. In addition, the school has bought in qualified instructors for activities such as canoeing, rock climbing and wind surfing. Satisfactory records are kept, but currently there is only accreditation available for swimming and athletics. Support from the county advisory officer for physical education has been beneficial in developing guidelines for teachers' planning that address skills pupils will learn. However, opportunities to reinforce pupils' learning in other subjects, such as mathematics, science and geography, though created, are overlooked. In addition, there is no formal overall co-ordination of activities followed by pupils within the residential programme, and opportunities to link them to the physical education programme, or pupils' personal targets, are overlooked.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

90. The school makes satisfactory provision for religious education and, by exploring relevant personal and social issues in ways that make them interesting to the pupils, the subject embodies the aims of the school well.
91. Throughout the school, pupils' levels of achievement are satisfactory. Pupils at Key Stage 3 gain a basic knowledge of the major faiths such as Christianity, Islam and Bhuddism. They also explore aspects of other beliefs, for example those of the North American Indians, in their work in history. They consider and discuss concepts such as crime and punishment with some maturity, gain some understanding of the moral issues involved, and learn how different faiths have dealt with them. Pupils at Key Stage 4 develop and apply this knowledge and awareness effectively in the context of their accredited, vocational courses, learning, for example, how the faith of individuals such as Martin Luther King can affect the lives of other people. They use information and communication technology fluently to research such topics, and demonstrate a keen sense of awareness when discussing issues such as racial equality, expressing

themselves with little sign of self-consciousness. In these respects, their personal, social and moral development is good.

92. Teaching in religious education is satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and good at Key Stage 4. Relationships are good, and teachers encourage and value contributions from the pupils. Lessons are generally well planned, particularly at Key Stage 4 where the structure of the vocational courses provides a good foundation for the activities. This was illustrated in a very successful lesson with Year 11 pupils on Faith in Action, where the pupils clearly understood what was required of them, organised themselves well and settled quickly to work. The teacher handled the subsequent discussions sensitively, which ensured all pupils were interested and maintained their concentration for a considerable period of time, despite the complexity of the issues involved. However, where teachers are less confident in delivering the subject, as in a Key Stage 3 lesson with the focus 'Thou shalt not kill', pupils' interest sometimes wanes, they lose concentration and some begin to misbehave. This compromises the learning of all the class.
93. There is a satisfactory scheme of work that, because of the appropriate emphasis given to social and moral issues, is highly relevant for the pupils, particularly at Key Stage 4. However, the nominated teacher is not allowed any time to monitor provision in the subject, and does not have a clear overview of what is being taught. Class teachers who are less confident about delivering the subject do not receive the support and guidance that would make their planning more effective, and their assessment of what pupils' actually learn does not help to guide their subsequent planning. As a result, the school cannot be sure that pupils are taught the right things at the right time. In addition, the subject makes an inadequate contribution to the school's arrangements for collective worship. However, the accreditation of pupils' work at Key Stage 4 through the vocational courses is a particularly positive feature. In this respect, the school has made a good response to the findings of the last inspection, when the development of such courses within the whole curriculum was identified as a key issue. **(Key issues 2a; 3)**