

INSPECTION REPORT

WYVERN SCHOOL

Ashford, Kent

LEA area: Kent

Unique reference number: 131748

Headteacher: David Spencer

Reporting inspector: Steven Parker
13033

Dates of inspection: 18th-22nd June 2001

Inspection number: 230111

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

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Community
Age range of pupils:	5-19
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Hythe Road Willesborough Ashford Kent
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mr Fred Winslade
Date of previous inspection:	Not previously inspected

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

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13033	Steven Parker	Registered inspector	Music	What sort of school is it? How high are standards?
16310	Charlotte Roberson	Lay inspector	Support on equal opportunities Support on special educational needs	How well does the school care for its pupils or students? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
1987	George Davies	Team inspector	Design and technology Physical education Information and communication technology Equal opportunities Special educational needs English as an additional language	
7327	Anthony Dunsbee	Team inspector	Support on geography Support on history	Support on how well are pupils or students taught. Support on how well is the school is led and managed.
1368	Glyn Essex	Team inspector	English Post-16 education	Inclusion provision

14691	Jennifer Hall	Team inspector	Science	How good are the curricular and other opportunities given to pupils or students? Support on how well does the school care for its pupils and students.
1769	Michael Holohan	Team inspector	Mathematics Religious education	Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development Support on how good are the curricular and other opportunities given to pupils and students.
20536	Sarah Mascall	Team inspector	Geography History	How well are pupils or students taught? Support on how well is the school led and managed.
30071	John Pearson	Team inspector	Art and design Modern foreign languages	How well is the school led and managed?

The inspection contractor was:

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

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Wyvern is a special school for pupils and students with moderate, severe and profound and multiple learning difficulties (PMLD). It is housed on two sites at opposite ends of the town. The needs of the pupils admitted to the school are becoming more complex. There is, for example, an increasing number of pupils with autistic spectrum disorder (ASD) and others with complicated and challenging medical conditions. There is a small number of secondary aged pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties (EBD). At present there are 115 pupils and students on roll, aged between five and nineteen. Only 16% of pupils are entitled to free school meals. This is low for this type of school, but probably reflects the generally balanced economic circumstances for this area of Kent. All but two pupils are from white, English speaking backgrounds. The ratio of boys to girls is 2:1.

Established in April 1999, the school was created by amalgamating two existing special schools in Ashford. One now provides for secondary and Post-16 pupils and students and is called the Willesborough site. The other, now called the Brookfield site, provides for primary aged pupils and a small group of secondary aged PMLD pupils who cannot be accommodated at Willesborough, because of its unsuitable design. At the time of the amalgamation it was a condition imposed by the DfEE that there should be a new purpose built secondary school, but this has not yet happened. There was very strong opposition to the amalgamation from parents, governors and the local community. However, once the arrangements were completed and the school was opened, the majority of those involved developed a working partnership in order to overcome the many difficulties that they faced.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

The school has done very well, under difficult circumstances, to create good provision, in which good teaching helps pupils and students to make good progress. The good leadership and management of the headteacher, working in a close and productive partnership with his senior management colleagues, promotes a positive climate for the high quality relationships that exist throughout the school. The school provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Very good relationships throughout the school, based on mutual respect, successfully encourage pupils' and students' good attitudes towards their learning and personal development and help them to behave well.
- Good teaching helps pupils to make good progress. This is often helped by teachers' very good subject knowledge, particularly in the secondary school.
- Very good learning support assistants (LSAs) work in very effective partnership with teachers and other professionals to make a significant, caring contribution to pupils' learning.
- Good curriculum provision is further enriched by an extensive range of relevant community visits, residential experience and very effective career and vocational education.
- Very strong leadership by the head teacher and senior managers has ensured a successful start for the new school.

What could be improved

- Partnership, consultation and communication with parents, especially about what their children are doing at school.
- Broadening opportunities for more people in the whole school community to be fully involved in planning for future development of the school. This would include all staff, governors, parents and pupils.

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

HOW THE SCHOOL HAS IMPROVED SINCE ITS LAST INSPECTION

The school has not been previously inspected.

STANDARDS

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

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

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

The school is ambitious for its pupils to improve and they make generally good progress across many subjects. Pupils' and students' achievements are good in English, good for younger pupils in mathematics, and good right across the school in science. The teaching of personal, social and health education (PSHE), both in discrete lessons and within many subjects, is very effective and this helps pupils and students to make good progress in this important area of their education. Achievements are particularly impressive in art and design, music, physical education (PE) and in all subjects during Year 6. Achievements are good in most other subjects. In geography, history, information and communication technology (ICT) for younger pupils and French, standards are satisfactory.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Pupils have positive attitudes to school and this is reflected in their enthusiasm and ability to maintain concentration.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Overall behaviour is good within lessons, around the school and when pupils and students go out into the community.
Personal development and relationships	Pupils' confidence and self-esteem is high because of the quality and strength of relationships between staff and pupils.
Attendance	Whole school attendance figures are satisfactory overall and in line with similar schools. There is good monitoring and support for the small minority of secondary age pupils who cause concern

TEACHING AND LEARNING

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

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

The quality of teaching is good overall. During the inspection, teaching in nearly three-quarters of lessons was at least good and in three out of ten lessons it was very good or excellent. All but a very small number of lessons were at least satisfactory. Teaching is particularly good in English, mathematics, science, art, design and technology, music, physical education and religious education. Teachers' subject knowledge is often very strong, especially in the secondary school, and pupils benefit from the enthusiasm and commitment that this produces. Teamwork between teachers and the very able LSAs is very effective and this ensures that pupils receive sensitive and well-focused support, enabling them to participate fully in all activities. The skills of communication, literacy and numeracy are mostly well taught, although there is inconsistent practice in the use of signing and symbols. The frequently excellent teaching for pupils in Year 6 and those secondary pupils with PMLD in the primary school helps them to achieve very well. Good planning for what pupils will learn contributes to these generally high standards. Teaching for geography, history, ICT in the primary school and French for older pupils does not meet these overall high standards, but pupils' achievements are still satisfactory overall.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	The school provides a good quality curriculum that is relevant to the full range of pupils' needs and gives them a broad range of experiences across a balanced timetable of all subjects. The Post-16 curriculum is especially effective in developing students' independence skills in preparation for the next stage in their education, training or employment
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	The school has established a strong moral climate and provides a very good range of opportunities for personal development. Spiritual experiences in assemblies and religious education are well developed. Cultural activities, such as music, drama and visiting artists and performers, meet pupils' needs very well
How well the school cares for its pupils	The school ensures that very good attention is given to the care, welfare and guidance of all pupils. Procedures for child protection are good. There are very good procedures in place for finding out how well pupils are getting on in their school work and teachers use this information well to inform their planning of pupils' work. LSAs make a significant contribution to these high standards of care.

The National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies have been successfully adapted and implemented and the school provides a good range of externally accredited courses for older pupils and students. Links with the community are good and enhance pupils' education well. The school is participating very successfully in the County Council's pilot inclusion project to create and enhance opportunities for Wyvern pupils (mostly of primary age) to spend time supported in mainstream schools. Staff also provide focused support for mainstream school pupils with learning difficulties and their teachers. All of this work is highly valued by parents and participating schools. There is currently an unfilled vacancy for a speech and language therapist and this has a negative impact on the school's provision for pupils' communication needs. The school works in satisfactory partnership with parents, but recognises this as an important area for development.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Strong leadership has given the school a good start, with considerable development having been achieved in the first two years. Planning for the future is, though, not yet based upon full information about the school's strengths and weaknesses, particularly in relation to the

	structure and provision of curriculum subjects.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	The governing body is dedicated to and supportive of the work of the school. Governors fulfill their statutory duties well, but have not yet developed appropriate procedures to enable them to gain a detailed picture of the school's developmental needs.
The school's evaluation of its performance	The senior management team are introducing ways to find out how well the school is working, particularly in relation to the quality of teaching and the achievements and behaviour of pupils. Good systems are in place, but they are not always well used to evaluate the impact of developments and changes.
The strategic use of resources	Effective systems are in place for good financial control and management. Staffing, learning resources and accommodation are used well to support pupils' learning. Valuable improvements have been made to the secondary school and further improvements are planned on both sites.

The school is appropriately staffed with the recommended numbers of teachers and LSAs. Learning resources are satisfactory overall, with some subjects being well provided for. Whilst work has been carried out on the secondary site to make the best of an unsatisfactory situation, there remains an urgent need for the proposed new building. The wide spread of non-permanent classrooms on a sloping site constrains access for pupils with limited mobility and is unsatisfactory in bad weather. This raises health and safety concerns. There is considerable disappointment and frustration across the whole school community about the long and continuing delay in building the new secondary school. The principles of best value, which require the balancing of costs and effectiveness, are integrated into the school's management thinking.

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 quality of care their children receive. • The progress their children make. • That the school has high expectations. • That their children like school 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information and communication. • A closer partnership with the school. • Improved arrangements for homework. • The provision for speech and language therapy. • They are anxiously awaiting the building of the promised new school. • There is a significant minority of parents that continues to be unhappy about the arrangements for their children, following the amalgamation.

The findings of the inspection team both confirm the parents' positive views and support most of their concerns. Home-school books are not always used as intended to provide regular feedback about what their children are doing and achieving. There is no formal home-school agreement in operation. The school does not have sufficient, effective structures in place to seek parents' views about proposed developments. Steps are in hand to establish a Parent Teachers' Association. There is inconsistent application of the school's policy on homework. The school is dependent on the Health Authority to provide speech and language therapy, but regularly lobbies for the urgent appointment of a therapist. Whilst the realisation of the promised new school building has been delayed, a site has been identified, three minutes walk from Brookfield, funding has been allocated and an initial design brief has been agreed. It is not, however, expected to be open before September 2003. Inspectors were reassured that the school tries to work collaboratively with those parents who were and continue to be resistant to the amalgamation of the two schools.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and achievements

1. Pupils' and students' achievements are good in English, science and PSHE right across the school and for younger pupils in mathematics. Achievements are very good in art and design, in which a significant number of pupils gain GCSE qualifications, physical education (PE) and in all subjects for pupils in Year 6. In most other subjects, achievements are good. Students in the Post-16 department make good progress, building further on their earlier learning, and are very well prepared to go on to the next stage of their life after school. Whilst there are some small variations in achievements for particular age groups in certain subjects, pupils and students make good, steady progress throughout their time in the school.
2. The school is ambitious for its pupils and students to succeed and is developing suitable systems to plan for and measure progress against appropriate targets for both individuals and the whole school. In relation to the challenging targets set at their annual statement reviews and in their IEPs, pupils' and students' achievement and progress are good overall. There is a very wide range of skills and abilities in the school. All pupils, including those with the most significant learning needs, achieve as well as they can and make good progress. The work that teachers and LSAs do with those pupils with the most complex needs is a strength of the school, ensuring that pupils make often very good progress towards the finely graded targets set for them. There is no evidence of differences in the performance of boys and girls.
3. Successful adaptation of the requirements of the National Literacy Strategy has ensured that all pupils make good progress in reading and in their ability to communicate. The slower progress that younger primary aged pupils make in writing, improves markedly in the year before they go up to the secondary school, so that older pupils are able to achieve good standards overall. This results in many achieving very good results in the Certificate of Educational Achievement.
4. The National Numeracy Strategy has helped teachers to develop their skills and planning in mathematics and standards are, as a result, good overall. Older pupils do not, however, make the progress that they could in learning to apply their skills in real problem solving situations because not all teachers plan for this across subjects. This does not, though, prevent them from achieving good results in examinations.
5. Pupils' achievements are good overall and often very good in science right across the school. Good quality teaching for secondary pupils ensures that they gain success in the Certificate of Educational Achievement and go on to gain further knowledge and understanding in the Post-16 Youth Award Scheme.
6. Pupils' and students' make very good progress in art and design and PE as the result of consistently good quality teaching, particularly in the secondary school. Pupils and students make good and sometimes very good progress in

most other subjects. However, because teaching does not always meet the generally high standards seen in the majority of subjects, pupils' progress is not so impressive in geography, history, ICT for younger pupils and French, although their achievements are still satisfactory overall.

7. The school teaches personal, social and health education in discrete lessons, as well as focusing on it in many other subjects and throughout the social life of the day. This enables pupils and students to make good progress throughout the school, helping them to become confident, mature young people by the time they leave.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

8. Pupils' attitudes to school are consistently good across all age groups. Their enthusiasm for school is reflected in the positive way in which pupils approach their work. From a maths lesson, where seven year old pupils generated an atmosphere of enthusiasm and co-operation, to an English lesson for 16 year old pupils, where they were totally absorbed, pupils were seen to be committed and purposeful about their work. Pupils show both interest and curiosity, which is encouraged by the good teaching in the school. This curiosity and a desire to learn was well illustrated in a wide range of activities, but two particular examples were seen in a science lesson for younger primary aged pupils and a personal studies lesson for 11-year-old pupils. In the former, pupils were absorbed by their practical task, showing the ability of necessary lengthy concentration and, in the latter, pupils responded with humour and developing self confidence in overcoming their initial shyness to participate in a role play about listening carefully to others. The positive attitude to school is, perhaps, best reflected in the comment of a year 6 pupil who was working on a copy of the book Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban, when he said, "This is fun!"
9. Pupils' behaviour is good throughout the school. Wyvern is an orderly community in which serious behavioural incidents are rare. Whilst there have been fixed term exclusions, the number of such incidents is very low and is confined to a very small group of pupils. Examples of bullying are rare. The strong sense of community in the school means that each pupil feels valued and, in turn, values others. This sense of mutual regard and support is very well reflected in the school assemblies, especially in the leavers' assembly, where pupils celebrated each other's achievements with great enthusiasm. Similar examples of community and sharing are present in the class circle times and the end of day periods of reflection.
10. Relationships are very good throughout the school. In lessons, such as design and technology, science and using computers, pupils work together well. In other subjects, such as English or personal education, discussion is thoughtful and pupils listen carefully and respectfully to each other's contributions. In a Year 11 personal education lesson on bullying, for example, pupils discussed sensitive matters in a mature and thoughtful way, giving careful consideration to each other's opinions.

11. During the short period since it was opened, the school has created an impressively purposeful, orderly and hard working community, in which pupils make full use of the opportunities offered to them.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

12. The quality of teaching is good overall. During the inspection, teaching was good or better in seven out of ten lessons. Three out of ten (30 per cent) of lessons were very good or excellent and four out of ten (40 per cent) were good; a quarter (twenty five per cent) were satisfactory and only four per cent were unsatisfactory. This reflects good achievement for such a new school and is the direct result of a number of factors. Planning for what the pupils will learn is good and, in nearly all subjects, this ensures that they build on what they have already learned. Effective systems for checking the quality of teaching and the very good teamwork that exists amongst staff contribute greatly to pupils' learning. There are examples of good teaching throughout the school, with those pupils between the ages of five and seven and those over the age of fourteen benefiting from teaching that is consistently satisfactory or better. However, pupils in Year 6 and those in the special needs class in the primary school achieve very well, because teaching is frequently excellent. Most notably in the secondary school, teachers' subject knowledge is very good in science, art and design, PE and history and good for all pupils in music, literacy, ICT and mathematics.
13. The effect of this good teaching is that pupils' achievements are good. It is very evident in secondary art, where the teacher ensures that pupils are clear about what they are going to learn in the lesson and are in fact prepared for the next lesson because they are told, at the end of the session, what they will be doing next. Because of this teacher's expertise, pupils are encouraged to develop their own ideas, but are skilfully directed, so that they have a range of choices. This was very evident for a group of pupils in Year 10 who had designed their own quilt patterns. All had very different designs, based on their own interests, and were very proud of their work, explaining what they were doing and where they had got their ideas. In PE, the teacher's secure knowledge ensures that she is able to demonstrate techniques such as throwing the discus or the shot to pupils and provide good advice to them on how to improve their technique.
14. In other areas of the school, pupils benefit from teachers' secure knowledge of the special needs of pupils. This is particularly evident for pupils in Year 6 and those with profound and multiple difficulties in the primary school. Regardless of their special needs, the latter pupils make very good progress in developing a range of skills. The teacher uses her knowledge well to ensure that tasks are matched to pupils' abilities. Resources are used well and communication approaches are very effective through the use of symbols and signing. Year 6 pupils gain remarkably in confidence, because their teacher clearly credits each and every contribution that they make and, even when responses are incorrect, he has the ability to use them in such a way

that pupils feel they have contributed well. Praise is used very effectively so that all achievements are recognised and valued.

15. Teachers have very high expectations of what pupils can achieve. Good planning enables them to ensure that pupils' skills are built upon in a systematic way. This is very evident in science. Lessons are interesting and exciting, with the teacher enabling pupils to develop independence. This was particularly noticeable in a lesson for Post-16 pupils, who were given the task of taking photographs as part of their ASDAN project work. It was made clear that, not only would pupils work independently but could expect, by the end of the lesson, to have achieved the task set. They all did.
16. Teachers have adapted their training in the National Literacy and Numeracy Strategies well. Lessons are effectively introduced, ensuring that pupils know what is happening and, at the end of the lessons, there are often opportunities to discuss what has been achieved. Teachers frequently encourage pupils to use their knowledge in numeracy to make calculations. This was a very good feature of a number of science lessons, where pupils, for example, had to compare the cost of different bags when disposing of biodegradable products. Literacy, too, is well promoted in all subjects. Teachers encourage pupils to read out loud to the class, such as in history, when reading from worksheets. They also encourage pupils to spell words independently, making them think about phonetics and the sound of the word. This was very evident in a geography lesson for Year 8, where pupils working on maps, had to write down the names of different countries and were asked to think "How does the word sound?" when spelling them.
17. Teachers are still developing their skills in ensuring that the full range of special needs within each class is met. This is satisfactory overall and there are examples of very good practice. For example, those pupils with profound and multiple difficulties in the primary school, although following the same theme in a lesson, are given a range of tasks that are matched to their own ability. Where work is different for individuals, teachers ensure that pupils' self esteem is not affected by inappropriate comments. Similarly, in a Year 6 lesson, when some pupils were drawing animals that are becoming extinct in South America, rather than writing about them, the teacher suggested that "We have all got different jobs to do". In a geography lesson for Year 8, the teacher ensured that the worksheet for a non-reader was different so that, although doing the same work, he could complete it almost independently. However, in a number of classes, the work is the same for all pupils and, as a result, more able pupils are not challenged by the work, whilst less able pupils are overly dependent on LSAs to help them complete the task. For example, in a Year 10 geography lesson about France, the most able pupil was set the same task as the rest of the class, which was to copy-write about the work they had done. He was, in fact, able to write short sentences or words independently. Equally, a less able pupil who did copy the sentences, was unable to read all that he had written.

18. There is not yet a whole school approach for teachers to assess pupils during lessons. As a result they cannot ensure that pupils' work is based on what they have achieved from the previous lesson. In subjects such as art and PE, teachers are very effective in encouraging pupils to consider what they have achieved during the lesson and to discuss how they can improve. Where time at the end of the lesson is used well to discuss the work covered, such as in history and geography, good question and answer sessions enable the teachers to assess what knowledge pupils have gained. However, teachers do not always use this information to go over work in the next lesson.
19. Where teachers give homework, it supports the work pupils have done during the lesson. This is particularly effective in the primary school, where reading books are sent home and parents are able to support their children. However, it is less clear in the secondary school when and how homework is set. As a result, at times, pupils respond badly when given homework. For example when some Year 8 pupils were told they had French, some were very negative when they were asked to complete at home the work they had started in the lesson.
20. In the very small number of lessons where teaching was not effective, this was a direct result of unsatisfactory management of pupils. In these lessons, teachers did not ensure that planning was adequate to keep pupils on task and, where there were incidents of unacceptable behaviour, these were not managed well. For example, in lessons for Year 3, pupils pay little attention to the teacher and, at times, there is little control of what happens in the class. As a result, pupils make limited progress. Equally, in the secondary school, there are several pupils with significant behaviour difficulties. Where teachers have expertise in this area, pupils are handled well. However, on occasions, their difficult behaviour is not addressed appropriately and this affects not only their learning but also that of other pupils in the class.

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

21. A relevant curriculum of consistently good quality, covering all the required subjects and elements in a balanced timetable, is provided right across the school. It includes the full National Curriculum, religious education and collective worship, together with sex and careers education. The curriculum has clearly been an important area for development since the school opened in 1999. Well-argued documents analyse what the curriculum should be like, and how best it can provide a full entitlement for all pupils, no matter what their learning difficulties. It is successfully constructed to meet the full range of learning needs. All pupils, no matter what their level of difficulty, are sensitively included. The content of the curriculum is well matched to the age of pupils; and the level of challenge well matched to their different stages of development. Most of the older pupils achieve well in a good range of accredited courses. For pupils with the most profound learning difficulties, well-planned individual targets successfully enable very small steps in progress to be recognised. In writing subject policies and annual plans, the

senior managers make excellent use of computer programmes to analyse and map out the curriculum in line with the provision found in similar schools nationally. Their procedures for monitoring the quality of the curriculum in practice; and for ensuring the continuing development of the curriculum through well argued and costed subject development plans, informing the school improvement plan; are less well developed. Structures are in place for subject co-ordinators to monitor the quality of their subject plans across the school but this too is an area for further development. A wide range of external agencies is available to support pupils, access to the curriculum.

22. The curriculum meets well the needs of all pupils in English, mathematics, and in science from Year 6 onwards. It is especially effective in promoting very good levels of achievement in art and physical education. In other subjects, provision is satisfactory, but termly plans require further development, and, in history, not all of the teachers follow the plans. There is a very relevant and effective emphasis on the development of literacy and numeracy skills. The promotion of literacy skills through other subjects on the curriculum is especially effective. Provision for information and communication technology is well established on the secondary school timetable, but it is not so securely in place in the primary phase, where teachers have not yet fully developed and applied the use of these skills within other subjects. There is also scope to develop further the use of ICT skills within other subjects in the secondary phase, in science for example. In design and technology, some secondary provision focuses too much on re-enforcement of scientific principles, in work on forces for example, and not enough on the application of these principles. Provision for French is a new venture this year. Developments so far are satisfactory and set to improve. Outline plans are in place to cover a relevant range of topics for personal, social and health education, including sex education and drugs awareness. Management of this subject is very new and an area for continuing development. The co-ordinators have only recently been appointed and are busy preparing more detailed guidance to secure the implementation of plans, especially in the primary phase, where the subject is not formally timetabled. The amount of time allocated to PSHE lessons in the secondary phase is lower than is found in similar schools nationally, but co-ordinators have not yet had an opportunity to evaluate how this impacts on pupils' progress.
23. The primary curriculum successfully takes account of pupils' very low attainment on entry to the school by initially focussing on the National Foundation Curriculum. In this way, pupils are prepared well for their later access to the National Curriculum programmes of study. A number of effective approaches, including good collaboration between paired subject co-ordinators from both phases, are in place to provide good continuity from the primary to the secondary curriculum, enabling older pupils to build successfully, without loss of momentum, on their earlier achievements. Senior managers provide a very strong lead in long term planning by providing common formats for annual and termly plans for what pupils will experience and learn. Very well established assessment procedures at the end of each year allow results to inform planning for the following year.

24. The secondary curriculum mirrors the model of planning typically found in mainstream secondary schools. Subjects are timetabled and taught by specialists wherever possible. As in the primary phase, the secondary curriculum is also of good quality and, by the age of sixteen, pupils are entered for public examinations. Pupils currently follow accredited courses in GCSE art, and in the Certificate of Educational Achievement in English, mathematics, science, physical education and religious studies. Plans are in place to extend this provision to include history and geography. Pupils also now have access, from the age of fourteen, to the Youth Award Scheme at bronze level. This has been very effectively introduced this year and the first certificates will be awarded in 2002. The course provides accreditation for work experience and for the skills of independent and co-operative learning in a wide range of subjects and topics. For the lowest attaining pupils, the curriculum leads to accreditation in the core skills of literacy, numeracy, information and communication technology and personal skills. This wide range of accredited courses enables all pupils well-deserved public recognition of their good achievements whilst at school. Carefully phased planning enables individuals from a group of secondary age pupils with complex and challenging learning difficulties to spend valuable time in other classes alongside pupils whose learning difficulties are less severe. Inspection evidence did not support the view expressed by a small minority of parents, that the needs of these pupils are not well met.
25. Good use is made of local community facilities and a wide range of visits out of school and visitors into school significantly enriches the curriculum. Community visits enable older pupils to apply the independence skills they are developing in everyday contexts. A regular programme of social events is well attended by pupils and their families and by pupils from other schools, the very successful public performances of musicals being a good example. Lunchtime clubs for secondary pupils are open to all and are well attended. A recent development is the residential week for older pupils, with plans to expand this aspect of the curriculum to give younger pupils similar opportunities. Physical education and games make an important contribution to pupils' personal and physical development. The school plays a very active part in inter-school competitions for athletics, rounders, football, netball, swimming and badminton. Opportunities are available for as many primary and secondary pupils as possible to participate in these matches. The school has established good links overall with partner institutions. There is a stated aim to be 'inclusive', both internally, through the school's organisational structure, and externally, through a network of mainstream placements. Well over half the primary age pupils benefit academically and socially by spending at least half a day a week in a mainstream school. There are plans in hand to extend this experience to an even higher proportion of primary age pupils. Opportunities for secondary pupils to learn alongside their mainstream peers are not as extensive as in the primary phase, because of various timetabling constraints associated with secondary schools and the timing of school holidays. The school is, however, actively seeking to extend the opportunities for further integration opportunities in the secondary phase. Very good links have been established with local further education colleges and careers service as part of the school's very effective curricular provision Post-16.

26. The leavers' curriculum is very good. Students continue to have access to a broad range of subjects through the Youth Award Scheme, with an increasing and very effective emphasis on the development of independence skills, careers and vocational education. The transfer of pupils to the next stage in their education or employment is very well managed. A comprehensive careers education and guidance programme is in place that meets statutory requirements from Year 9. The school takes great care to give all pupils aged fourteen and over an opportunity to participate in work experience, either within the school, for lower attainers, or out in the community, for higher attainers. The preparation of pupils for work experience is very thorough. Local employers are very supportive and provide helpful evaluations of the progress that pupils make during their placements. The co-ordination of work experience is very good; and very productive links have been forged with local employers to match placements to the pupils' stages of development.
27. In the short time since it opened, the school has made good provision for pupils' spiritual development. This has been achieved through a well planned programme of assemblies, the use of time in classes for reflection and the contribution made by the teaching of subjects such as religious education and music. School assemblies are interesting and made relevant to the age of the pupils. A primary assembly, for example, on the need for teamwork, involving groups of pupils attempting to move a piano around the hall, put across serious messages of friendship and responsibility in a humorous and understandable way. The school leavers' assembly gave pupils and students the opportunity to reflect on their time at school and how it had prepared them for their future lives. Through the use of well-expressed and sensitively personalised recollections, music, poetry and prayer, it effectively marked the transition pupils faced.
28. Younger pupils showed themselves to be very familiar with the concept of prayer and reflection. The inclusion of pupils with more complex learning difficulties is a significant feature of class assemblies, as, for example, when an autistic pupil sang a hymn confidently and beautifully on his own.
29. Wyvern school has a very strong moral ethos. The positive role models set by both teaching and support staff are a significant element of this provision. Clear expectations of behaviour, combined with simple rules that are readily understood by pupils, ensure that they develop a clear sense of right and wrong, as well as a regard for other people.
30. The staff has successfully placed great emphasis on providing opportunities to encourage pupils' social development. Primary aged pupils are made aware of the wider world through many activities, such as the visit of the local fire brigade, and through opportunities to be included in lessons in local primary schools. Secondary pupils benefit from similar but age-appropriate experiences, such as the work experience provided in Years 10 and 11 and the opportunity to go on residential visits, such as the recent trip to Butlins at Bognor Regis.

31. A good personal education programme is also an important element of the curriculum. Primary pupils considering ways in which they can help each other, secondary pupils' role playing conversations, in which they aim to be interesting and self-confident, and Year 11 pupils discussing bullying and its effects, are all examples of engaging and relevant activities. Apart from formal, structured provision, the very good quality of relationships between pupils and staff are also an important element. All staff clearly place a high value on the pupils' welfare and work hard to ensure that all pupils feel valued. The maturity and self-confidence shown by pupils and students at the leavers' assembly are a testament to the success of these approaches.
32. The school makes good provision for pupils' cultural development. Music and drama are important elements in providing pupils with experience of both their own and other cultures. They have the opportunity to perform music throughout the school and the confidence that this generates is reflected in their willingness to perform in school assemblies. Visits by outside musicians, such as African drummers, provide pupils with memorable experiences of listening and performing. Visits to a range of museums and buildings, such as Canterbury Cathedral, also play a significant part in developing pupils' awareness of a range of cultures.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

33. A wide range and number of appropriate systems are well established in the school, which help to ensure that standards of care for all pupils and students are very good. A significant feature is the well-organised and managed group of learning support assistants. They contribute not only to the smooth running of daily life within the school, but also add greatly to the support, care and attention given to each pupil, and as a direct result, to pupils' good achievements across the school. Many parents speak very positively about the quality of care their children receive.
34. Teachers know pupils' personal circumstances well and are fully aware of their needs, which are carefully monitored both formally and informally. Assessments accurately identify a number of areas, for example pupils' levels of independence and their ability to give attention. Where programmes and progress are well shared with parents and carers it is much appreciated, but this is an area for further development across the school. Health care plans are regularly updated and kept centrally, as well as in each pupil's file. There are a good number of trained first-aiders in the school. The storage and administration of medicines follows clear procedures. Training to ensure the safe use of restraint and for manual lifting is effective. The school has implemented a comprehensive health and safety policy, which is monitored by staff. It is fully aware of the shortcomings on the secondary site and constantly seeks to overcome them as well as it can. Members of senior management follow good procedures for risk assessments. Thought and consistent practice have gone into ensuring that standards of support for pupils' wellbeing and their personal development are very good.

35. The school works closely with many professionals from health and social services, including therapists who support the varied needs of pupils. However, ongoing difficulties in recruiting speech therapists have impacted adversely on provision, especially for some pupils in the primary department. Annual reviews are very thoroughly conducted and involve, wherever possible, valuable input from all those who know and support the pupil. This includes a paediatrician who has worked very closely with the younger pupils and their families for a number of years.
36. Procedures for child protection are good, with three named people sharing this responsibility. The school follows county recommendations. There is a named person to oversee 'Looked After Children', who are very well supported. She has begun to offer this group individual informal counselling and is highly committed to this role. Standards of supervision during all break times including dinner are good. Pupils play and learn happily within an environment, which, despite its inadequacies in secondary, is well looked after and kept very clean.
37. Attendance procedures are good and fulfil statutory requirements. Some pupils walk to school and parents or carers bring others, but the majority arrives on both sites in transport provided by the local authority. The system runs very smoothly and traffics congestion in the town centre rarely delays a prompt start to the day. There are no unauthorised absences among primary aged pupils and those in the secondary department are closely monitored. Immediate phone calls home clarify why some pupils may be absent. The non-attendance of one pupil is properly recorded.
38. Good or improving behaviour is recognised and rewarded. A small number of pupils on both sites have individual behaviour plans and all IEPs have a personal target as well. Systems are in place to promote, recognise and reward good standards of behaviour. Most difficulties are sensitively handled, but, in a minority of cases, pupils who have more challenging behaviour are not always consistently and effectively managed. Policies and systems do exist to guide staff in this aspect of their work, but they are not always followed properly. Procedures for recording and reporting behaviour require some further revision and improvement. For example, available information is not always used to inform practice. The school has a loose-leaf incident book, but this should be more formally presented in a bound format.
39. Very effective procedures have been established to find out how well pupils are progressing. They use common formats to assess pupils' academic achievements in the context of all National Curriculum requirements. Pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills are accurately assessed, recorded and reported to parents. No pupils are disappplied from the National Curriculum and its assessment procedures and the Governing Body properly publishes the results of national assessments and examination successes in its annual report to parents. Across the school, the use of individual education plans is well established, as part of the procedures for annually reviewing a pupil's

statement of special educational need. Targets in these plans are precise, manageable and well matched to learning needs. Progress in meeting these targets is reviewed at least termly; and the results of these reviews are used to plan new work. Although achievements in subjects are recorded on a regular basis, the procedures are not used to evaluate whether the progress of individual pupils is as good as can be expected. Teachers are adept at annotating samples of work to indicate the level of support given for a pupil to achieve success. They are also proficient in following the assessment requirements for accredited courses. However, the use of all this very useful information to evaluate the overall educational performance of the school and of different groups of pupils within the school, is not as well developed as the procedures themselves. Senior managers are not therefore in a position to say whether achievements in subjects are as good as can be expected.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

40. The school identified partnership with parents as an area for development, in its last development plan. Challenging difficulties during the amalgamation of two existing schools to create Wyvern, when the majority of parents and governors were strongly resistant to the idea of closing highly valued establishments, meant that some parents were slow to establish trust, particularly with the new managers. Relations in some instances were damaged and have been difficult to re-establish. However, many people involved at the time do talk positively about ongoing improvements in the school's partnership arrangements with parents and carers, but rightly recognise together that there is still scope to improve some aspects still further. Newer parents, who have become involved since the new school opened, are generally much happier with the situation.
41. Overall, parents' and carers' views of the school are good. Many parents and carers have very positive views, valuing the high levels of support and care their children receive, the good and very good progress they make and they say that their children are happy and settled in school. Some parents report that they find the school very approachable and welcoming. There is genuine appreciation of people working hard as a team to support pupil's' varied and complex needs. However, a significant minority of parents and carers, in their responses to a pre-inspection questionnaire and in the pre-inspection meeting, raised some issues, which they were less happy with. These main areas of concern were about information in general and information on progress in particular, plus a lack of commitment in some instances to work together in partnership. Some concern was expressed about homework. It was suggested that there is some inconsistency in the expectations of teachers as to how homework may help pupils and effectively involve parents and carers. Inspectors agreed that this is an area requiring some further development.
42. Information which all parents and carers receive has significant strengths, but some weaknesses too, and is, therefore, only satisfactory overall. Good quality newsletters, regular use of the telephone, and productive and regular contact with many parents are good features, which keep parents informed.

The annual review process is well managed and very successful in terms of seeking parents' views and keeping them fully informed. The introduction of monthly coffee mornings in the primary school has been well supported and gives LSAs in particular more direct contact with parents, which is also beneficial. Information parents receive in written reports, which accompany the annual review, gives a comprehensive and accessible picture of pupils' progress over the year. Concerns and complaints, when raised with the school, are usually settled to the satisfaction of parents and carers. Sometimes, however, this can take an unacceptably long time. One of the main anxieties and frustrations that parents currently have is the unacceptable delay in the start of the building of the promised new school.

43. Home-school books are not used every day for every pupil. Some examples of excellent sharing of information between teachers and parents are evident and this impacts positively and directly, for example on pupils' personal daily progress and achievements. However, home-school books do not always give an accurate picture of what a pupil will be doing over time and his progress. In this situation, their effective use is then questionable. Although it is school policy to include individual pupil targets and timetables in home-school books only about half of those seen contained them. The annual report from the Governing Body contains all statutory requirements, but in its current form is not easy to read. The newly produced school brochure is very full and detailed and will be given to prospective parents shortly. There is, at present, no formal home-school agreement in either department and this requires urgent attention.
44. Regular family discos are well attended and contribute positively to the home school partnership, providing good opportunities for families to meet together. There is at present no formal Parent Teachers' Association, but steps are in hand to address this. Many parents do live quite far from the school, but a few are directly involved on a regular basis in supporting learning which goes on in the school, either for individuals or for small groups of pupils. The newly documented IEPs identify ways in which children's learning can be supported at home. A creditable 90% of parents are involved directly in annual reviews. The school does not yet seek parents' views as a group on, for example, future initiatives and developments. On balance, the impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is satisfactory overall.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

45. Very strong leadership by the head teacher and senior managers has provided a good launch for the new school. Their major focus has been, quite rightly, on establishing the identity of the school and putting into place organisational systems to enable it to run smoothly. Although this initial drive has been successful, longer term planning about precisely what special educational needs the school will cater for and how it will do it, is not so well developed.

46. Responsibilities for establishing and developing the school and managing its day-to-day work are allocated very effectively to the senior managers. The additional difficulty of operating on two very separate sites is handled well, particularly by making senior management responsibilities very clear and providing good communications, through personal contact and by good use of information and communications technology, between the personnel on both sites. However, responsibilities for longer term planning are weighted heavily towards the roles of the head teacher and the heads of education and do not sufficiently involve other members of staff.
47. The Governing Body carries out all of its statutory duties and is hardworking, dedicated and supportive of the school. The governors are, though, not sufficiently well informed to guide and direct the school's future development. For example, the new school was established by the local education authority with a wide brief to support pupils with special educational needs in the local area. However, governors appear not to be entirely clear about the school's role in relation to local initiatives to develop a more inclusive education system and how these initiatives might impinge upon the future nature of its pupil population.
48. Governors make satisfactory efforts to find out what is happening in the school, through informal visits and reports received at its meetings. This aspect of governors' work is, however, constrained by the fact that they have limited formal systems for monitoring the quality of the school's provision. This means that they are not aware of, and therefore do not use as a basis for their decision making, important information that is available in the school; such as, for example, the analysis of the quality of teaching resulting from lesson observations carried out by the senior management team.
49. The senior management team has, in fact, developed a good approach to monitoring teaching that has contributed to the good quality identified during the inspection. Lesson observations provide both general information and specific details about teaching that are then discussed with teachers. There is good provision of support and training to resolve any weaknesses that are identified. The raising of teaching quality is also the focus of a performance management scheme, based upon the national model, which provides teachers with an incentive to improve all aspects of their work. All teachers have identified individual targets for their further improvement, against which they will be assessed next year.
50. During its first year, the school's priorities were to put into place those arrangements that were vital to its operation. Thus, the senior managers correctly took the lead in devising and pushing forward major developments, such as establishing core curriculum subjects and improving approaches to behaviour management. They have been very successful in meeting, in a relatively short time, these important targets for establishing the new school.
51. This approach, which primarily involves the senior managers proposing and establishing organisational and educational systems, is less suitable for

planning the school's longer term development. The current plans for development are at their most appropriate where they have arisen from those activities that seek to find out how well the school is doing. This is well illustrated in the improvement of specific teaching techniques as the result of structured classroom observations by senior managers. It is not clear, however, how most of the school's targets for development are intended to lead directly to specific improvements in pupil achievement in any particular curriculum area. This is because the planning process does not involve collecting information from curriculum subject leaders about the standards achieved in their subjects and how they propose to improve them. It is difficult to see how effective priorities for school development can be arrived at without taking account of this important curriculum information.

52. The head teacher and senior managers have recently changed their approach to planning, by consulting with the school's staff and Governing Body after forming the first draft of the school improvement plan. Although additions have been made to the plan as a result of this consultation, this is not as effective as taking into account information and opinions drawn from a wide range of people, such as staff, governors parents and pupils before deciding upon development priorities.
53. The school's staff have worked hard to establish the new school, particularly in their very successful efforts to put the statutory curriculum in place. The good team spirit that operates across both sites provides a solid base for further development and raises significantly the school's capacity to succeed in the future.
54. Staffing for the school represents a good balance overall of subject expertise and knowledge of a range of special educational needs to ensure effective provision. There is a generally good match between the qualifications and experience of teaching staff and their curriculum responsibilities. The school also has very good learning support staff, who are well integrated into the life of the school and play a significant role in helping to extend learning opportunities for pupils. In the period since the school opened, a comprehensive in-service training programme has enabled many staff to develop valuable additional skills in aspects of the particular special needs reflected in the present pupil population. There are clear and supportive induction procedures in place for all staff.
55. The accommodation available to the school is satisfactory overall. However, many aspects of the secondary accommodation are unsatisfactory and reflect an urgent need for the promised new building. Although the main building is adequate and has been imaginatively adapted in places to make more effective use of the space available, there are concerns that many lessons have to be taught elsewhere on the site in a variety of temporary or semi-permanent classrooms. Most of these have been in use for a long time and are deteriorating quickly. Access to these external classrooms is made more difficult by their dispersal across a wide range of steep banking. This in turn means that valuable time has to be allowed throughout the day for pupils and

staff to get to their next lessons. Whilst concrete ramps have been installed to facilitate wheelchair access, at the upper end of the site there are still low steps to be negotiated to enter some classrooms. During bad weather this situation is particularly unacceptable. A further educational concern is that there is a group of secondary aged pupils with PMLD who have to be taught on the primary site because their needs cannot be met at Willesborough.

56. There are potential health and safety issues to be addressed and these have been communicated to the headteacher for attention. There is also an urgent need for an audit of all access routes to temporary classrooms to ensure that they remain safe. It should, however be noted that the site manager at Willesborough makes strenuous efforts to maintain the fabric of the buildings and attends to any identified minor damage immediately.
57. It is acknowledged that the LEA is committed to relocating the secondary school to a new building, for which funding has been allocated, on an allocated site near to Brookfield. It is, however, a cause of considerable disappointment and frustration to the whole school community that there has been a long and continuing delay in fulfilling this plan, which was a condition imposed by the DfEE (Department for Education and Employment) at the time of merger.
58. The resources available for teaching and learning are generally good. Since the new school opened, there has been a conscious policy of updating and replenishing stocks of books and teaching apparatus. Curriculum co-ordinators have made effective use of funds delegated to them, for example in the purchase of many new textbooks. They are also able to submit bids for larger items of expenditure for allocation from centrally managed funds. Although this system has served the school's needs well to date, consideration should be given to extending greater financial responsibility to the co-ordinators. They could then make a major contribution to whole school development and improvement through the provision of subject plans that set development targets based upon strengths and weaknesses, identified through careful analysis of pupils' achievements. Without this information, managers cannot be sure that they are making the best use of the financial resources available.
59. The finance officer, who makes good use of computerised financial systems to control and monitor spending, manages the school's finances very well on a day-to-day basis. All major school developments are accurately costed and included in the school's budget plan.
60. The staff of the school, especially the senior managers, make good use of modern technology to assist with their planning and communications. Management and planning documents, for example, are made clearer by the use of word-processing and spreadsheets, and communications and information gathering are improved by the use of the internet and e-mail.

61. Additional grants provided directly by the government are put to good use, particularly in the school's successful work to include as many of its pupils as possible in some mainstream school experience and its support of pupils with special educational needs in local schools.
62. The school makes a good effort to ensure the quality of the services it provides. For example, the senior managers take good steps to monitor how successfully their plans have been achieved, the quality of the teaching is monitored and evaluated well and competitive tenders are obtained for all major purchases. Some aspects of the school's work, such as allocating time for curriculum subjects, are achieved by making comparisons with similar schools, using national data. The school's successful work with local mainstream schools has arisen from critically examining Wyvern's own provision and deciding that, in some curriculum areas, pupils will gain more benefit from attending another school. There are very good procedures for assessing pupils' attainments and progress, though the school has not yet fully developed methods of using this information to plan for further improvement. Also, the school fails to ensure the quality of its priorities for future development by not consulting widely before establishing them.

INCLUSION PROVISION

63. Wyvern operates one of three pilot inclusion projects funded by the local education authority to enhance opportunities for special school pupils to have time in mainstream and for special schools to provide support to mainstream school pupils with learning difficulties.
64. The school has responded very actively and effectively to this challenge and the period since the project began has seen a significant growth in the number of pupils and schools involved. The development has so far involved mainly pupils of primary school age. Provision of opportunities for secondary age pupils is still at a very early stage of development.
65. Staff of the mainstream primary schools which provide placements for the school's pupils comment very positively on the quality of the information and support provided by the school. An individual plan for inclusion is compiled for each pupil. These reveal close liaison between the school and its mainstream colleagues.
66. One parent of a pupil involved in the scheme reported that her son greatly enjoyed his time in mainstream and that his social skills and confidence had benefited considerably. She hoped that he would have the opportunity to take part in more academic lessons in the mainstream school. Although pupils do integrate into lessons in subjects such as English and mathematics, it is more common for them to take part in subjects such as art, games and music. Individual inclusion plans tend to concentrate on the social and behavioural aspects of integration and, at the moment, make no reference to the increased integration of suitable pupils in a wider range of academic subjects in the longer term. At this early stage of the project, however, 24

pupils, or sixty per cent of the primary classes, are already experiencing time in a variety of activities in a total of fifteen mainstream schools and a very good base has been established for the further development of the scheme. Two pupils, one in Year 4, the other in Year 6, were observed on their placement at a nearby primary school. Both said that they enjoyed going to the school and looked forward to seeing their friends there. The older pupil joined an art class, quickly settled into the activity and required very little support from the learning support assistant who accompanied her.

67. There is no formal system for the evaluation of this project but documentation shows that regular reviews of each pupil's placement take place. Two case studies, initiated by the school, contain ample evidence of the close monitoring carried out by the school and of the very good relationships, which have been built up with the mainstream schools involved.
68. The school has made very effective use of the funding allocated to this project by the local education authority but there is a lack of clarity about future developments in this area. There is currently no clear rationale for the division of the time available between the inclusion of the school's pupils and the provision of 'outreach' support to mainstream school pupils with learning difficulties, which is also part of the school's brief. The school can be asked to take on the role of providing support for individual pupils in this way but has difficulty in finding the additional staff time required. It is well placed, however, to expand its 'outreach' work if these practical difficulties can be overcome, because of its success in building relationships with mainstream schools in the first stage of the project.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

69. In order to build on the good start for the school and to raise standards further, the Governing Body, headteacher and senior management team, working with the whole staff team, should consider the following points as the basis for an action plan:
- (1) Improve the way the school works in partnership with parents by:
- ensuring that home school books are used consistently to inform parents about what their children are doing and achieving;
 - developing a home school agreement collaboratively with parents;
 - completing the planned establishment of a Parent Teachers' Association;
 - clarifying the school's policy on homework and ensuring that it is applied consistently across the school;
 - making the annual report from the Governing Body more readable;
 - exploring other ways to find out how parents are feeling about the school.
- (referred to in paragraphs 19, 41, 42, 43, 44, 52 & 62)*
- (2) Develop a more inclusive approach to development planning by:

- using the good existing school systems more effectively to evaluate the impact of developments and changes, particularly on pupils' achievements;
- involving subject managers more effectively in planning for improvements in their subjects;
- ensuring that governors are involved in becoming more fully informed about the school's strengths, weaknesses and development needs and use this information more actively in their work;
- involving parents and pupils more fully in any debate about planning for the school's future.

(Referred to in paragraphs 39, 46, 47, 48, 51, 52, 58 & 62)

In addition to the key issues above, the following less important area for development should be considered for the action plan:

- i) ensure that signing and symbols are used consistently and to good effect by all staff across the school *(referred to in paragraph 73)*;
- ii) explore with the local health authority appropriate solutions to the current lack of speech and language therapy support *(referred to in paragraph 35)*;
- iii) ensure that existing systems for managing, recording and reporting incidents, particularly relating to challenging behaviour, are appropriately used and consistently applied *(referred to in paragraph 38)*;
- iv) establish a formal system for evaluating the inclusion project and clarify the focus of its future development *(referred to in paragraphs 47 48 67& 68)*;
- v) identify best practice in the school for planning to meet pupils' individual needs and ensure that it is followed by all teachers *(referred to in paragraphs 12, 16, 17, 18, 20, 72, 73, 79, 82, 84, 91, 93, 96 & 144)*;
- vi) ensure that the good assessment information gathered is used to evaluate more effectively individual pupil and whole school successes *(referred to in paragraphs 18; 39 & 62)*;
- vii) formalise planning for the inclusion of information and communication technology within all subjects, most especially for core subjects across the school and for pupils up to the age of 11 years *(referred to in paragraphs 6, 80, 87 & 97)*;
- viii) continue vigorously to pursue with the local education authority the speediest resolution of planning for and construction of the new secondary school *(referred to in paragraphs 34, 42, 55 & 57)*.

Some elements of (1), (2), (i), (iv) and (vii) are already in the school development plan.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	125
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	44

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
9	21	41	25	4	0	0

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

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	115
Number of full-time pupils eligible for free school meals	19

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	2
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	3

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	9.1

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	1.87

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stages 1

No pupils were entered for statutory testing because the school appropriately considered that there would be no positive outcome to this process. Teacher assessment was carried out with nine pupils and they were all found to be working towards level 1 in English, mathematics and science.

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 2

No pupils were entered for statutory testing because the school appropriately considered that there would be no positive outcome to this process. Teacher assessment was carried out with six pupils and the results are shown below:

	W	L1	L2
English	33%	33%	33%
Mathematics	33%	50%	17%
Science	33%	50%	17%

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 3

No pupils were entered for statutory testing because the school appropriately considered that there would be no positive outcome to this process. Teacher assessment was carried out with twelve pupils and the results are shown below:

	W	L1	L2
English	58%	17%	25%
Mathematics	58%	52%	17%
Science	58%	8%	34%

Attainment at the end of Key Stage 4

Thirteen pupils were entered for GCSE art and Certificate of Education examinations and their results were as follows:

GCSE	B	C	D	E
Art	1	2	5	5

Certificate of Education	Distinction	Merit	Pass
English	4	7	2
Mathematics	1	6	5
Science	2	7	4
Physical education	2	4	6
Religious studies	1	8	2

Six other pupils who were unable to access these courses were assessed and accredited by means of the ALL Project and completed six modules.

Attainment Post-16

Students are entered for either ASDAN Bronze or Towards Independence accreditation. They all achieve creditable results.

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	114
Any other minority ethnic group	1

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: YR – Y13

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	18.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6.3:1
Average class size	9

Education support staff: Y1 – Y13

Total number of education support staff	38
Total aggregate hours worked per week	1031

FTE means full-time equivalent.

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	16	0
Other minority ethnic groups	0	0

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

Financial information

Financial year	2000/2001
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	£
Total income	1,140,948
Total expenditure	1,126,706
Expenditure per pupil	9,798
Balance brought forward from previous year	0
Balance carried forward to next year	14,242

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out

115

Number of questionnaires returned

52

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	75	19	4	2	0
My child is making good progress in school.	56	30	6	6	2
Behaviour in the school is good.	35	43	6	2	14
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	19	43	18	14	6
The teaching is good.	63	27	4	4	2
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	61	22	10	8	0
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	69	25	4	2	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	65	27	2	2	4
The school works closely with parents.	50	32	10	6	2
The school is well led and managed.	38	42	8	6	6
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	45	43	6	6	0
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	48	24	12	4	12

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

ENGLISH

70. Achievements in English are good.
71. Pupils' ability to speak, to communicate in other ways and to listen develops well throughout the school. The youngest pupils do sometimes display difficulties in taking turns in oral work and in listening to instructions, but, by the time they are seven, most show good progress in activities such as listening to stories and answering teachers' questions.
72. This good progress continues throughout the junior classes, although in a small minority of lessons some pupils still find it difficult to listen to more complex instructions and teaching does not manage their distractible behaviour well. In general, however, the ability to engage pupils in purposeful oral work is a real strength of teaching throughout the school. The very good relationships, which are a feature of the school, are an important factor in this, together with very challenging question and answer activities and a common expectation that pupils should talk to the rest of the class on a variety of subjects. As a result, pupils' spoken vocabulary and their confidence as speakers develop noticeably, both in English and in other subjects. In a Science lesson for Year 6 pupils, for example, the quality of pupils' contribution to a discussion about sound was outstanding. They asked relevant questions, made helpful comments and explained their ideas confidently to the class. By the time they are sixteen, pupils are often able to maintain a thoughtful and mature discussion. In one lesson involving Year 11 pupils, for example, their confidence, expanding vocabulary and humour came through very strongly in their responses to letters written by their classmates to a 'problem page'.
73. Pupils with more complex learning difficulties display very good progress in their communication skills. The school has rapidly developed good quality provision for these pupils through its 'total communication' policy. This is still developing, but a variety of teaching approaches, equipment and resources is used very effectively by staff, both teachers and LSAs, to provide a growing range of opportunities for these pupils to communicate. Signs, symbols, pictures and photographs and more 'high tech' equipment, such as alternative communication devices, were all in evidence during the inspection week. In one session at the start of the day, for example, two pupils used their 'messagemates' to answer the teacher's questions and others were making choices by indicating photographs or symbols of their preferred activities. High expectations and intensive interaction with pupils are noticeable strengths of the work of both teachers and LSAs with these children. Pupils respond by pointing, turning the pages of their communication books, matching spoken words with pictures and co-operating in activities involving books, simple sequences, counting and the recognition of different items by their use. Their individual education plans identify clear progress in their understanding and performance of such activities. Outside

these specialist groups, however, the use of signing and other communication aids is much more variable. Good practice was seen during the week, but there were also occasions when opportunities to sign were missed by staff. The school recognises this as an area for development; in particular the need for ongoing staff training to improve the consistency of the use of signing.

74. Primary pupils make good progress in their reading. The youngest rapidly develop an awareness and enjoyment of books. They listen to stories, point at pictures and begin to match symbols with words. Records show their increasing ability to read their own and others' names, to recognise familiar words in print and to identify letters by shape and sound.
75. By the time they are seven, most pupils are making steady progress through the main reading scheme used by the school and by the time they are eleven they are reading a growing range of texts, both fiction and non-fiction, with increased levels of accuracy and understanding.
76. In the younger secondary classes, pupils are beginning to appreciate modern children's fiction and adapted versions of Shakespeare. By sixteen, they have made very good progress in using texts to find information and in responding to developments in plot and character in the more demanding range of literature that they are tackling. One Year 10 girl, for example, talked enthusiastically about 'Romeo and Juliet' and 'Of Mice and Men' when asked what she had enjoyed reading at school and displayed good knowledge of the main characters as she did so. Year 10 and 11 pupils read aloud confidently and fluently in class. Teaching is very effective in promoting their independence as readers and in encouraging them to discuss their feelings about the books that they read.
77. Throughout the school, very good planning by teachers as they implement the structure and principles of the National Literacy Strategy is a major factor in the good progress made by pupils in their reading. In addition, the very good scheme of assessment ensures that challenging targets are set for pupils as their skills develop.
78. There is sound development of pupils' writing skills through the primary classes. There is clear progression from the very early stages, where pupils are forming letters by over-writing and copying and learning to write their names, to the development of more independent writing by the higher-attaining pupils of Year 4 in their news books. By the time they are eleven, although there is still a broad range of attainment in pupils' writing, many are spelling unfamiliar and more complex words with increasing success. They are using punctuation such as speech marks correctly and are beginning to produce more creative writing, for example, poetry with their own illustrations about characters in the stories they have read. Their ability to record information and write answers, for example, on worksheets is also making an important contribution to their progress in other subjects of the curriculum.

79. By the time they are fourteen, pupils have continued to make steady progress in the presentation of their work, for example, in the quality of their handwriting and the accuracy of their spelling, but they are given insufficient opportunities to extend the range and quantity of their writing. Their folders have little, if any, evidence of extended or creative writing. They do contain a considerable amount of grammar and comprehension exercises and these aspects of their work in the subject show clear improvement over time. However, the ability of the higher attainers in particular to organise longer pieces of writing and to experiment with different styles of writing is not developing as it should. This weakness is reflected in the results of statutory assessment at age fourteen, which are below what would be expected for some of the higher attaining pupils. Pupils in Year 10 and 11, however, are very positively encouraged by some very good teaching to write confidently and at increasing length on a wide range of topics. A particular strength of teaching here is the choice of subject matter used to stimulate pupils' ideas in their writing. It is very relevant and of much interest to the pupils. The very good results attained in the Certificate of Education in English in the last academic year reflect the very good progress made by these pupils, both in their reading and writing.
80. The subject is well served by efficient co-ordination and a very good scheme of assessment, but the effective use of assessment information to evaluate standards and to set whole-school targets in literacy has yet to be developed. The co-ordinators have not been sufficiently involved in or consulted about this process. Other areas which require attention are the development of information and communications technology in the subject, particularly its usefulness for the drafting, editing and production of longer pieces of written work by pupils, and improved consistency in the use of signing throughout the school. Overall, however, English has developed well since the establishment of the school, standards and the quality of teaching are good and there is now a good base for further improvement in the subject.

MATHEMATICS

81. Achievements in mathematics are good in the primary school and satisfactory for secondary aged pupils.
82. Primary aged pupils' achievements in mathematics and numeracy are good. They demonstrate a developing confidence in the use of number and the recognition and understanding of shape. Secondary aged pupils continue to develop mathematical skills effectively and success is achieved in public examinations. However, whilst these older pupils achieve well in lessons, the lack of opportunities for them to apply their skills to real problem solving situations mean that their progress over time is only satisfactory. Pupils with more complex learning needs benefit from skilful support from the LSAs and this enable them to make good progress. However, there are occasions when the achievements of pupils with challenging behaviour can be restricted by a lack of teacher certainty on how their behaviour is to be managed.

83. By the age of seven, pupils have a good and developing knowledge of both number and shape. Higher attaining pupils can count to 100 in tens and are confident in the addition and subtraction of single numbers up to ten. They know and can recognise two dimensional shapes, such as a square and a triangle, using them to create patterns and sequences. Pupils with more complex learning needs develop an awareness of number and can recognise the shapes of digits such as 1, 2 and 3. By the age of 11 the good progress made is reflected in the confident way in which pupils use number to, for example, place missing numbers into calculations or undertake division exercises. Pupils' confidence in Year 6 is further illustrated by their ability to discuss various methods of arriving at a solution.
84. Secondary aged pupils continue to achieve well in the acquisition and practice of number and calculation skills in lessons. By the age of 14, pupils are competent in methods of calculation and have an understanding of money. Practical skills, such as accurate measurement, are well developed. However opportunities for the use of these skills to solve real life problems is under-developed and pupils lack challenging opportunities to apply their knowledge of recording information and drawing graphs. Similarly, whilst pupils at the age of 16 often perform well in public examinations, they too lack opportunities for practical applications of their skills. The development and use of mental arithmetic skills are a strength of secondary pupils.
85. Overall, the quality of teaching is good, with the teaching of pupils in Year 6 being very good. Where teaching is good, lessons are characterised by careful planning, imaginative tasks and stimulating delivery. Examples of this were seen at all ages. In a Year 9 lesson, for example, mental arithmetic skills were developed and practised through an exciting card game. Further examples were seen in a Year 10 maths lesson, where the careful organisation of groups and the high quality of the support staff enabled pupils of all abilities to achieve well. Similarly, and in a Year 2 lesson on shapes, the teacher was careful to develop the pupils' maths vocabulary by having them name the shapes. When teaching is very good, as in a lesson on methods of division for 11 year old pupils, the teacher's very high expectations of the pupils gives them the confidence to form and suggest methods of their own, leading to pupils making discoveries for themselves.
86. Teachers use the National Numeracy Strategy effectively and the training that they received in these methods is a significant factor in the standards achieved by pupils. Lessons are well planned, although there are occasions when insufficient time is left at the end for pupils to be effectively questioned on what they have learnt in the lesson. Identifying what is to be learned is clearly defined in the planning and is made clear to the pupils at the beginning of the lesson. There is an appropriate emphasis on pupils using the correct mathematical vocabulary and this enables older pupils to explain their work effectively. Mental arithmetic sessions are delivered with enthusiasm and these skills are practised through interesting activities, such as calculating prices or playing card games.

87. The use of computers to support pupils' learning in numeracy and mathematics is under-developed, with little use being observed during the inspection. The need to develop their use is identified as an area for development by the school.
88. The newly appointed co-ordinator has developed accurate methods of assessing pupils' achievements through termly tests and teacher assessments. However, there is a need to ensure consistent methods of marking pupils' work throughout the school. The co-ordinator has also been successful in improving curriculum planning for secondary aged pupils, but is aware of the need further to develop it to provide opportunities for pupils' practical application of their skills.
89. During the short period since the school's opening, good progress has been made in mathematics. Tasks are well matched to pupils' abilities, appropriate opportunities are provided for ensuring that pupils with complex learning needs make good progress and all pupils have the chance to gain external qualifications.

SCIENCE

90. Achievements in science are good throughout the school.
91. Some of the very good progress noted in science lessons is a direct result of very effective teaching, in Years 1, 6, 10 and Post-16, where methods are very well matched to pupils' different learning needs, and resources are used very effectively to add interest to lessons and motivate pupils. Good quality teaching overall ensures that, by the time pupils leave school, they have achieved a good level across all aspects of the subject. Most sixteen year old pupils gain accreditation in the Certificate of Educational Achievement in science and continue to develop their knowledge and understanding of the subject as part of the Post-16 Youth Award Scheme. The youngest pupils also make very good progress because interesting and well-presented activities are presented to them. There are, however, some primary aged pupils who are not making as much progress as they should, because of weaknesses in the management of classes and, sometimes, due to a failure to pitch work at the right level to engage the attention of all pupils. Progress in the secondary school is always good and sometimes very good, especially for pupils with the most complex learning difficulties. This is because the overall quality of specialist science teaching is good and, for pupils with the most severe learning difficulties, in Year 10 and Post-16, for example, it is very good. For these pupils, very effective use is made of resources, signs, symbols and three-dimensional models to give pupils successful access to difficult scientific ideas. This was well illustrated in work on the solar system, in Year 10; and in learning to observe in the classroom and school grounds and to use a camera at Post-16.
92. By the age of seven, pupils are making good progress in understanding about the lives of plants and animals, about materials and their properties, about

push and pull forces and making electrical circuits. Higher attaining pupils distinguish between light and dark, identify the main sounds heard around the school and know that sounds become fainter the further they are from the source of sound. Pupils with complex learning difficulties follow the same science programme and, with good support, use the same equipment. They can, for example use torches to make patterns with light, and observe what happens to light through prisms and kaleidoscopes. Higher attainers in the youngest class know that toys can be made of different materials and all pupils watch entranced as 'dancers' move across the surface of a clockwork toy. They concentrate very well when observing and investigating during a very well prepared lesson in which pupils see that materials can change, for example, when mixing warm milk and vinegar to produce a 'plastic' texture.

93. The oldest primary pupils make very good progress in science because the quality of teaching is outstanding and, as a result, the highest attainers in Year 6 are approaching national average attainment levels in tests. In work on sound, for example, the use of questions, discussion and examples from pupils' own experiences lead not only to the promotion of new scientific knowledge, and understanding, but also to oral work of very high quality. An excellent focus on key words, prominently displayed, consolidates the learning of new scientific language. Seemingly effortless management of pupils is very calm, patient, and courteous. The pace, variety and pitch of the lesson are all at the right levels to challenge all pupils. Excellent relationships and use of praise thoroughly motivate pupils. Teaching is exceptionally effective in engaging pupils' interest and they are fascinated and amazed to learn about the way the ear works. Excellent teamwork between the teacher and LSAs ensures the involvement of pupils with the most complex and challenging behaviours. Year 6 written work displays the very good capacity of higher attainers to write their own descriptions of investigations and to make closely observed and accurate drawings. Thorough annotations of their written work and very full assessment records provide a very secure picture of what each pupil has achieved.
94. From the age of eleven, pupils have access to a science laboratory and use equipment with increasing confidence to promote their understanding of cause and effect. There is no slowing of progress in science on transfer to the secondary school because the whole school science curriculum is so well planned and because the quality of specialist science teaching in the secondary school is good. This year, for the first time, seven pupils aged fourteen have made sufficient progress to access the national tests in science and a small number of higher attainers are estimated to achieve level 4. Expectations in secondary science lessons are admirably high. At times, however, this can result in planning too many activities, leading to a teaching pace too fast for rigorous questioning to monitor the quality of what individuals have learned. In work on light, higher and average attainers manipulate apparatus and make increasingly accurate diagrams of reflections in a plane mirror. Pupils extend their understanding of sound begun in Year 6. They investigate and explain why sound travels better though some

materials than others; and apply vocabulary learned previously, when explaining about sound vibrations, for example.

95. By the age of sixteen, last year, all pupils attained the Certificate of Educational Achievement in science, most at merit standard with a small proportion achieving distinction. In 2001, standards are equally good because pupils continue to respond positively to good quality science provision. End of module testing makes a significant contribution to the good progress made in science because challenging tests over a number of years prepare pupils well for public examinations. Specialist teaching, facilities and resources all help pupils to develop the full range of science enquiry skills, as the assessment records confirm. Pupils make good progress in obtaining and recording the results of their investigations. They produce closely observed diagrams, improve the accuracy of their bar charts, and of line graphs, of cooling curves, for example. Pupils make extensive and accurate use of mathematical calculations, as is the case across the secondary phase. Pupils are less successful in routinely explaining their results and evaluating which aspects of their enquiry methods could be improved, and this is an area for development. High levels of achievement in science in relation to learning needs were observed in a Year 10 lesson about the solar system for pupils with very complex learning difficulties, some of whom have great difficulty understanding the words bigger and smaller. Very good use was made of signs and symbols and three-dimensional models to give pupils some awareness of the making of a star, the relative distances of the planets from the sun and their orbits around the sun. There is some evidence that pupils are motivated to complete science homework in preparation for entry to the Certificate of Educational Achievement; but across the school the use of homework to consolidate class work, and to extend and enrich the science curriculum, is not well developed. Although the science curriculum makes a very good contribution to the development of literacy and numeracy skills, there was no use of computers to support learning in science during the inspection and this is an area for further development.
96. There is no formal science timetable Post-16 but students continue to access science-based topics, and achieve very well, in the Youth Award Scheme. Science provision Post-16 is very effective because the quality of the specialist science teaching is consistently very good and activities are very well matched to learning needs. The content and methods used generate an excellent response from students. Students show great respect and support for those peers who have greater learning difficulty than themselves. They learn the importance of preservation of the environment and the recycling of materials. They develop horticultural skills as part of the Youth Award Scheme. Some very good one to one teaching enables pupils with the most severe learning difficulties, with support, to learn how to manipulate a camera and take photographs in the school grounds. As preparation for entry into the further education unit, Year 11 pupils are designing and making a friendship garden. This is an exciting project. The effectiveness of this project in promoting pupils' scientific, personal, social and communication skills could be yet further enhanced by engaging parental and community support.

97. The science curriculum is very well matched to National Curriculum requirements and the arrangements for co-ordinating science across the school are good. There is no loss of momentum when pupils transfer from the primary to the secondary phase and learning in the secondary phase builds very effectively on earlier learning. The learning support staff are very caring in science lessons and mainly give good one to one support. The impact they have on learning and progress is, however, not always as good as it could be because their roles in science lessons as part of an integrated adult team are not always sufficiently planned. Consequently there are missed opportunities for them to promote literacy, numeracy and ICT, to extend the challenges for some pupils, on the autistic spectrum, for example, and to assess and record academic progress.

ART AND DESIGN

98. Achievements in art and design are a strength of the school. Pupils of all ages and abilities make very good progress in the subject. This is due to the very high quality of teaching, a very well planned and prepared curriculum, and the high status with which the staff and pupils view the subject. The subject's standing in the school is apparent in the high quality artwork that is to be found on display in every corridor and classroom and in the main halls on both sites.
99. Up to the age of 7, the progress that pupils make varies between satisfactory and excellent, but is mostly good. In the majority of art and design lessons, which are taught by class teachers in the primary school, pupils respond well to the very high expectations of their teachers and take pride in the quality of their work. Teachers' confident knowledge of art and design enables them to gain the respect of pupils and provide them with the appropriate skills to develop their original creative ideas into finished work of a high standard. On the very few occasions where pupils make less progress, they are presented with, and are motivated by, a good range of stimulating objects and materials, but their enthusiasm for these is not always adequately translated into creative effort.
100. Pupils aged between 11 and 16 make very good and sometimes excellent progress in art and design. This age group benefits from having a specialist teacher, who also acts as the main subject leader for the whole school. The high quality of pupils' work is reflected by the fact that all pupils are entered for and achieve good results in GCSE art and design. Pupils' achievements are directly related to the very good and sometimes excellent quality of the teaching, which combines excellent subject knowledge, high expectations and excellent tutoring of specific practical skills. As a result, pupils are highly motivated by the subject and approach their projects with maximum concentration and effort. The majority of pupils express real interest in and love for the subject, which is a firm favourite. The confidence with which they approach their artwork is due to the sensitive support, infectious enthusiasm

and not a little humour, provided by their teacher, who takes on the role of 'critical friend' or 'fellow artist'.

101. Pupils of all ages and levels of attainment gain success and enjoyment from their art and design lessons. Those who have very complex special educational needs, for example, achieve excellent results and gain much satisfaction from their sculptures using wood bark, leaves and twigs.
102. The art and design work of all pupils in the school is based upon very solid principles. Pupils are taught to seek creative inspiration by looking at the world around them through an artist's eye. A group of 7-year-old pupils, for example, examine a wide range of objects from the seashore then select objects to make their own collages by arranging them in a lined box.
103. Frequently, pupils look at the works of famous artists, to see how they have interpreted a subject. Thus, young pupils aged five, explore a theme about flowers and look at some of the works of Van Gogh and Monet. They then design their own work and explore the effects they can achieve with watercolours and wax-resist techniques.
104. Another source of inspiration is the creative work of different cultures. A group of 10-year-old pupils, for example, study the artwork of Native Americans, then make totem poles out of clay, to represent aspects of their own lives. During this exploration stage, pupils consult books, photographs and search the internet for images or famous works. They then design their own work in draft form, trying out several ideas before beginning their final production. Once the idea has been formed, pupils learn to explore a wide range of materials and processes in order to achieve the result that they want. A group of pupils aged 14 years use this approach to develop ideas for a quilt tapestry. Having decided upon their designs, they consider which materials they will use, test out and mix a range of coloured dyes, and try out various techniques including stitching, waxing, ironing and gluing.
105. Older pupils, particularly, have very firm views about their own artistic tastes and this guides the choices they make about their GCSE work. One boy, for example, is very confident about his design and the choice of materials and colours for his work on fabric using wax-resist and subtly merging shades of dye wash.
106. Some lessons are devoted to very good teaching of basic skills that pupils can then use in their own creative works. Pupils aged 12, for example, learn how to roll a flat slab of clay and stick other pieces of clay to it using slip. Other pupils, aged 13, learn how to fix fabric pieces together for sewing.
107. The level of interest pupils have in art and design aids their learning in other subjects. For example, younger pupils make full use of their painting skills to create butterflies when learning about symmetry in mathematics, and when illustrating their project on the Aztecs in history. Pupils of all ages are prompted to develop their speaking and listening skills through the

stimulating experiences they study in art lessons. In their pursuit of information, for example, about famous artists, pupils improve their skills with information and communications technology as they search the internet or access information from computer disks.

108. The art and design curriculum is managed very ably by the subject co-ordinators, who have provided a very comprehensive programme of stimulating and exciting activities for pupils of all ages and abilities. The subject is very well resourced. Good use is made of the ageing accommodation in the secondary school, while the pupils in the primary school have the advantage of a good art resource area in addition to their classrooms.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

109. Overall, pupils' progress and achievements are good because teachers plan well, set objectives which are achievable and use methods and class organisation which enable pupils to have full access to the tasks undertaken. Pupils have a good understanding of the design, making and evaluation process both with non-resistant materials and in food technology, but as yet, they do not experience much work with resistant construction materials.
110. Younger pupils make good progress as they handle a range of materials such as wood, card, paper and textiles and learn to tear, cut, paste and join. They become aware of the need to design and plan and, as shown when working on building a home for a doll, they appreciate the need to modify original designs when the making process throws up a problem. Teachers and support staff sensitively help them take their turn and provide them with opportunities to make their own suggestions, for example when one pupil decided that it would be better to glue the floor of the house as opposed to gluing the carpet. Activities are carefully selected to provide pupils with choice-making opportunities, such as when mixing ingredients for a cake and when choosing type and shape of topping. The teachers' promotion of independent and collaborative work is effective in most activities.
111. Between the age of 7 and 11 years, pupils continue to make good progress as they build on previous learning and handle a greater range of materials. They use scissors with more skill and cut lollipop sticks with greater confidence and accuracy. Carefully led research into the construction of bridges led to the making of a variety of bridge structures that demanded the use of their improving cutting, joining and shaping skills. During food technology activities, pupils make healthy snacks, including salads and, because of very careful planning by teachers, the activity involving making choices about biscuits and types of cheese contributed significantly to the pupils' mathematical development. They identified triangles and squares with enthusiasm; knew that the biscuits were circles not spheres and equally knew that the feta cheese pieces were cubes. The use of the small specialist food technology room makes a positive contribution to pupils' learning and in particular prepares them for the safety and hygiene conventions that will be a strong feature of work in food technology as they move through the school

112. Between the age of 11 and 14 years, pupils continue to develop their basic practical skills. They use cutting knives accurately and with regard for personal safety and the safety of others. Well-planned lessons in measurement enable pupils to make their original designs translate into finished products that work. A project involving making mini fair ground attractions challenged pupils to make choices, design, make and evaluate. Considering that they were working at widely different tasks and using a wider range of materials such as plywood, stiff card and plastic they learnt well how to organise their own work space. Pupils were highly motivated by the carefully supported responsibilities placed upon them and could talk with confidence about the process as well as the product. Working independently and a willingness to offer advice to others was a very positive feature of this activity. This independent working is also a positive feature of pupils' work in food technology. As a consequence of the teacher's well structured demonstrations of the skills of cutting, slicing and scraping, pupils were very pleased with their own attempts and in particular their ability to cut carrots into fine strips. A carefully planned series of questions by the teacher helped pupils relate their work in mathematics to the fractions involved when slicing vegetables and the multiplication needed for 'batch work'. Good routines that have been established by the teacher, result in good collaboration, as pupils clear up after lessons. The early work done by pupils on the need for hygienic practices is further developed in the larger and more demanding specialist facility that they use in the secondary school.
113. Older pupils are introduced to new skills as well as having opportunities to consolidate established skills. Teachers focus on activities and outcomes that have a strong real life element to them. A project involving making cardboard boxes to hold food – dry goods - for a forthcoming residential visit effectively relates design and technology to real life. Pupils responded very well to the challenges inherent in the task and successfully used the previously learned design techniques and skills of accurate measurement and cutting to solve the problem set. However, when the plans of one group did not turn out as expected the teacher effectively used their dilemma as a learning experience, with the result that the pupils made 'on the job' corrections and were justifiably proud of the corrected end product. The production of T-shirts using a variety of techniques, including screen printing, dyeing and direct painting also contributed to the pupils' understanding of assembly line and batch production processes. Pupils with complex learning difficulties stick, paste and, with help, cut and experience control as they use a range of specialist switches.
114. The recently appointed co-ordinator for the subject has worked hard at making the neglected craft room into a suitable room for working in and has also built up a satisfactory stock of suitable equipment and materials. There continues to be a need for easy access to water. A start has also been made on the creation of a whole school scheme of work, with all the reference sources reflecting National Curriculum guidelines for a balanced curriculum.

GEOGRAPHY

115. Overall, pupils make satisfactory progress in their learning because the quality of teaching is satisfactory. There are examples of very good teaching for pupils in Year 6 and good teaching for pupils in Year 10.
116. It was not possible to observe teaching of geography in Years 1 and 2 due to time tabling constraints. However, a scrutiny of work, classroom displays and lesson plans shows that pupils have developed a satisfactory knowledge of their local environment and its links, through roads, railways and transport by sea and air, to other places. This has been achieved as a result of effective planning by teachers, which has enabled pupils to have a wide range of experiences. These include trips to the seaside by train, and looking at a lighthouse. Pupils have also visited Ashford station and seen the Euro train. They show an understanding of how it links France and England. Pupils' work has been well supported in the Literacy hour. For example pupils are reading the story 'The Train Ride' which links in well with their topic of transport.
117. Older pupils in the primary school are studying a range of topics including rivers and South America. The local community is used well. For example in Year 4, pupils went on a walk along a local river, plotting its course and deciding where the flow is faster and slower. The teacher used questioning well to encourage pupils to look carefully and make their own conclusions about the flow of the river. In Year 6, pupils make good progress in extending their knowledge of South America by considering its wild life and the pressures on species that might lead to their extinction. From the teacher's clear introduction to the topic and his regular checking of the pupils' understanding by well structured questioning, they were confident in using appropriate vocabulary and enthusiastic in putting forward their own ideas about the effect on the animals living there of cutting down the rain forests. The recording tasks in the course of the lesson were well matched to the individual pupils. For example, the teacher helped a pupil with learning difficulties on the autistic spectrum to read the appropriate set of symbols explaining that a drawing task was the next activity.
118. In Years 7 to 9, pupils continue to develop their understanding and knowledge of other countries as well as finding out more about local geographical features. Teaching is effective by making the lessons interesting and introducing a range of experiences. For example, a Year 7 class explored some of the differences between English and French customs. In the course of the lesson, the pupils used their speaking and listening skills well to respond appropriately to the teacher, comparing and contrasting issues such as sporting interests and expectations of car drivers. The teacher showed the pupils a boule set and after a simple explanation of the rules they were paired off to play a short game outside the classroom. In lessons with Year 8 pupils, the teacher introduced them to the layout and conventions of an atlas. First of all, they were helped to understand that the contents page could help them to find maps of different countries and to

become familiar with that. In a subsequent lesson, the teacher built on the pupils' previous knowledge by helping them to find and use the index of the atlas as another way of locating countries and continents.

119. Learning opportunities for some older pupils have been extended by the introduction in the present Year 10 of an accredited modular course leading to a Certificate of Achievement. They have made good progress in working their way through various units of study and show confidence in relating earlier learning to current topics. Good teaching ensures that pupils develop their knowledge well. Questioning is used effectively to enable pupils to recall previous work. For example, in a lesson about the contribution of water flow to the process of erosion, pupils were able to recall correctly the origins and properties of chalk and limestone and use this to predict the impact over time of the passage of water over soft and hard rocks. At the end of the lesson, they were able to demonstrate to the teacher their understanding of terms such as 'erode' and 'meander'.
120. For those pupils with complex learning difficulties, work is more practical in order to meet their needs. For example, when working on the topic of France, teaching enables pupils to contribute about their own likes and dislikes about food before presenting them with pictures of a range of French foods, which they then cut out and mounted on worksheets. The teacher and LSAs, using and repeating French words for some of the foods with individual pupils, reinforced French culture throughout the lesson. By the end of the lesson some of them were able to remember words such as 'pate' and 'croissant'. In this way, the lesson was successful in helping pupils to gain an initial understanding of a different culture from their own. However, the written task was less effective as it did not ensure that the needs of all pupils in the group were met.
121. Much has been achieved in producing sound schemes of work for pupils throughout the school, clearly cross-referenced to National Curriculum requirements. The lead and link co-ordinators have recognised the importance of moving beyond this, to ensure that more detailed termly planning is undertaken, in consultation with all staff teaching the subject throughout the school, and have already identified the need to offer pupils access to a wider range of resource materials. The introduction in Year 10 of the Certificate of Achievement course is rightly seen as a positive step towards raising pupils' levels of attainment

HISTORY

122. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory. This is as a result of satisfactory and, on occasions, good and very good teaching. However, teaching for pupils in the Year 3 class is unsatisfactory, because of poor planning and management of pupils' behaviour.
123. It was not possible to observe teaching of history in Years 1 and 2. However, a scrutiny of work, classroom displays and lesson plans shows that pupils

have developed a satisfactory knowledge of the past. This has been achieved as a result of effective planning by teachers to ensure that pupils have a wide range of experiences. These include learning about the past by looking at toys from long ago and visiting an exhibition of 'Yesterday's World' at Hastings. Other activities have been based on helping pupils to understand the passage of time and correctly to sequence days of the week, months of the year and identify birthdays. Pupils also looked at how railways have changed over time.

124. Older primary aged pupils develop their knowledge about a range of topics including the Aztecs. In Year 6 where teaching is most effective, pupils make very progress in their knowledge and understanding of history. They have developed their understanding of the Aztecs by looking at how they made written records of important events. In a lesson based on this topic, the teacher's very clear introduction enabled the pupils to recall their previous knowledge of Aztec customs and mythology confidently. Well structured questioning allowed them to confirm their understanding of appropriate key words and names, which then led them into appreciating that written records from the period held valuable information about the Aztecs for subsequent generations. Text and pictures on a worksheet were carefully explained to show pupils how the Aztecs had made books. Pupils worked well together to create their own books in the Aztec style. The teacher concluded the lesson very effectively by reviewing with each pupil in turn what they had learnt and testing out their explanation of their chosen symbols.
125. Pupils in Years 7 and 8 have developed an understanding of a number of historical events, including the Battle of Hastings, the Black Death, the English Civil War, life in the mid-eighteenth century, the Industrial Revolution and the way of life of Native American peoples. Pupils benefit from the teacher's good subject knowledge and enthusiasm for the subject in learning about these events. However, there is an over-reliance on worksheets, with much of pupils' work being recorded in this way. This prevents pupils from developing their skills in extended writing. Where there was evidence of opportunities for more detailed work it was brief, lacking in detail and not always marked. In Year 9, pupils' classroom-based learning about World War I had been consolidated by a visit to the Imperial War Museum.
126. For older pupils up to the age of sixteen, work related to the Nazi persecution of the Jews in the 1930s and 1940s was a distinctive recurring feature of provision. This reflects the personal interest and detailed subject knowledge of the co-ordinator. Teaching of aspects of this topic in Year 9 was consistently effective in stimulating brief but well focused discussion amongst the pupils of the morality and reasons for repression. Pupils working with the same resource materials in Year 11 were helped to gain a similar level of insight and understanding. In Year 10, pupils studied crime and punishment in the eighteenth century and learnt about transportation to Australia through the story of the convict 'Mary Jones'. The teacher used present day analogies to promote discussion and help pupils reflect on changes over time in attitudes to crime.

127. Where teaching is less effective there is insufficient planning to ensure that pupils have opportunities to learn independently and at a level that is matched to their ability. At times lessons are too teacher-led, with pupils having few opportunities to contribute. For example in a Year 10 lesson, it was clear that by the end, only a small number of pupils could recall the details that had been covered during the lesson.
128. For pupils with complex learning difficulties there is limited evidence of work undertaken. However, pupils have developed their knowledge of the past and present by looking at photographs of their friends when they were younger and considering how they have changed in appearance now. An understanding of the passing of time is developed through practical ways, such as considering the changing seasons, days of the week and changes during the day. The use of symbols and signing supports pupils' understanding well.
129. Pupils benefit from teachers' good subject knowledge, particularly those in the secondary school, who are taught by the co-ordinator. However, although there is appropriate planning to ensure that pupils' knowledge and skills are developed as they get older, these are not always adhered to. As a result, the school has no way of ensuring that pupils get a suitably wide range of experiences. The lack of checking what is taught in lessons is a weakness in this subject. In this context, the co-ordinator recognises the need for more detailed termly topic planning and greater emphasis on the day-to-day assessment and recording of pupils' achievements.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

129. Provision for information and communication technology is satisfactory overall. Older pupils are taught information and communication technology as a discrete subject while younger pupils are introduced to the subject through its application within the other subjects. As a result, pupils between the ages of 11 and 16 years make consistently good progress. However, the progress of pupils up to the age of 11 years is constrained by the lack of regularly planned opportunities to acquire and use information and communication technology skills in lessons, most especially in English, mathematics and science. They therefore make only satisfactory progress.
130. The majority of younger pupils know how to switch on the computer; they focus well on the screen when controlling the cursor with a mouse or tracker ball and are showing some variable control of the clicker. With varying degrees of competence, pupils know about the basic conventions of using a key-board and, in English, will use their key board skills to produce simple word-processed text to support their story telling. When working at the computer, pupils demonstrate that they are able to work independently and all show care and respect for the equipment that they use. Pupils know that a variety of devices can be controlled through the use of keyboards, remote

controls and special switches and good use was made of this facility when one pupil successfully used her special switch to generate a vocal output as her contribution to the assembly. When given the opportunity to use information and communication devices the majority of pupils demonstrate confidence, such as was demonstrated by the pupil who chose to work at a simple mathematics programme while waiting for morning registration.

131. Pupils between the age of 11 years and 14 years make good progress and achieve well. Consistently good teaching, involving well-planned lessons that have clear aims and achievable outcomes, results in pupils working with effort, perseverance and enjoyment. They confidently use the keyboard; their mouse control is such that it is now a tool and not a task and they are developing consistency in their use of the correct subject vocabulary. Pupils respond very well to the challenges set. The lesson involving them in importing a pre-prepared template and manipulating an image challenged all at different levels. The teacher ensured that every pupil ended the lesson knowing that they had made tangible progress through providing individual help when required and increasing challenge when suitable. This lesson demanded an ability to click, drag and drop; a skill which was further demonstrated as another group used a spreadsheet to create a pie chart that was based on a simple traffic survey. Pupils showed real satisfaction when their raw data was converted into the pie diagram as they also showed pleasure at learning and remembering the new terminology – column, line, address, data – associated with such a task. Importing clip-art images provided pupils with a carefully planned opportunity to experiment with re-sizing, with one pupil showing satisfaction when his experimenting resulted in his finding the ‘landscape’ method of presentation.
132. Older pupils continue to make good progress. Teachers ensure that they consolidate previous learning and use their ‘old’ skills in word processing, importing and manipulating images and using spreadsheets to create real life outcomes, such as pamphlets and simple brochures. Their previous work on building up a suitable subject vocabulary is further extended as they now learn to use more complex terms, which they apply to systems and the hardware used. Pupils now access the Internet with more skill and confidence as a consequence of their being effectively taught how to use key words for searches and the possibility of using a variety of search engines. Pupils with complex learning difficulties also make good progress as they show excitement when in the very effectively used sensory room. They learn to have an effect on their environment as they use a touch screen and ‘read’ and touch symbols. Additionally, some use a mouse with help, while others react positively to the sound of a printer.
133. Overall, the co-ordination of information and communication technology is satisfactory. However, there is a need to respond to the carefully considered subject development plan as soon as possible. It identifies a clear need to formalise the inclusion of information and communication technology within all subjects for pupils up to the age of 11 years. Additionally, it identifies a need to incorporate the current

and successfully taught units for older pupils into a whole school scheme of work that reflects a structured, within-subject provision for younger pupils and discrete teaching for older pupils. The resources available for the subject are very good and are particularly well used by pupils between the age of 11 and 16 years.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

134. French is being introduced into the school as a new subject for pupils aged 11 to 14 years in the first instance, extending to include older and some younger pupils in the near future. As French is currently taught to 3 classes, only a few lessons were seen during the inspection.
135. Pupils make satisfactory progress in French, bearing in mind that is a relatively new subject to them. The enthusiasm of the specialist teacher, whom the pupils respect for her good subject knowledge and command of the language, holds their interest in the subject. Lessons are made enjoyable by the use of games to reinforce the vocabulary and by the established routine of ending each lesson with drinks and things to eat, to promote conversation. Most pupils are happy to engage in spoken use of the language, though the opportunities for them to do so in lessons are too limited, with the major emphasis being on recognising and reading vocabulary from cards and games.
136. The teaching of French is generally satisfactory, sometimes good, but in some instances where the activities provided in a lesson fail to hold and maintain the full interest of the pupils, is less than satisfactory. Most lessons, however, are planned satisfactorily, with a range of different activities to maintain pace and actively involve the pupils. The most successful lessons seen were those where the topic was of interest to teenage pupils, such as buying tickets for sporting events or planning items to take on a camping trip.
137. Most pupils enjoy their modern foreign language lessons and are not shy about speaking in French. They engage happily in the activities and offer French words readily in question and answer sessions or games.
138. French lessons are based upon a satisfactory scheme of work that includes the topics already being provided for some pupils, along with others planned for older and younger pupils when the subject is expanded next year. There is satisfactory provision at the end of each topic to assess how well it has contributed to the pupils' learning, and pupils' achievements are satisfactorily reported to parents in their annual reports. The topics in the scheme of work, however, are not generally planned in sufficient detail, and are variable in their interest level for teenage pupils.

139. The resources available for teaching the subject are unsatisfactory, though the teacher has worked hard to provide home-made materials such as games to encourage pupils to practice their French vocabulary.

MUSIC

140. Pupils' achievements are always good, often very good and sometimes excellent as a result of consistently good teaching across the school, mostly by a specialist teacher. It is clear from the lessons observed and teachers' records that pupils make consistently good progress in learning to listen carefully, singing and in playing instruments during the very engaging and motivating lessons that teachers plan. The fact that these lessons often also involve drama and dance makes them particularly effective in increasing pupils' ability to express themselves confidently and raising their self esteem.
141. Pupils enjoy a wide range of activities that encourage them to pay close attention to a good variety of musical forms in thoughtfully presented activities. During the inspection, pupils were rehearsing for performances of West Side Story in the primary school and The Blues Brothers in the secondary school. Their enthusiasm and commitment was impressive and it was clear that many individual pupils were excelling. One boy in Year 6 sang a solo that was moving in its intensity and very impressive in its perfect pitch and tone. This was not, however, an isolated example and many pupils demonstrated their high quality singing skills, both as individuals and in groups. When combined with actions or dance it was possible to see them progressing towards the outstanding performances that were evident in videos of earlier productions of Cats and Grease. Pupils clearly understand about taking turns and higher attainers are able to make creative suggestions for sound patterns, rhythms and ways of improving the class's performance. Lower attaining pupils are enabled through sensitive and encouraging support from teachers and LSAs to make significant contributions that are appreciated by the whole group. In a lesson that brought the Year 6 class and the PMLD group together, there were many examples of pupils exceeding staff expectations. One of the more startling examples saw a girl who could barely walk, stand up and dance by 'act of will', because the teacher encouraged her in such a way that it was assumed she would. All of these individual achievements were watched and listened to respectfully by the whole group and always celebrated as a valid recognition of individual achievements. As in so many other lessons observed, pupils were proving the co-ordinators' philosophy that music is "life enhancing and affirming in its effect".
142. Music is well used around the school to develop pupils' attention and listening skills and reinforce their learning in other subjects, such as literacy and numeracy. Signing is also used successfully to reinforce pupils' understanding of the songs they are singing. Music makes an important contribution to the development of pupils' cultural awareness through the wide-ranging activities that they experience. A recent visit by Ghanaian drummers introduced pupils to a new and exciting experience that lead to a

successful performance and has since informed their ability to recognise, reproduce and extend rhythms in their work. The work done with secondary pupils is motivating and relevant to their interests, extending as it does their understanding and appreciation of an eclectic range of musical styles. Attendance at courses by both co-ordinators has developed their expertise further to explore the therapeutic value of music to all pupils, but most especially those with more complex needs.

143. The co-ordinators work very effectively together in planning for and developing the potential of music across the school. They are ambitious in their plans to extend the curriculum and develop more informative assessment and recording strategies. Resources for the subject are good and will improve further as the result of carefully planned developments.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

144. Overall, pupils' achievements and progress in physical education are very good. Their very good gains in learning are the direct result of careful planning and very good teaching. Pupils enjoy their lessons, work with solid effort and demonstrate real pleasure in their achievements and the progress that they make. Teachers' high expectations, constant praise and confirmation of standards achieved contribute significantly to pupils' pleasure and feelings of success.
145. Younger pupils learn the basic skills of throwing and rolling balls towards targets and begin to use these skills in simple games such as skittles. They improve in their ability to kick and stop a ball and, through practice in running and stopping with control, use these skills in mini ball games. Controlled running is developed into an ability to run in between posts and an increasing knowledge of their body enables them to stretch and curl in a controlled manner.
146. Between the ages of 7 years and 11 years, pupils continue to make progress as they become more aware of team play, including dodging, passing and shooting. They understand the value of correct arm and leg action when swimming and in gymnastic lessons progress from moving and balancing on mats to performing the same actions off the ground, such as when balancing on benches. Their listening skills help them to string simple sequences of movement together and during athletics lessons, they are introduced to sprinting and running longer distances. They know of the need to warm up and cool down and are introduced to safe practices, both in the hall and when outside.
147. Between the ages of 11 years and 14 years, pupils use previously acquired skills to develop the higher level skills required for participation in a wider range of activities. They play cricket, football and hockey and are developing the throwing, jumping and running skills that are necessary for successful

participation in athletic activities. Despite an understandable wish to 'play the game' or take part in races, older pupils understand and accept the need to warm up and for pre-activity practice. Because of very good teaching, involving clear instructions and the use of models of good practice, they are happy to practice throwing, catching and fielding skills before a rounders game. Pupils were equally responsive to the teacher's very precise instructions about how to hold a bamboo javelin and perform correct throwing actions before throwing for distance with the real javelin. The safe practice culture, which runs through all physical education lessons, was clearly demonstrated during this lesson. During swimming, pupils continue to make very good progress at their own pace, with the most able swimmers accepting the need to focus on correct breathing, improved stroke skills and the building of stamina.

148. Older pupils continue to make very good progress. They show that they can use previously acquired skills in games, which make demands of their understanding of positional play and whole game strategies, while their body control, running, throwing and catching skills are used in a wider range of athletics activities. During an athletics lesson, the teacher's very carefully graded series of instructions enabled one group of pupils to make clear progress in their shot putting skills. Equally structured guidance resulted in pupils with more complex learning difficulties not only developing good sprint starts and sprint running skills, but also had them show real pleasure in the success of the one pupil who was a much better walker than runner. The pupil in question demonstrated that she knew that she had performed well and would have been happy to practice sprinting for the whole lesson. Pupils with more severe learning and physical difficulties also make good progress as they gain more confidence and learn to float on their front and back and allow water to be splashed on their faces. Throughout the school, teachers and LSAs work excellently together. Such collaboration has a very positive effect on pupils' learning and enjoyment and was clearly demonstrated during small group work in rounder skills practice in one instance and during discuss throwing practice in another.
149. Physical education is very well managed. The very carefully planned scheme of work provides a series of structured activities which reflect National Curriculum guidelines and ensures that all pupils have equal opportunity to participate and achieve maximum success. Pupils' achievements are very well recorded, providing a good basis for making judgements about pupils' progress over time. Additionally, the school participates successfully in a range of inter-school games, swimming and athletics competitions and plays a significant part in the organising of the latter. Overall, resources for the subject are good in quantity and are well deployed. Very good use is made of the outdoor facilities but the two multi-purpose halls are too small, in particular for the range of activities that are part of the scheme of work for pupils between the ages of 11 years and 16 years.

POST-16 PROVISION

150. Post-sixteen students enjoy the benefits of a very well-planned curriculum which is broad, well-balanced and very relevant to their needs and interests, particularly in the practical nature of the courses provided in subjects such as literacy and numeracy.
151. There is a wide range of attainment among the students and this is reflected in the organisation of the course, which is mostly divided between provision for two groups, one of higher and one of lower attainment, working for accreditation in the 'ASDAN Bronze' and 'Towards Independence' schemes respectively. Students of both groups are, however, brought together for various activities, both social and academic, and there is a clear community spirit at work in the Further Education suite.
152. The achievements of both groups are good, both in their personal and social development and in the academic side of their courses. The flexibility of the curriculum enables a very wide range of activities to be pursued and the levels of students' interest and commitment are very high as a result. One higher attaining student talked very enthusiastically about the work in her 'Bronze Award' folder and was particularly keen to share her enjoyment of her work experience and her work for 'Team Enterprise', in which students run their own business, making and selling mirrors, bracelets and telephone pads. There is also evidence in this group's folders of visits to various venues and workplaces in the wider community, such as a Magistrate's Court and an Art Gallery. Their written reports on these and other activities provide evidence of very good progress in their literacy skills. Their work on the Current Affairs module, for example, shows good understanding of a range of issues culled from newspapers and a growing ability to read for information and research purposes.
153. Students on the 'Towards Independence' course are also studying a good range of subjects, which promote their independence skills and prepare them well for future educational or employment options. They look at sports and leisure facilities in the community, for example, study aspects of home management and learn to recognise an increasing number of social signs. One student with autism has clearly made good progress in his ability to carry out simple domestic tasks, such as making tea. This student was one of two with autism in the lower attaining group that was observed on a link course at a local College of Further Education. This was an art lesson, taken by one of the College's lecturers. The attitudes of both autistic students in this session indicated the very good progress they have made, in the way that they co-operated in the activity, responded to the help they were given and worked well to complete the task. The work of LSAs with these two students, both in this session and in the school, is very effective. They have a very good knowledge of the needs of the students and show high levels of expertise in addressing them. They have a clear idea of the ways in which progress can be made, for example, in the students' use of a growing number of symbols, and through their preference for particular activities, and are very adept at managing the students' behaviour and avoiding confrontation with them. The

session at the College also provided evidence of the value of the link-courses for other students in the group. Two students will be attending the College in the next academic year and they talked confidently about what they would be doing, clearly at home in the College environment and with College staff with whom they had already begun to form a useful relationship.

154. There is good specialist teaching, for example, in physical education and science, at the school for both groups, but in some areas of the curriculum for the lower-attaining students, teaching is less effective. The pace of these lessons is slow. There is an excessive reliance by the teacher on talk as the medium of instruction, which is often rapid with inadequate opportunities for the reinforcement or monitoring of students' understanding, and planning does not include sufficient provision for small steps in the learning process. As a result, students are not always clear about the purpose of the activity and show very limited levels of response and independence in their learning.
155. Co-ordination of the Post-16 provision is very effective. Detailed planning supports a rich and varied curriculum and the deployment of staffing and resources is managed very efficiently.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

156. Religious education is firmly established in the life of the school and makes a significant contribution to the spiritual development of pupils. As a result, pupils achievements are good.
157. By the age of seven, pupils are aware of the importance of festivals in the major religions and understand the significance of events such as Christmas and Divali. Good work is also done on the importance of religious symbols, such as the crucifix to Christians and the Koran to Muslims. By eleven, pupils knowledge of religions is further developed to enable them to have real insight into the practices of a range of faiths such as the painting of hands in the Hindu religion. Secondary pupils continue work on religions with Years 10 and 11 pupils understanding the importance of ritual washing in Islam and also considering more complex moral issues. Year 9 pupils, for example, use drama to consider how pupils should behave towards each other.
158. The quality teaching is good overall, with excellent teaching being seen in the Year 6 group. Lessons are planned to take careful account of pupils' previous knowledge and ability. Good use is made of artefacts, such as an Islamic headdress or a prayer mat, to enable pupils to gain insight into and an understanding of the major religions. The use of books from literacy lessons and the telling of stories means that pupils have knowledge and understanding of the bible and other stories. This also provides opportunities for pupils to practice the skills learnt in literacy lessons.
159. Pupils take a pride in their work and enjoy the variety of approaches that teachers use. Year 8 pupils, for example, enjoyed putting on a play and Year 1 pupils concentrated well in cutting out religious symbols. The excellent teaching of the Year 6 group, made possible by the strength of the

relationships between teacher and pupils, resulted in a caring and supportive environment in which pupils showed respect and understanding of the Hindu faith. Lessons, teachers' planning and displayed work show that teachers provide a balanced religious education based on good subject knowledge.

160. Religious education also provides opportunities for pupils to consider wider issues. A particularly striking example of this is the display of 'blessings' in the primary department, which give pupils the opportunity to consider issues such as their family and their health. Similarly, strong links have been established with school assemblies. A well-planned programme also gives pupils the opportunity to consider issues such as working together and important landmarks in their lives.
161. Subject co-ordination is good. The curriculum is in line with the locally agreed syllabus. Standards are monitored effectively through the establishment of pupils' portfolios of work and by looking at teachers' planning.
162. Since the school opened, religious education has been well developed. Consideration now needs to be given to strengthening links with the wider religious community.