

INSPECTION REPORT

ST JOHN'S WOOD COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Knutsford

LEA area: Cheshire

Unique reference number: 131733

Headteacher: Paul Evans

Reporting inspector: Alastair Younger
23587

Dates of inspection: 18th-21st June 2001

Inspection number: 230104

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:	Emotional and behaviour
Age range of pupils:	11-16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Longridge Knutsford Cheshire
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Appropriate authority:	Local Education Authority
Name of chair of governors:	Mr W Edwards
Date of previous inspection:	Not previously inspected

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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23587	Alastair Younger	Registered inspector	Science Art and design Physical education Religious education	The characteristics and effectiveness of the school The school's results and pupils' achievements Teaching and learning
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15303	Mike Smith	Team inspector	Mathematics Information and communication technology Geography History	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development
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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

This is a school for up to 35 pupils of secondary age. All have statements of special educational need identifying behavioural or emotional difficulties. Learning difficulty is never the main reason for referral but most pupils have been significantly underachieving prior to their referral. The school has been open for only three years. During the inspection no Year 11 pupils were present as they had reached school leaving age and completed their examinations. All pupils are white and English speaking. About one half are entitled to free school meals. Pupils are admitted from all over Cheshire and many have long journeys to school each day. Four are girls. The school is housed in an ex-primary school building. It adjoins a community centre with which it shares several rooms.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a very good school giving very good value for money. There is a very high standard of teaching. It leads to pupils making good academic progress and to their very good personal development. Underpinning the success of the school is the exemplary leadership and management of the headteacher. Parents like the school and pupils are happy to attend.

What the school does well

- The headteacher's contribution to leadership and management is exceptional.
- National strategies for numeracy and literacy have been wholeheartedly embraced and contribute to high standards in mathematics and English.
- There is a good curriculum.
- Pupils are very well looked after; the school is a safe and happy place.
- A high consistency of strong teaching leads to pupils learning well and making good academic progress.
- Pupils make exceptional progress in improving their behaviour. By the time they leave they demonstrate mature and positive attitudes.

What could be improved

- Teachers' lesson planning; by paying more attention to the high quality individual education programmes and schemes of work when planning lessons.
- Facilities for physical education.
- The curriculum for Years 10 and 11 pupils, through improved college links and vocational opportunities
- Provision for art

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has not previously been inspected but there is a relentless drive for improvement through careful planning and comprehensive self-evaluation.

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

High standards are achieved in the very important subjects of English, mathematics and science. In English, pupils make particularly good progress in improving their writing skills. In mathematics the school's exceptionally well-planned response to the national numeracy strategy is contributing to rapidly improving standards, most noticeably with younger pupils. In science, pupils build up a good understanding of biology, physics and chemistry and improve their practical skills. Achievement is good in all other subjects except religious education, French and personal social and health education, where it is very good; and art, history and music, where it is satisfactory.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Parents report that their children like the school and this is confirmed in conversation with pupils. Pupils arrive in uniform and expect to learn. Nearly all participate enthusiastically in lessons.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. From poor standards prior to their referral this represents excellent progress. There is a calm atmosphere and pupils are polite and welcoming to visitors. Lessons are rarely disrupted and movement around the school is sensible. Breaks and lunchtimes are relaxed, pleasant occasions. Bullying, sexism and racism are rare but there are a few occasions when the extreme behaviour of individuals has resulted in the need for short periods of exclusion.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Nearly all pupils are sensitive to the difficulties others are occasionally facing. They are often sympathetic and support one another in times of difficulty. There is very little mockery of the efforts of those less able than themselves. Older pupils show an increasing commitment to work, nearly all persevere and gain creditable examination results at the end of Year 11. Their maturity is demonstrated by the fact that, for the last two years, every leaver has left to employment.
Attendance	Unsatisfactory. At only 76% this falls well below national expectations. In such a small school the very poor attendance of a small number of pupils distorts figures. Most pupils attend very well, enabling them to make good progress.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	
Lessons seen overall	Very good

Of thirty lessons observed, 86% of teaching was good or better and 46% very good or better. Excellent teaching was observed in two lessons. No teaching was less than satisfactory. On the evidence of pupils' past work, monitoring by the headteacher and by local authority advisors it is clear that this very high standard of teaching is the norm and this is leading to pupils making good academic progress.

The major strength of teaching, and the reason why teaching is graded higher than achievement, is the excellent balance teachers maintain between the pursuit of academic progress and pupils' personal development; the latter being the reason for pupils being referred to the school.

There is a high consistency of strong teaching in English, mathematics and science. The teaching of all other subjects is good, except in religious education and French, where it is very good and art, where it is satisfactory. All teachers pay very good attention to the development of pupils' numeracy and literacy skills. Lessons are made interesting and classes are very well managed. Lesson planning is variable but good overall. A weakness is that teachers are not always stating learning objectives sufficiently clearly nor relating them closely to schemes of work and individual targets.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. With the recent addition of music, pupils now have access to the full National Curriculum and religious education. Very good attention is also paid to pupils' personal, social and health education. The curriculum for Year 10 and 11 pupils is weakened by the limited opportunities for pupils to participate in vocational studies or college courses and for some, especially lower attaining pupils this slightly reduces its relevance.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good. Provision for pupils' spiritual development is very good. Religious education is a strong area of the curriculum and many opportunities are provided for pupils to reflect on their situation and make sense of it. Many will leave the school with happy memories. Pupils are helped to develop strong moral and social values through the high standards expected of them and the excellent example set by all staff. Provision for cultural development is good. Although art and music are weak areas of the curriculum there are strengths in modern foreign languages, geography and the cultural aspects of English. There is also a good range of visits to museums, galleries and theatres. Insufficient emphasis is placed on the importance of multicultural education other than through the particularly strong study of the great world religions in religious education.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Very good. The school is a safe, settled and happy place where pupils can relax and learn to the best of their ability. There is very strong monitoring of academic performance, personal development, attendance and behaviour. Child protection procedures are good.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Excellent. The headteacher is one of the best. In a short period of time he has played a vital role in establishing a school that is very effective. In this he has been hugely supported by dedicated, and very capable, senior staff.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Very good. An excellent chair has determinedly led the governing body and ensured that it has fulfilled its statutory duties. Sub-groups of the governing body meet regularly to discuss issues relating, for example, to finance, building, personnel and the curriculum and this provides great support to the headteacher. Where the governing body could contribute more is in visiting the school more frequently to see (and comment on) what is being achieved and thus contributing more to the monitoring and evaluation of standards.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Very good. There has been extensive and effective monitoring of teaching by the headteacher, the local education authority and the teachers themselves. Clear priorities for improvement have been identified and training provided. Performance management strategies are very well developed and are being implemented with great success. The curriculum is closely monitored by senior staff and subject co-ordinators. Particularly close attention is paid to the identification of appropriate accreditation opportunities for Year 10 and 11 pupils.
The strategic use of resources	Very good. This is helped by excellent improvement planning. Each subject co-ordinator identifies priorities for development and these are carefully considered and prioritised by senior staff and governors before resources and funding are finalised. Money is wisely spent and very carefully accounted for by excellent administration staff. Best value is assured.

There is a very good staff. Teachers are well qualified in a good range of subjects and demonstrate very good skills in working with this type of pupil. Support staff make a very strong contribution to pupils' learning and personal development. The accommodation is very good with excellent specialist facilities for design and technology and science. However, there is a significant area of weakness in facilities for physical education. Learning resources are very good. They are of high quality and relevant to the range of pupils. This greatly helps teachers to generate interest in lessons and vary their teaching methods to promote learning.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The high quality of teaching. The information they receive on their childrens' progress. The ease with which they can approach the school with questions or problems. The high quality of leadership and management. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Only a tiny minority of parents voiced any criticism of any aspect of the school

The inspection team agrees with parents' positive views. A very small minority of parents would like more work to be sent home. The inspection team feels that the present amount is appropriate and is reassured that the school is reviewing procedures to meet with the wishes of that minority.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

1. Across the whole school, pupils achieve well and make good progress. They do so because they are taught very well, work enthusiastically and have access to a good, well organised curriculum. One reason why very strong teaching is only resulting in good academic progress overall is because of pupil absence, another is because teachers, rightly, are focussing particularly well on personal as well as academic progress.

2. Nearly all pupils have entered the school following long periods of underachievement, usually because their behaviour and attitudes have prevented them from making the best of their mainstream education. Girls are in a small minority but this is not adversely affecting their academic progress. There is a wide range of ability within each class but all pupils are able to achieve to their potential because they are taught in small groups, with keen attention being paid to their different needs.

3. As the school has been open for only three years it is early to be judging trends in results but it is clear, from examination results, that there is ongoing improvement. In each of the past two years most pupils have been gaining passes in the D – G category in a small range of GCSE's, On the evidence of teachers' assessments of coursework, the school is confidently predicting its first successes at GCSE Grade C in several subjects this year. Pupils also gain good passes in Certificate of achievement examinations in many subjects.

4. There are particular strengths in several subjects. Individual, challenging targets are clearly stated and pupils are invariably meeting them. Achievements in writing are very good throughout the school. This is evident in the confidence with which pupils tackle written work in a broad range of situations and in the pride they take in their handwriting. In mathematics, achievement is especially good in Years 7,8 and 9. This is where some of the strongest teaching in the school takes place. In personal, social and health education, pupils are making very good progress because there is such a comprehensive, relevant and well-taught curriculum. Achievement is also very good in religious education, a cause for celebration in any school; and in French, which is exceptionally well taught. In nearly every other subject, pupils achieve well. In no subject is achievement less than satisfactory. It is satisfactory in art, where the lack of a specialist teacher is having an adverse impact; in music, which has only recently been added to the curriculum and in history, where the subject has been taught by a succession of different teachers.

5. In English, pupils make good progress, overall. They show good results in their Standard Attainment Tests and nearly all gain passes, in the D to G range, at GCSE for English Language. These results compare very favourably with the achievements of pupils in similar schools. Pupils make good progress in speaking and listening across the school. Younger pupils listen to, and answer, questions well; older pupils listen carefully and show they have understood the main points in an argument. Pupils make good progress in reading. There are several instances of individuals making very good progress, for example, by improving their reading age by two years in under a year. Older pupils continue to make good progress, using their skills to analyse difficult texts in their work for GCSE language. All pupils make very good progress with their writing. They show

confidence in writing for different purposes and producing imaginative written work. For this type of pupil this is particularly good, and unusual.

6. Achievement and progress in mathematics are good. The school's exceptionally well planned response to the National Numeracy Strategy is contributing to rapidly improving standards, especially in Years 7,8,9. Younger pupils give quick oral responses during the initial 'mental starter' warm-ups to each lesson. They demonstrate accurate addition; subtraction, division and multiplication skills and clearly explain how they arrive at their answers. Their use of, and understanding of, the vocabulary of mathematics is developing well and they demonstrate a clear understanding of the characteristics of common two-dimensional shapes. Pupils collect and handle data with confidence and use ICT to graphically represent their findings. In Years 10 and 11, pupils increasingly apply their mathematical knowledge in real life situations. By the end of Year 11, nearly all pupils gain a pass at D-G level in GCSE mathematics.

7. Pupils of all ages are achieving well and making good progress in science. This is because they are provided with interesting and motivating lessons, with a strong focus on practical and investigative work. As a result, nearly all pupils are achieving a good degree of success in statutory tests for pupils in Year 9 and GCSE at the end of Year 11, where results compare very favourably with other schools of this type.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Pupils say they like the school and this is confirmed by parents. Pupils are in no doubt that they come to school to learn. In nearly two out of three lessons observed their attitudes to work were very good, or better. Pupils demonstrate a strong commitment to their work by working and behaving very well. There is a calm and relaxed atmosphere around the school and pupils are polite and welcoming to visitors. Movement around the school is sensible and breaktimes and lunchtimes are pleasant, relaxed occasions. Bullying, sexism and racism are rare and there are few exclusions, each of short duration.

9. Pupils arrive at school on time, transport allowing, and settle quickly into the routines of the school. They listen carefully and show enthusiasm in lessons. When working independently they concentrate well and complete tasks efficiently and quickly. Pupils frequently support and help each other in their work. For example, in a Year 7 geography class when comparing graphs and in a Year 10 class when developing word processing skills.

10. Behaviour in lessons, at lunchtimes and around the school, is very good. Inappropriate behaviour, which is seen when pupils are troubled or unsettled, is mostly of short duration and typically will be a verbal outburst against another pupil. When this occurs, pupils acknowledge that they have let themselves and their teachers down and quickly make amends. Conduct in class is only rarely interfering with learning. Pupils behave well on outings such as field trips. There is respect for the school ethos and pupils show pleasure when they are given merit points for positive attitudes and behaviour. Respect is shown for property, resources and displays of work.

11. Pupils make very good progress in their personal and social development. They respond with confidence and maturity to the opportunities they have to make choices during the day and when required to show initiative in lessons. Relationships are very good. Pupils learn to show concern for each other and offer support to classmates who become troubled or overly worried. Pupils think about the consequences of their actions upon others and take increasing responsibility for their own behaviour. In doing so they show an increasing understanding of the hurt and disappointment that they occasionally cause.

12. Although the school has good procedures for monitoring and promoting attendance, at 76.32 per cent it falls well below national expectations. In such a small school the very poor attendance of a small number of pupils distorts figures. Most pupils attend very well, enabling them to make good academic progress overall.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

13. Teaching is very good overall for pupils of all ages. It is making a significant contribution to pupils' learning and their personal development. During the inspection 86% of teaching was good or better and 46% very good or better. Excellent teaching was observed in two lessons. No teaching was less than satisfactory. On the evidence of pupils' past work, monitoring by the headteacher and by local authority advisors it is clear that this very high standard of teaching is being consistently maintained. The major strength of teaching, and the reason why teaching is graded higher than achievement, is the excellent balance teachers maintain between the pursuit of academic progress and pupils' personal development; the latter being the reason for pupils being referred to the school.

14. There is a high consistency of strong teaching in English, mathematics and science. All teachers are identifying opportunities to promote the basic skills of literacy and numeracy in their lessons and are teaching them very well. The teaching of all other subjects is good, except in religious education and French, where it is very good and art, where it is satisfactory, weakened by the temporary teacher having insufficient subject knowledge to bring the subject alive.

15. Nearly all lessons are made interesting, with teachers using a wide range of effective strategies to help pupils learn. These include the particularly strong involvement of highly effective support staff. Stimulating lessons result in motivated pupils and reduce the incidence of interruptions through undesirable behaviour. On the few occasions that pupils lose interest, most frequently the older pupils, teachers use a very good range of strategies for maintaining order and keeping the pace of lessons flowing.

16. Lesson planning is variable but good overall. It is at its best in Years 7, 8 and 9 mathematics, where the teacher clearly states what she expects each pupil to have remembered from the previous lesson and then very simply identifies what is expected of each child in the current lesson. This makes it easy for her to check whether pupils have learned what she set out to teach. Weaker planning is characterised by learning outcomes not being clearly stated nor related sufficiently closely to schemes of work and individual targets. All teachers are adept at using very good questioning to ensure that pupils understand what is being taught. The marking of work is of very high quality. This is because it offers appropriate encouragement to pupils, by highlighting their strengths, whilst offering clear guidance to help them correct their mistakes.

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

17. The quality and range of learning opportunities is good. With the recent addition of music and drama, all subjects of the national curriculum are taught, as is religious education. The school comprehensively meets its aim to demonstrate that this is a place where pupils can be proud of their achievements academically and develop maturity in their approach to their learning.

18. A strong focus on implementing the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies has significantly raised standards in English and mathematics and has also enabled pupils to gain more from other subjects. The school has received the Basic Skills Charter Award in recognition of these achievements. Work is presented in such a way that it motivates the pupils and helps them to see how well they are achieving.

19. Learning opportunities match the needs of pupils well. Activities are challenging but within their capabilities. All pupils have an equal opportunity to take part in all activities. The very small number of girls, all of differing ages, limits opportunities for them to mix with other girls who share similar interests and problems. This is recognised as a weakness by the school management which is hoping to address it by increasing the total number of places on roll.

20. Pupils' personal, social and health education, as well as their emotional and behavioural development, is very well promoted. Important issues such as what pupils see as acceptable behaviour are discussed and pupils are also taught how to improve their study skills and the presentation of work. This helps them to gain positive attitudes to learning and to see a purpose for working towards academic achievements. As a result, they gain self-esteem and increasing control over their emotions. Older pupils discuss issues such as what makes pupils bully, and the abuse of drugs and alcohol. There is good provision for sex education and pupils are encouraged to look at forming relationships and growing up and parenting. There is an appropriate emphasis on the gaining of citizenship skills.

21. There is a satisfactory range of extra-curricular activities. These include an annual residential trip and educational visits out of school. Year 7 pupils have recently attended a modern production of "The Wizard of Oz" at the Lowry Theatre. Social activities are occasionally run after school. For example, pupils have built up reward points (merits) and put these towards a visit to a nearby theme park. These activities provide valuable opportunities for pupils to gain social skills.

22. Links with the community and partner institutions are satisfactory. The head teacher currently chairs the secondary heads forum and the chair of governors has many links with organisations within the broader community. The school is adjacent to a community centre, with which it shares several rooms. Several teachers have informal links with mainstream schools. The management of the school is keen to develop this area and provide more opportunities for pupils to link with pupils in mainstream schools.

23. The relevance of the curriculum for pupils in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory overall. The school has developed very good opportunities for older pupils to gain national accreditation, including General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) examinations and Certificates of Achievement. However, there are insufficient opportunities for pupils, especially those who are currently unmotivated to attend school, to participate in courses which have a stronger practical, or work based, nature such as those offered by further education colleges. A small number of pupils has successfully participated in work experience. An imminent appointment, with responsibility for work experience and careers, will support this development.

24. Provision for pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development is very good and has a significant impact on the quality of pupils' learning and the life of the school. Religious education is a strong area of the curriculum and pupils are provided with many opportunities to reflect on their own and others' lives and to make sense of the world in which they live. In tutor time, pupils are able to reflect when discussing what they like about

themselves and why others are special too. This raises their self-esteem. Pupils are helped to develop strong moral and social values through the high standards expected of them and the excellent example set by all staff. Very good use is made of opportunities, such as mealtimes, breaks and tutor time, to reinforce the attitudes which the school promotes.

25. Provision for cultural development is good. Although art and music are weaker areas of the curriculum, with little emphasis on the study of famous artists and musicians, there are strengths in modern foreign languages, geography and through the study of a wide range of stories, poetry and plays in English lessons. There is a good range of visits to museums, galleries, theatres and local places of interest. In religious education, there is particularly strong study of the great world religions and some exploration of the associated cultures. Other than in religious education, however, there are not enough opportunities for pupils to gain a greater understanding of the diversity of race and culture found in Britain.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

26. This is a safe, settled and happy school. Pupils are able to improve their behaviour and take advantage of the educational opportunities provided because there is high quality educational and personal support and guidance including strong monitoring of their academic performance, personal development and behaviour. This helps them to relax and concentrate on their learning.

27. There are good procedures to monitor and promote pupils' attendance and to follow up any unexplained absences. The reasons why these good procedures are not always reflected in better attendance are often beyond the control of the school. All staff have a very good understanding of pupils' backgrounds and the difficulties that they experience in their lives. Child protection procedures are good and all staff have very good awareness of issues affecting pupils' well being which may need to be recorded, monitored and reported to outside agencies.

28. Regular checks of the premises are carried out by the headteacher and governing body and any risks are minimised by carrying out immediate repairs. There is a good health and safety policy in place and the headteacher has received up-to-date training. Nevertheless, the school recognises that there could be further improvement in its procedures with the introduction of formal written risk assessments for specific areas of school life. Staff are very caring when pupils are upset or feeling unwell. Many staff are trained in first aid and pupils' medication is correctly handled.

29. There is a very good approach to monitoring and improving pupils' behaviour. Staff have high expectations and are consistent in the way in which they reward good behaviour and attitudes and sanction inappropriate behaviour. Pupils gain a very clear message about what constitutes acceptable behaviour. High quality relationships between staff and pupils have a very significant impact on pupils' behaviour. Pupils are treated with care and respect. Bullying is not tolerated and there are very good records in place to monitor and review any incidents that take place. There is a satisfactory policy for the use of any physical restraint. It recognises that staff require training to ensure that, on the rare occasions that restraint is necessary, correct procedures are always followed.

30. Pupils' personal development is promoted and monitored very well. Tutor periods are used very effectively to review pupils' attitudes and behaviour, to discuss targets for improvement and to motivate pupils to try harder. Pupils value the system of points, merits and certificates and understand what they must do to achieve improvement and to receive rewards. Each pupil has an achievement folder, providing very good photographic

evidence of participation in activities in and out of school, awards of achievement certificates and pupils' own views of their progress. These folders are a valuable record of their personal development and are highly valued by pupils.

31. Procedures for assessing pupils' academic achievement and progress are very good. Basic skills in English and mathematics are assessed when pupils first arrive. Individual education plans are quickly drawn up with very clear targets addressing pupils' varied needs. Assessment information is well used to guide curricular planning in subjects and to target additional literacy support for those pupils who need it. The assessment of what pupils know, understand and can do within English, mathematics and science is particularly strong

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

32. The school has quickly developed a very good partnership with parents and carers. It is working effectively with them to manage and improve pupils' behaviour and their attitudes to learning.

33. Parents express very favourable views of the school. Through their responses to the questionnaires, parents showed particular appreciation of:

- the high quality of teaching;
- the information they receive on their children's progress;
- the ease with which they can approach the school with questions or problems;
- the high quality of leadership and management.

34. Only a tiny minority of parents voiced any criticism of any aspect of the school. A few feel that they would like more work to be sent home. The inspection team fully endorses parents' positive views of the school. It feels that the present amount of homework is appropriate and is reassured that the school is reviewing its homework policy to meet with the wishes of those few parents who would like more regular homework for their children.

35. The quality of information provided for parents and carers is very good. Staff place high priority on regular communication with them through telephone calls, newsletters, and letters to praise pupils' achievements or to alert parents to concerns. The school documentation is very well presented. There is a very high quality prospectus. All communication with parents is friendly and encouraging. This helps parents to feel more at ease with their children's education and not to feel concerned about approaching the school with any questions or problems. The introduction of literacy and numeracy leaflets is a particularly good feature and encourages parents to support their children's learning at home.

36. Each year the school sends a questionnaire to parents and carers and incorporates their views in the process of school improvement planning. A home-school agreement is signed by most parents and demonstrates their approval of what the school provides for their children. However, the agreement could be improved by more negotiation with parents to more accurately reflects parents' ability to fulfil their commitment. As evidence of the strength of partnership, there has been 100 per cent attendance of parents at annual review meetings this year and parents are increasingly active on the governing body.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

37. The leadership and management of the school are excellent. The headteacher provides a very clear direction for the work of the school and is particularly well supported by dedicated and very capable senior staff. The school improvement plan is detailed and provides very good guidance for the further development of the school.

38. The school's aims and values are clear. They are based on an unconditional regard for pupils as individuals and their entitlement to the very best educational experience the school can provide. The excellent relationship between staff and pupils is, to a considerable extent, based on the obvious respect, which staff have for pupils. The head teacher sets high expectations for pupils and staff alike. He makes a significant contribution to the very good ethos for learning, which is a notable aspect of the success achieved by the school.

39. The governing body fully meets its role of 'critical friend' to the school and provides very good support to the head teacher. The dedicated chair has ensured the governing body meets its statutory duties. Sub groups meet regularly to discuss issues relating, for instance, to premises, staffing, finance and the curriculum and the circulation of minutes of these meetings ensures that all governors gain a very good view of the effectiveness of the developments identified in the school improvement plan. There is no regular and focused timetable of governor visits to see what is being achieved and this weakens the gathering of first hand evidence to further contribute to the monitoring and evaluation of standards.

40. The very good programme for monitoring the effectiveness of the work of the school, the regular involvement of the local authority advisor and the clearly identified in-service training programme are testament to the school's commitment for further improvement. Responsibilities are shared very well. The two senior teachers have a clear understanding of their duties and discharge them very effectively. Performance management strategies are well-established and senior staff and subject co-ordinators closely monitor the curriculum. The programme for monitoring and evaluating the work of the school includes teachers' planning, their effectiveness in lessons and the progress pupils make in their learning through regular review of their individual education plans. More regular analysis of pupil work samples would positively add to this programme.

41. Due to the small number of teachers, subjects have not always been taught by those with specialist training. Presently there is a very good match, particularly in the core subjects, although the standards achieved and the progress pupils make in, for example, art are affected by the lack of specialist knowledge of the teacher.

42. Accommodation is mostly very good. It contains specialist teaching areas for the National Curriculum to be fully delivered, including excellent specialist facilities for design and technology and science. The lack of specialist facilities for physical education hampers its delivery. Resources to support teaching and learning are good overall and teachers have clear plans for their continued improvement especially in geography, history and ICT.

43. Financial planning is detailed and thorough. Governors, together with senior teachers and subject co-ordinators, make careful decisions about the use of funds available. Money is wisely spent and very carefully accounted for by excellent office staff who have also been responsible for streamlining and developing increasingly efficient office systems. These systems allow the head teacher and governors to monitor finance, curriculum and personnel very effectively. Some of the surplus of funding from the previous financial year has been well spent on increased staffing, the rest is earmarked for improvements in physical education accommodation. This year the school will carry forward a realistic sum to be used as a contingency fund against unexpected demands. The school is acutely aware of the principles of best value and applies them appropriately in purchasing, tendering and contracting arrangements. It is becoming increasingly effective in collecting and analysing data, using computer technology and using the information to evaluate and review practice. At a realistic cost, pupils are making good academic, and

very good personal, progress as a result of very strong teaching. The school is providing very good value for money.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

44. In order to raise standards still further, the headteacher and governing body should:

- Improve the consistency of all teachers' lesson planning, to reflect the best practice, by ensuring that it identifies clearer learning outcomes, more closely linked to Statements of Special Educational Need, individual education programmes and schemes of work. (Paragraph 16)
- Improve facilities for physical education, ideally by building a new sports hall and changing rooms or, more practically, locating alternative provision in local schools or leisure centres that can be hired. (paragraphs 42, 86)
- Improve links with local colleges and increase vocational opportunities for Years 10 and 11 pupils (paragraph 23)
- Raise the status and quality of art provision in the school. Whilst it is not the only subject where achievement and progress are satisfactory, it is the only one where they appear to be declining rather than improving. (paragraphs 4, 14)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	31
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	27

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
6	40	40	14	0	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll

	Nursery	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils on the school's roll (FTE for part-time pupils)		36
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals		17

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Special educational needs

	Nursery	Y7 – Y11
Number of pupils with statements of special educational needs		36
Number of pupils on the school's special educational needs register		36

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	N/A
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	4

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	8.31
National comparative data	N/A

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	15.29
National comparative data	N/A

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	0
Black – African heritage	0
Black – other	0
Indian	0
Pakistani	0
Bangladeshi	0
Chinese	0
White	36
Any other minority ethnic group	0

Exclusions in the last school year

	Fixed period	Permanent
Black – Caribbean heritage	0	0
Black – African heritage	0	0
Black – other	0	0
Indian	0	0
Pakistani	0	0
Bangladeshi	0	0
Chinese	0	0
White	14	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y7 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	7.1
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	5
Average class size	7

Education support staff: Y7 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	4
Total aggregate hours worked per week	123

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	417,174
Total expenditure	393,328
Expenditure per pupil	10,926
Balance brought forward from previous year	24,496
Balance carried forward to next year	48,342

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	35
Number of questionnaires returned	13

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	29	57	14	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	50	43	7	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	14	79	7	0	0
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	29	36	14	7	14
The teaching is good.	71	21	0	0	7
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	86	14	0	0	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	93	0	7	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	79	14	7	0	0
The school works closely with parents.	86	7	0	0	7
The school is well led and managed.	93	0	0	0	7
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	64	29	0	0	7
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	57	21	7	0	14

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

Parents are extremely supportive of the school. Nearly all the criticisms and don't knows are from a single parent (who nevertheless feels the school keeps him/her well informed) The one area we must look at is work sent home. Three parents are not happy and 2 don't know. I particularly like the strength of feeling regarding being able to approach the school, feeling well informed and feeling the school works closely with parents.

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

ENGLISH

45. Pupils make good progress in English across the school. They show good results in their Standard Attainment Tests (SATs) and nearly all gain passes, in the C to G range, at General Certificate of Education (GCSE) for English Language. These results compare very favourably with the achievements of pupils in similar schools. The National Literacy Strategy has been well implemented and literacy is being well promoted across the curriculum.

46. There is good progress in speaking and listening. Pupils approach visitors confidently and conduct appropriate conversations with them. Younger pupils listen to, and answer, questions well. This helps them when they use their imagination to write, for instance, letters to people from another culture who are coming to England for the first time. Older pupils listen carefully and show they have understood the main points in an argument. When they discuss topics they use a varied vocabulary and level of detail. For example, they compare the way language works to get the writer's message across in poetry and in the writing of a fairy story. There are well advanced plans for providing more drama with a view to further raising standards in speaking and listening skills.

47. Progress in reading is good. Younger pupils read confidently in front of the class and use a good range of strategies when they are unsure of words. Pupils also make good progress when reading together in class. There are several instances of individuals making very good progress, for example by improving their reading age by two years in under a year. Lower attaining pupils make good progress working on individual computerised programs. They develop a good range of skills to extend their comprehension. By the end of Year 9, pupils demonstrate their progress by working together to analyse written text. For example, when looking at how a magazine 'Problem Page' is written they support each other, working in small groups, with one pupil taking notes. Older pupils continue to make good progress, using their skills to analyse difficult texts in their work for GCSE language. They begin to use inference and deduction from the texts that they read. However, they become distracted when they have to make notes of points they are finding and this affects their progress in retrieving information from the text.

48. All pupils make very good progress with their writing. They show confidence in writing for different purposes and producing imaginative written work. For this type of pupil this is particularly good, and unusual. Very good progress is also made when using writing in other lessons. Younger pupils write simple sentences and use capital letters and full stops correctly. They use "Writing Frames" and "Spell Masters", which help them to gain the confidence to write independently. Handwriting is carefully formed and usually consistent in size and pupils take great pride in the way they present their work. By the end of Year 9 they are using drafting and re-drafting well. Higher attaining pupils spell accurately, often with the help of dictionaries. Lower attaining pupils spell common words correctly and use 'Spell Masters' for words of which they are unsure. Older pupils continue to make very good progress. They write good comparisons of different 'Murder Mystery Stories', using well-chosen text references to support their arguments. They also write very well about characters in fiction, such as when they argue whether Macbeth was a tragic hero or a villain. Pupils' writing is interesting and they use varied vocabulary to create atmosphere and illustrate the points they are making. Their re-drafted work is accurate. They also use word-processing and present their work in an attractive way.

49. Teaching and learning in English are good overall. For writing it is very good across the school and leads to pupils concentrating and showing a pride in their work. The teacher has good subject knowledge, evident in the many and varied strategies used to encourage independent writing, such as working together in small groups, using "Writing Frames" and "Spell Masters". These enable pupils to gain the confidence to write for different purposes. Additional strategies, such as highlighting key points in written text are very effective in helping older pupils to make inferences from text. Where the work is interesting their response is very good. In the few lessons where the content of the lesson is less interesting, pupils' attention wanes and learning slows but the management of pupils' behaviour remains good. In a few lessons, however, the teacher does not succeed in preventing pupils from leading the discussion away from the lessons.

50. The subject is well managed and there is a good curriculum. There is a very good balance between imaginative and creative writing and acquiring basic spelling, grammar, punctuation and handwriting skills. Pupils use "Successmaker" and "Word Shark" computer programs which individualise their work and provide good feedback on how they are doing. Assessment is very good. Individual Education Plans (IEPs) and targets set for English support the teacher and the pupils to be clear of their individual aims within lessons. Displays with examples of work showing what level they have achieved give pupils a clear idea of how they are progressing in writing and what they are aiming towards.

MATHEMATICS

51. Achievement and progress in mathematics are good. The school's exceptionally well-planned response to the National Numeracy Strategy is contributing to rapidly improving standards, especially in Years 7,8,9, and numeracy is well promoted in many subjects. By the end of Year 11, pupils have studied either the foundation or intermediate level G.C.S.E and the high pass rate is an indication of their good progress in the subject.

52. Younger pupils are learning to do calculations in their heads. They give quick oral responses during the initial 'mental starter' warm-ups to each lesson. They demonstrate accurate addition; subtraction, division and multiplication skills and can clearly explain how they arrive at their answers. Their use of, and understanding of, the vocabulary of mathematics is developing well and is demonstrated clearly in lessons. Pupils have a clear understanding of the characteristics of common two-dimensional shapes. They demonstrate their knowledge of angle names and estimate and measure acute and obtuse angles. Most use protractors to draw angles accurately and to construct triangles given side and angle measurements. Pupils measure angles with sufficient accuracy and use these skills when constructing pie charts. Year 8 pupils calculate the volume of cuboids by counting squares and eventually, with some prompting, derive a formula for this calculation. Pupils' increasing confidence in the use of decimals is linked to their work with the more complex addition, subtraction and multiplication of fractions. They use this information well to convert decimal numbers and fractions into percentages. Pupils have been collecting and handling data and use ICT to graphically represent their findings. Most pupils open a spreadsheet application (MS Excel) and input data with 100% accuracy and with little or no support.

53. In Years 10 and 11, pupils continue to consolidate previously learned skills and techniques for problem solving. Increasingly, they apply their mathematical knowledge in real life situations. For instance, when using their data handling skills when comparing a range of differences in a collection of national newspaper articles.

54. Teaching is good overall. In Years 7,8 and 9 it is very good. The high quality of teaching encourages positive attitudes to the subject and has a direct impact on pupils' learning and the progress that they make. The best, occasionally excellent, teaching is characterized by excellent planning, incorporating an extensive range of tasks which interest pupils and are well matched to their individual needs. This encourages pupils to persevere for longer periods of time. The very good relationships that exist between pupils and the staff, coupled with the high standard of teaching, help make lessons very enjoyable. This enjoyment makes pupils want to succeed in their learning and makes a positive contribution to the standards they achieve and the progress that they make. Weaker, though still at least satisfactory, teaching is more often seen with older pupils. In a Year 10 lesson, for instance, pupils were less interested in the limited range of tasks planned, resulting in the teacher spending more time handling behaviour issues than teaching at several points in the lesson.

55. The co-ordination of mathematics is very good. The policy is very good, reflecting the school's aim. It is translated into practice through a scheme of work that includes the National Curriculum orders for the subject, supplemented by parts of the National Strategy for Numeracy. It is supported by good assessment procedures, which help with the planning of future lessons, as well as providing good information for the subject's annual reports to parents and carers. ICT effectively supports pupil's learning and the development plan clearly plans for its increased development within the subject.

SCIENCE

56. Pupils of all ages are achieving well and making good progress in science. This is because they are provided with interesting and motivating lessons, with a strong focus on practical and investigative work. As a result, nearly all pupils are achieving a good degree of success in statutory tests for pupils in Year 9 and GCSE at the end of Year 11, where results compare very favourably with other schools of this type.

57. In Year 7 pupils quickly learn the importance of safe practice in the laboratory and this opens up many opportunities for them to develop good skills in the handling and use of apparatus including glassware and chemicals. Pupils get good at recording their experiments, recording 'what we did' and 'what we found' systematically. Over the next three years they make good progress. This is evident in end of topic tests covering, for instance, forces, magnetism, energy, variety of life and making and using materials. Pupils develop a good scientific vocabulary including words such as *attract* and *repel* when describing magnetic forces and *resistance* and *insulation* when talking about electricity. The main weakness is that pupils are not sufficiently involved in the design of their experiments.

58. Pupils in Year 10 build well upon their existing scientific knowledge. This leads to nearly all gaining gold and silver awards for Certificate of Achievement mini-projects such as 'The Evolution of the Car', 'African Wildlife' and 'Drugs'. In these projects they demonstrate the ability to find information for themselves, using reference books and computers. Last year every Year 10 pupil gained a distinction in science. Before they leave, pupils have developed the ability to select equipment for themselves, make accurate predictions and observe results closely, all of these evident, for instance, in high quality work on how heat affects the rate of a chemical reaction.

59. Science teaching is good overall. That observed varied from very good to satisfactory. At its best, as in a Year 10 lesson, a very good review of the previous lesson established what each pupil remembered about the appearance of specialised animal cells.

Where pupils had forgotten details, the teacher quickly reminded them. This enabled all pupils to contribute more effectively to the rest of the lesson and was a very good use of time. The lesson maintained a fast pace, incorporating well focussed questioning to make sure that pupils were listening. Classroom support was very effectively used to help lower attaining pupils. It benefited from helping pupils to stay involved without ever becoming overbearing or reduced to nagging. Prompt attention to a high attaining pupil allowed him to forge ahead with extra work. Weaker teaching, in a Year 8 lesson for instance, had many of the attributes of the stronger teaching but lacked the pace because the teacher allowed too many pupils to interrupt needlessly and was too indecisive in managing their behaviour. This resulted in time running out before learning outcomes had been fully met.

60. The subject is very well managed and there is a good curriculum. Assessment is a very strong feature. It is helped by the very careful choice of a scheme which breaks the subject down into small modules, each finishing with a test to measure achievement. A great deal of thought has been put into the choice of external accreditation. This has resulted in the identification of exam courses particularly well matched to the pupils. There is an excellent, very well resourced laboratory.

ART AND DESIGN

61. Achievement is satisfactory in art. Pupils' work demonstrates gradual progress in the development of skills such as colour mixing, painting and drawing. What is missing is vibrancy and a sense of enthusiasm being transmitted into work. A wide range of achievement is evident in the work of pupils. Lower achieving pupils have difficulty in mixing colour to achieve a desired effect and, for some, it would appear that every secondary colour is brown. Other pupils are working cleanly and precisely. They identify colours that have warming or cooling effects, keep within margins and produce good, varied drawings and paintings using, for instance, metallic paints or chalk. Work on display demonstrates pupils' satisfactory progress in pottery, from the construction of 'thumb pots' to more refined, thrown pots that have been glazed. Pupils have also created relief sculptures using plain paper. Some of the best work incorporates materials such as 'bubble wrap' and demonstrates a good understanding of the importance of texture in art-work. What makes this work stand out is that several examples are very original and occasionally exciting. Too much work is presently copied and lacking in original ideas.

62. The observed teaching was satisfactory but showed the limitations of a non-specialist teacher. There was not enough use of artefacts, pictures and books to give pupils a clear idea of the wealth of different approaches to making masks. This resulted in the teacher explaining too much, too verbally and in turn this slowed the pace of the lesson. As a result several pupils became restless because they were not sufficiently involved. What was particularly good about the teaching was the teachers' encouragement of pupils to help one another and work together and her ability to involve individuals who were, at first, reluctant to participate but who gradually became involved as they saw other pupils achieving success.

63. With the long term absence of the co-ordinator, management of the subject is in limbo. This is not good for a subject in which these pupils can excel. Art does not have the necessary status in the school, there are few displays and some of these are overdue for replacement. The policy is not good enough nor are schemes of work clear enough to direct teaching in the author's absence. There is a good, spacious room and satisfactory resources. It is important that the school appoints a specialist teacher sooner rather than later.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

64. Pupils achieve well in design and technology, including food technology. The development of making skills is stronger than designing skills. By the end of Year 9 pupils select appropriate tools, techniques and materials to assemble simple products. They also demonstrate an increasing awareness of safety in the workshop and an understanding of what different machines can do. They begin to understand the importance of matching properties to purpose when, for example, they make a "Rooster egg holder" and a jigsaw in a plastic box. When constructing electrical circuits they decide which battery to use for different purposes. In food technology they demonstrate cutting and mixing skills when they joint a chicken, and prepare and cook a chicken curry.

65. By the time they leave, pupils are choosing what they want to make from a series of pictures and producing simple drawings, with measurements to help them. However, they do not draw to scale or extend their plans beyond basic drawings. Pupils work increasingly independently and apply skills they have learnt previously when choosing materials and tools and solving problems as they arise. Work is evaluated and choices made as to how to improve on it. They show these skills, for example, when they make an artefact using wood and copper.

66. Teaching and learning are good overall, and very good in the making aspect where the teacher has a very good understanding of the subject and is able to provide good explanations and demonstrations, so that the pupils are challenged to think about how they will set about tasks. Management of pupils' behaviour is confident and very good. Learning support assistants provide a very good contribution and often demonstrate good subject knowledge. There are limitations in teachers' understanding of the design aspect of the subject. Pupils are not, for instance, given sufficient examples of what makes a good design to help them extend their drawings and this means that the progress they make with design is slowed.

67. The curriculum is satisfactory. The food curriculum provides a good contribution to the cultural and multi-cultural development of the pupils. Assessment is satisfactory. Older pupils work towards the NEAB Certificate of Achievement and there are plans to develop the accreditation of work in FT in the future. Leadership and management are good. Very high quality specialist rooms and resources contribute greatly to pupils' learning.

GEOGRAPHY

68. Achievement is good. By the end of Year 9 pupils demonstrate their understanding of weather patterns around the world by completing worksheets to a good standard. They become increasingly confident when locating countries using a world atlas. Pupils demonstrate a good understanding of the differences between cities, towns and villages in terms of the services that support these settlements. They recognise Ordnance Survey map symbols and can accurately locate places on a map by using four and six figure grid references. By the time pupils leave they are recognising different types of farming and the impact they have on the land. They accurately take information from a map and complete tables illustrating that information. Year 11 pupils are expected to do well in the Short-course GCSE examination this year.

69. Teaching is good overall. It is strongest for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. Teaching is characterized by good subject knowledge, effective pupil management, good humour and an enthusiastic delivery. Specialist and technical vocabulary are routinely and accurately used. Teaching strategies are well chosen and in combination with appropriate resources

stimulate and extend pupils' learning. Questioning and explanation are good throughout, often at different levels of complexity so as to meet individual needs. Pupils show an interest in learning about other places and the people who live there. They display a willingness to ask and answer questions. The contribution of classroom support assistants invariably makes an important contribution to pupils' learning and attainment but in classes for older pupils it occasionally detracts from encouraging pupils to work independently.

70. The subject is well managed by a knowledgeable and experienced teacher. The policy document and scheme of work is appropriate and shows that National Curriculum Programmes of Study are covered in a sensible and logical order. Assessment procedures are effective in monitoring pupil progress and contributing to the planning of future lessons. Pupils have been entered for GCSE this year and Certificate of Achievement is being considered to encourage and reward less able pupils next year. The subject plays a significant role in pupils' cultural development through the teaching of environmental and population issues. Additional resources have been identified to further support teaching and learning.

HISTORY

71. Achievement in history is satisfactory. Pupils develop an awareness of different periods and societies and are learning to relate their lives to events in the past. For instance, year 7 pupils discuss and compare the effects of the Black Death and debate the effects on society of the foot and mouth epidemic of today. Increasingly, pupils analyse the social, cultural, religious and ethnic diversity of the societies studied. For instance, when studying the period of the Black Death, pupils discussed what it must have been like for different levels of society. Pupils also build up a satisfactory understanding of the differing backgrounds and ideals of Roundheads and Royalists when studying the English Civil War. Pupils have a good understanding of chronology; they make relevant comparisons between the past and the present and understand why and how changes take place over time. As they progress through the school they become more perceptive in their analysis of secondary sources of information and show confidence when discussing their interpretations.

72. The small amount of teaching observed was good but there has been a succession of teachers taking the subject over a short period of time and this has led to a lack of consistency, resulting in pupils' progress being slowed. The head teacher is currently covering the teaching, but recognizes that the subject requires a specialist teacher to take developments further. Lessons are well planned but limited resources restrict teaching and learning. The present scheme relies heavily on work-sheets and these are not sufficiently varied to ensure they reflect pupil needs. Nevertheless, a good balance is achieved between teaching facts and prompting active inquiry and debate. Enthusiastic and stimulating delivery promotes learning through maintaining pupils' interest.

73. Despite the lack of a subject specialist, history is well managed and the scheme of work is closely linked to National Curriculum Programmes of Study. At present there is no planned system to routinely record what pupils know and can do. This is a weakness as it results in insufficient information being available to plan further developments in the curriculum.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

74. Although only recently added to the curriculum as a discrete subject, there is clear evidence of good achievement and progress in ICT across subject areas. Year 9 pupils effectively demonstrate their good skills in data collecting, handling and graphical representation in mathematics and science. In ICT lessons pupils demonstrate their skills and understanding of word processing. All could log on and open a word processing application, retrieve a file from a floppy disc and insert text with a minimum of data entry errors. They save and print copies of their work and most confidently make specified amendments to text. They insert, remove, replace and move text and alter justification, line spacing and margins. Pupils visit parts of the Internet and download, for example,

information from a weather station as part of their geography studies. The oldest pupils are using spreadsheets to analyse information gained from questionnaires before presenting the results visually, using a number of graphic presentations for best impact.

75. The discrete teaching seen was very good. The teacher has high expectations and challenges pupils to give of their best. She expects pupils to try for themselves before providing a suggestion. This promotes independent and confident learners who become very capable of finding out for themselves by exploring their own learning. Lessons are purposeful and of brisk pace and pupil management is very good. Pupils are interested in their work and quickly become independent and knowledgeable learners. As a result the quality of learning is very good.

76. The subject is being well managed. This term has seen the first of a newly scheduled timetable of discrete lessons. A scheme of work has been developed which clearly demonstrates a logical progression in skills and competencies for pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 can progress onto the RSA Computer Literacy and Information Technology Stage 1 scheme (CLAIT) which provides a broad basis for those intending to enter further education or the world of work after full time schooling. Assessment procedures are ongoing in each subject area and are built into the CLAIT scheme for accreditation.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES (FRENCH)

77. All pupils achieve very well and make very good progress in French. Pupils are confident to speak French in front of the class and show their enjoyment of the subject by speaking French in other lessons. Younger pupils count in 2's, 5's and 10's up to 100 in French and tell the time. They understand simple classroom instructions and reply in single words, or copy short phrases. They copy simple written sentences in French to support their understanding. By the end of Year 9 they role-play scenes in a café. They order from a menu and work out the prices of a snack and a drink, asking for it in French. Lower attaining pupils receive support and encouragement and are persuaded to attempt to make their orders. Older pupils work towards the NEAB Certificate of Achievement. They build on their previous work and learn vocabulary within different work occupations and shopping for food.

78. Teaching and learning are very good. Lessons are very well planned and activities are motivating for the pupils. Pupils have excellent relationships with their teacher who has high expectations of the pupils' behaviour and ability to learn a foreign language. Pupils rise to meet the challenge and this positively promotes learning.

79. The curriculum is good overall. There is a good range of activities to cover speaking, listening, reading and writing. Pupils in Year 9 begin work on the NEAB Certificate of Achievement, which they complete during a short course in year 10. There are plans to continue to use the course used currently in year 7 when these pupils move into year 8. Good assessment is provided by end of module tests. There is a very clear vision for the development of the subject, clearly shown in a very good development plan. There are good resources to support teaching. There is a subject specialist room with good use made of displays of useful vocabulary strategically placed around the classroom. The teacher is very well qualified and experienced and she is very well supported by a learning support assistant who has lived in France and is a fluent French speaker.

MUSIC

80. Music has only recently been added to the curriculum. A part-time specialist music teacher has begun to develop the subject. An important emphasis has been placed on the relevance of the subject to the pupils. In order to capture their interest it was decided to begin with keyboards. The school has invested in a number of good quality keyboards. This has made it possible for a good start to be made in motivating the pupils to perform, compose, listen and appraise.

81. Pupils make good progress in learning to play the keyboard. They enjoy playing and take a pride in performing. Several pupils played in the school concert at Christmas. In Years 7, 8 and 9, pupils explore their creativity through composing. They begin to understand notation and its use for performance. They use improvisation and clap rhythms and do some singing. Pupils select appropriate backing when interpreting, for instance, a Beatles song. They use prompts of letters on the written music and keys and read music, picking out the melody with their right hand. Higher attaining pupils also use their left hand to provide chords.

82. The teaching is good. This improves pupils' attitudes to music and encourages them to behave very well. As a result, pupils concentrate hard to read music, which is difficult for them, and are patient with their own frustrations when they make mistakes. The teacher is a subject specialist, who has high expectations, and makes the work relevant and interesting for the pupils. There are good relationships between the teacher and the pupils and high quality help, with encouragement, is given to individual pupils. At times this focused help means that the rest of the class is not being monitored sufficiently to ensure that is using all the time constructively. Lessons are well planned to include listening and appreciating, as well as well playing.

83. The curriculum is satisfactory but heavily focussed upon the development of keyboard skills. There are no procedures to assess what pupils know, understand and can do in music in place and this is a weakness. Spacious accommodation allows pupils to work at individual workstations with headphones. The keyboards are of a very high quality. The school also has a few percussion instruments but as the curriculum is developed more resources will be needed.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

84. Pupils make good progress in physical education despite limitations imposed by unsatisfactory specialist accommodation. The good progress is largely due to the expertise of the teacher. Teachers' records and displays of pupils' achievements show pupils to be consistently improving on their personal best times and distances in athletics activities. In lessons observed, significant improvements were being made in the distances pupils were putting the shot. They were doing this because their technique was improving rapidly. School records are being bettered on a regular basis, evidence that standards throughout the subject are improving. Many pupils develop character and a determination not to be beaten, especially evident in older girls who are in a small minority. Lower attaining pupils struggle to co-ordinate their movements, taking wild swipes at a tennis ball and often missing, but higher attaining pupils show very good control, following the ball closely, concentrating hard and practising good technique. In team games, pupils play fairly and cope well with winning and losing. All pupils participate in adventure activities and understand the need for safety and organisation in activities such as walking, canoeing and sailing.

85. Teaching is good overall. The strongest, very good, teaching in a Year 9 lesson, set very high standards of expectation. It was accompanied by high quality coaching. A small

group and lots of individual attention ensured that each member of the class remained fully involved throughout the lesson. Copious, well directed, praise encouraged pupils to put every ounce of effort into their activity. The lesson was characterised by good humour and excellent relationships, resulting in very happy pupils, co-operative and eager to succeed. Weaker but still satisfactory teaching, as in a Year 8 lesson, had many of the strengths identified above but did not plan a wide enough range of tasks within an activity. This led to a slowing of learning as pupils' attention and efforts waned.

86. Management is good. The scheme of work is satisfactory but leans towards being a checklist of skills to be acquired by each year group, with insufficient reference to how or when they will be taught. Accommodation is a big issue. The school is an ex primary school and existing indoor facilities, principally the school hall, are not suitable for secondary pupils. The room is too small and is a main thoroughfare for the whole school. It is restricting the gymnastics programme and limits the practice of team games in poor weather. Outdoor facilities are much better.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

87. Achievement and progress are very good. This is highly unusual in a school of this type and gives cause for celebration. Pupils of all ages build up a very good depth of understanding about the world's great religions, such as Buddhism, Sikhism and Judaism. Pupils make very good comparisons between the special places, texts, buildings and celebrations of different religions. Higher attaining pupils understand that there are differences within religions as well as between them. They demonstrate this in their study of orthodox and reform branches of Judaism. Pupils learn about the life of Jesus and show a good understanding of the miracles he performed and the parables he told. There are differences in the degree of understanding shown by pupils. After discussing human values two pupils identified who they would rescue from a sinking ship or a house fire. One pupil replied 'family, orphans, helpless animals' the other 'Janet Jackson, Kate Winslett, Billie Piper'. He was probably the more honest but had not fully understood the point of the lesson.

88. Teaching is very good. It is often very formal, but pupils respond well to the style, enjoying the security and structure it brings to lessons. In this situation they are attentive and make a full contribution to discussion. The main strength of teaching is that the teacher knows exactly what she wants herself and pupils to achieve in each lesson. Expectations, especially regarding the recording and presentation of work, are exceptionally high.

89. The subject is well managed. Good attention is paid to the Agreed Syllabus of the local authority. A very good selection of high quality artefacts is well used to make lessons interesting. Each piece of work that pupils complete is graded on a simple scale. This provides simple assessment data but does not sufficiently identify exactly what pupils know, understand and can do. End of unit tests are planned to remedy this. The subject is making a significant contribution to pupils spiritual and cultural education. It is helping pupils to understand the concept of faith and it is helping pupils to become more tolerant of minorities. Pupils have enjoyed visits to places of worship including Christian churches and a Sikh temple.