

INSPECTION REPORT

RIDGEWAY SCHOOL

Kempston, Bedfordshire

LEA area: Bedfordshire

Unique reference number: 109742

Headteacher: Mr G Allard

Reporting inspector: Ms S Aldridge
8810

Dates of inspection: 10th – 13th March, 2003

Inspection number: 249337

Full inspection carried out under Section 10 of the School Inspections Act 1996

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INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Type of school:	Special
School category:	Physical difficulties
Age range of pupils:	2 to 19 years
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	Hill Rise Kempston Bedfordshire
Postcode:	MK42 7EB
Telephone number:	01234 402402
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Appropriate authority:	The governing body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs E Swaisland
Date of previous inspection:	June, 1997

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
8810	Ms S Aldridge	Registered inspector	Modern foreign languages, music, citizenship, educational inclusion, including race equality	What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' and students' achievements How well are pupils and students' taught? What should the school do to improve further?
12289	Ms S Burgess	Lay inspector		Pupils' and students' attitudes, values and personal development. How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
2512	Mr B Emery	Team inspector	Mathematics, art and design, religious education	How well is the school led and managed?
18354	Mrs R Onions	Team inspector	Information and communication technology, design and technology, special educational needs, Foundation Stage	How well does the school care for its pupils and students?
19996	Mr G Watson	Team inspector	English, geography, history, English as an additional language	How good are the curricular and other opportunities offered to pupils and students?
17907	Mr M Bowers	Team inspector	Science, physical education	

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

Ridgeway is a mixed, day, community special school that caters for 74 pupils and students aged from two to nineteen years of age. Most pupils and students have statements of special educational needs; a few, who attend the nursery, are undergoing formal assessment. Most pupils and students have physical difficulties; a very small number have visual impairment or severe learning difficulties. Attainment on entry to the school varies widely; for most it is low. Four out of five pupils and students are white; of the remainder, most are of Asian origin, and a few are of mixed race. Eight pupils and students are from homes where English is a second language, and two of these are at an early stage of language acquisition. The proportion of pupils and students eligible for free school meals is relatively low. The school has a wide range of links with mainstream schools and colleges. Academically able pupils and students in Year 9 and above attend some English, drama, mathematics and science classes in a nearby mainstream upper school; several younger pupils attend for part of the week at their neighbourhood schools.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

Ridgeway is a good school. Pupils and students achieve well, because they have such positive attitudes to school and to their work and because teaching is good. Behaviour is very good. The school is well led and managed, and it provides good value for money.

What the school does well

- Pupils and students achieve very well in communication, including speaking and listening; achievement in physical education is also very good.
- Excellent relationships between all members of the school's community create a most effective climate for learning.
- Pupils and students have tremendous enthusiasm for school, very positive attitudes to their work and their behaviour is very good.
- Children in the nursery make very good progress.
- Good leadership by the headteacher promotes strong teamwork between staff and other professionals.
- Very good arrangements for promoting personal development help pupils and students to mature into independent and personable young people.
- There are high standards of personal care and welfare.

What could be improved

- The range of accreditation in Years 10 to 13.
- Tracking of pupils' and students' progress is not possible where vague targets are set in individual education plans, and where teachers do not keep ongoing records of pupils' and students' achievements; the lack of records is also reflected in progress reports that are unclear about pupils' and students' attainments, and lack targets for the future.
- Pupils and students do not benefit as much as they should when they are taught in a few mainstream classes.

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 last inspection was in June 1997. Since then, there has been good improvement. Curriculum planning has been further developed, and monitoring of the curriculum is now carried out well. A common system of assessment has been developed. The curriculum for students over sixteen has improved, and this is enriched well by links with local colleges. Pupils and students with severe communication

difficulties now have full access to the curriculum. Toilet facilities have been much improved, and overall accommodation has been increased to provide some specialist areas. The school has extended its links with the local community, and increased opportunities for extra-curricular activities. The capacity for continued improvement is good.

STANDARDS

The table summarises inspectors' judgements about how well pupils and students achieve in relation to their individual targets.

Progress in:	by Year R	by Year 1	by Year 6	by Year 9	by Year 11	by Year 13	Key
speaking and listening	A	A	A	A	A	A	very good A
reading	A	B	B	B	B	B	good B
writing	A	B	B	B	B	B	satisfactory C
mathematics	A	B	B	B	C	B	unsatisfactory D
personal, social and health education	A	B	B	B	B	B	poor E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	A	B	B	B	B	B	

* IEPs are individual education plans for pupils and students with special educational needs. These judgements apply only to IEP targets that are specific and measurable.

Although the school has not set whole-school targets for raising achievement, it has assessed levels of achievement in all subjects and predicted the levels that pupils and students are expected to reach by the end of this academic year. As yet, there is no indication of whether pupils and students are likely to achieve the targets set, as tracking of progress is at an early stage. Children in the nursery achieve very well overall. Pupils' and students' achievements in communication and physical education are very good. Overall, pupils and students achieve well in English, mathematics, science and personal, social and health education. Achievement in all other subjects is at least good. Students over sixteen achieve well. In mathematics, achievement of higher attaining pupils and students in Years 10 and 11 is satisfactory. In science, higher attainers in Year 11 do not achieve as well as other pupils and students. Otherwise, good support ensures that all pupils and students achieve equally well, irrespective of their special needs, gender, ethnic group or mother tongue.

PUPILS' AND STUDENTS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Very good. Pupils and students show great interest in tasks they are set; they do their best and try hard to succeed. Those who need adult support co-operate well with those who provide this. Pupils and students are pleasant and welcoming to visitors, treating them as guests in their home.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Very good. Pupils and students behave very well in lessons, around the school and when they have lessons in other schools. Bullying is not a feature of the school, and exclusions are low.
Personal development and relationships	Very good. Pupils and students are pleased to take responsibility, and the school council has a stake in the running of the school. Mutual respect and caring attitudes contribute to the excellent relationships within the school community.

Attendance	Satisfactory. Most absences are the result of illness, some of this associated with pupils' and students' medical conditions. Punctuality is occasionally adversely affected by transport difficulties.
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TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils and students in:	Nursery and Reception	Years 1 – 6	Years 7 – 11	Years 12 – 13
Quality of teaching	Very good	Good	Good	Good

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

Particular strengths of teaching include the management of pupils and students; there is clear mutual respect, which creates a good learning partnership. Support staff make a most important contribution to teaching, by taking individuals, small groups or whole classes for lessons. Staff know pupils and students well and use their knowledge to plan challenging tasks for those of all abilities. However, they rarely identify different learning outcomes, so differences in attainment are not always recorded. Lessons usually proceed at a good pace, and teachers use resources and activities that appeal to pupils and students. Pupils and students are very well motivated, and they make a great effort in lessons, persevering to complete tasks, and trying hard to do their very best. Where they can, they work independently. Teachers' expectations are generally high. There are good opportunities for pupils and students to acquire literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology skills across the curriculum. A few teachers regularly set homework; opportunities for homework are inconsistent but satisfactory overall. A small number of unsatisfactory or poor lessons were seen when pupils and students attended drama and mathematics classes in mainstream; in these instances, some tasks were not challenging, or disaffected mainstream pupils and students disrupted lessons, so little learning took place.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	Good. A very good range of learning experiences is provided for children in the nursery. There are good arrangements for teaching literacy and numeracy across the curriculum. For pupils and students in Years 10 and 11, there are no vocational courses; this reduces the relevance of the curriculum at this stage. Relationships with mainstream schools provide some good social opportunities, but Ridgeway pupils and students do not always benefit academically as disruption reduces learning.
Provision for pupils and students with English as an additional language	Good. The very good provision for helping pupils and students to develop their communication skills ensures that these pupils and students quickly develop an understanding of the English language. There is also good support from a bilingual assistant.
Provision for pupils' and students' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Very good overall. The arrangements for promoting pupils' and students' moral and social awareness are very good. Although not as well developed, opportunities to acquire spiritual and cultural awareness are good.
How well the school cares for its pupils and students	There are very good arrangements to secure pupils' and students' welfare, including very well-developed procedures for child protection and most effective measures to promote good behaviour and prevent bullying. There are good strategies for checking on pupils' and students' personal development. Additional support needs, mentioned in pupils' and students' statements, are provided for well. Assessment arrangements are satisfactory; staff know pupils and students very well, and what levels they have reached in all subjects. However, new teachers would find it difficult to take over and plan suitable work straight away in those subjects where ongoing records are not kept. Annual reviews keep a

	thorough check on pupils' and students' progress.
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HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	The headteacher provides good leadership, and so do many senior staff and subject managers. Teamwork between school staff and health professionals based in the school is promoted well, so that everyone's energies are devoted to ensuring that pupils and students achieve as well as they can. Statutory requirements are met.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Satisfactory. Governors are very supportive and have many relevant skills between them. They carry out most of their statutory responsibilities well. They have suitable procedures in place for keeping the school's work under review, but their role in shaping the direction of the school is at an early stage of development. The recent governors' annual report to parents omitted several pieces of information required by law, and this needs to be rectified.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Satisfactory. Evaluation of the effectiveness of teaching and the curriculum through systematic analysis of achievements is at an early stage. The school improvement plan does not include arrangements for evaluating the impact of planned developments.
The strategic use of resources	Good. The skills of support staff are employed very well, and training opportunities for staff are good; all the possible sources of funding are exploited to support continued improvement in staff skills, curricular provision and the accommodation. The headteacher has increased the levels of support staff to meet the increasingly complex needs of pupils and students. This strains the budget, and there was a small overspend last financial year; this year a small contingency is planned.

Staffing levels are good, as are staff skills generally. There is a need for further training to give support staff the necessary skills to use information and communication technology. Learning resources are satisfactory; although they are good in most subjects, there are insufficient resources in science. The accommodation is satisfactory overall. The science room is not properly equipped for teaching examination courses, so pupils and students who are capable of taking examinations need to attend other schools for this. The room for art and design and design and technology is too small for whole-class groups, and there is no outdoor play area for the nursery as required. The principles of best value are applied in a satisfactory manner.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

What pleases parents most	What parents would like to see improved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Their children like school • They find staff approachable • The school is well led and managed • Teaching is good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A few feel that children do not get the right amount of homework • A few do not feel the school helps pupils and students to become mature and responsible • A few do not feel that there is an interesting range of activities outside lessons.

Inspectors agree with parents' positive views of the school. They find that homework is satisfactory, extra-curricular opportunities are good, and that the school is very successful in encouraging pupils' and students' independence and maturity.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' and students' achievements

1. Pupils and students achieve well. This is an improvement since the last inspection, when pupils' and students' progress was described as satisfactory overall. Improvements in the curriculum, assessment procedures, and in the quality of teaching since then have resulted in pupils and students making good progress. The positive attitudes that pupils and students have towards school and their work is also a significant contributory factor to good achievement.
2. There are no differences in the progress made by boys and girls, pupils of different ethnic backgrounds or those with additional special educational needs. However, for higher attaining pupils in Year 11, achievements in science and mathematics are restricted by their attendance in some mainstream classes, although their achievement is satisfactory overall.
3. The school is at an early stage of setting targets in order to raise achievement. It does not set whole-school targets, but predicts what levels each pupil or student will reach by the end of the academic year. The procedure was started last summer, and tracking has recently started, so there is insufficient information to tell whether each pupil will reach the level predicted for each subject. Tracking is difficult where teachers do not keep ongoing records showing pupils' attainments.
4. The link with an adjacent upper school (13-18) has enabled a small number of higher attaining pupils in Year 11 to enter GCSE (General Certificate of Secondary Education) courses; last summer, passes were obtained in English, mathematics and science. For students over sixteen, there is now a discrete curriculum that builds well on their experiences up to Year 11; the relevance of their curriculum is much better now, and they work towards an externally accredited course. However, this course does not adequately assess the achievements of the more able students; for example, it does not accredit key skills, so higher attainers leave school without their achievements being externally recognised.
5. Children at the Foundation Stage achieve very well overall. They achieve particularly well in communication, mathematical learning, and personal and social development. Very good achievement in these areas is linked to the quality of teaching. Children achieve well in creative development, where teaching is good. In knowledge and understanding of the world and physical development, although teaching is very good, the lack of a suitable outdoor playing area restricts the range of learning experiences that can be provided, and this limits children's learning and achievement.
6. Across the school, achievement in communication, including speaking and listening, is very good. This is a significant improvement since the last inspection, when achievement was satisfactory. High achievement in this important skill is linked to particularly good use of new technology to assist those pupils who have little or no speech. The school has worked hard to build up staff expertise in the use of communication aids, and it strives to keep up-to-date with developments in this field. The introduction of the National Literacy Strategy across the whole school, the recent Key Stage 3 Strategy, and good opportunities for pupils to reinforce their literacy skills in subjects other than English have helped to improve achievement in reading and writing skills. Pupils now achieve well in these aspects, and overall achievement in English is good. At Post-16, literacy skills are planned well as part of relevant projects,

and students make good progress in developing these skills in a variety of vocational and real-life contexts.

7. In physical education, pupils and students achieve very well. This is linked to the quality of teaching, and to the broad range of learning opportunities provided.
8. In mathematics, achievement is good overall; it is good in Years 1 to 9, satisfactory in Years 10 and 11 and good at Post-16. Good achievement is linked to the quality of teaching, much improved since the introduction of the National Numeracy Strategy, which has been implemented up to Year 11, and the implementation of the Key Stage 3 Strategy. However, in Years 10 and 11, work set does not build well on pupils' prior attainments; there is much revisiting of topics previously covered, and limited use of the prescribed content of the curriculum at this stage. As a result, higher attaining pupils are not always set challenging enough work. A few, who attend some classes in mainstream, derive little benefit from these sessions.
9. In science, although pupils' achievements are good overall, they vary across the school. In Years 1 to 6, achievement is good, as it is in Years 10 and 11, where teaching is generally good. In Years 7 to 9, achievement is satisfactory; here teaching is satisfactory. A small number of pupils in Year 9 and Year 11, who attend lessons in mainstream classes, do not always learn enough in the lessons, and this limits their achievement over time. Lessons in mainstream are occasionally disrupted by disaffected pupils, and tasks do not always challenge pupils well enough.
10. Achievement is good in art and design, citizenship, design and technology, humanities (history and geography), information and communication technology (ICT), French, music, religious education, and personal, social and health education. Good achievement in these subjects is the result of skilled teaching and the good range of learning opportunities provided.

Pupils' and students' attitudes, values and personal development

11. Pupils' and students' attitudes to learning, and to school as a whole, are very good. This is an improvement since the last inspection when they were judged to be good. All the parents who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire confirmed that their children like school, and the school's website reveals extremely positive attitudes from pupils and students both past and present. Pupils interviewed during the inspection were particularly enthusiastic about the day and residential trips they had been on.
12. Pupils and students are interested in their work, enjoy practical tasks and, with appropriate support, sustain their concentration during lessons. They are supportive of each other when working in groups or pairs. For example, pupils collaborated well to create supportive balances in physical education, showed good teamwork creating storm sound effects in a drama lesson, and co-operated with each other when sowing seeds for a science study. Pupils and students also work well independently when opportunities are offered, such as when preparing food in design and technology lessons or using computers at a local college to create travel dossiers.
13. Behaviour during lessons, in assemblies and around the school is very good. There was one fixed-term exclusion last year. Pupils and students are polite and confident with adults; they are happy to talk about their work and general experiences of school life. Relationships between staff and pupils and between pupils themselves are excellent. As at the time of the last inspection, the overall quality of relationships is a strength of the school.

14. Personal development is very good and is enhanced by the increased responsibilities that pupils undertake as they progress through the school. Pupils and students willingly help with small errands and offer general practical help, such as tidying the hall after assembly, pushing wheelchairs if necessary and escorting or playing with younger or less mobile pupils. The well-established school council offers primary and secondary age pupils and students the opportunity to make decisions affecting school life, including the very practical idea of reducing the size of the roundabout at the main entrance to make arrivals and departures easier and safer. Personal development is also enhanced by participation in a good range of extra-curricular activities, by interesting educational trips, and by the diversity of visitors invited into school to complement the curriculum.
15. Post-16 students look forward to their day a week at a local college, which prepares them well for the next stage of their education. However, pupils attending mainstream classes do not always have an equally positive experience, as their lessons are occasionally disrupted by disaffected mainstream pupils.
16. Attendance, at 89.8 per cent, is satisfactory. Unauthorised absence is almost non-existent. Illness or long-standing medical problems account for most of the authorised absence. Punctuality is generally good and the arranged transport gets pupils and students to school in good time for the start of the day, except when there are local traffic problems. Registration sessions are orderly and efficient.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS OR STUDENTS TAUGHT?

17. When pupils are taught on the Ridgeway site, teaching is generally good. Inspectors saw no unsatisfactory teaching in the 63 observations here. One of the greatest strengths in teaching is the existence of very good relationships between pupils, students and adults in the school, and between pupils and students themselves. On many occasions, the quality of relationships helped to promote learning. For example, adults encouraged greater effort on the part of pupils and students and valued their responses; this gave them the confidence they needed to participate or contribute. Because relationships are so good, teachers are able to use humour, and to make learning fun, without the flow of lessons being interrupted. In an English lesson in Years 10 and 11, where pupils were using new technology to increase their communication skills, pupils respected the efforts of others, falling silent in order to give their classmates time to respond by using their communication aids. In several lessons, more able pupils gave assistance to their less able peers. For example, in a music lesson, one pupil showed initiative by helping a profoundly disabled classmate to hold a set of bells, so that he could experience shaking these in time to the music. The existence of mutual respect helps to create a partnership in learning. Pupils and students are receptive to adults' wishes and preferences; in this way, adults' enthusiasm for their subjects becomes contagious. This was particularly noticeable in music and physical education. In drama, spontaneous applause showed that pupils genuinely appreciated one another's efforts, and this spurred pupils on.
18. Effective teamwork between teachers and support staff is also a strength. Many examples were seen of them working well in partnership with teaching staff to ensure that pupils and students were all included equally well in lessons, or to make sure that lessons were not interrupted. For example, as pupils arrived in the mornings, support staff took care of practical matters, encouraging pupils to be independent, whilst teachers got on with the planned activities or routines. During lessons, support staff discreetly recorded words or phrases onto 'talkers', so that pupils could later press the switches at the appropriate moment, and thus join in by making a response. In

other instances, support staff worked hard to get the young people to indicate their response by pointing with their eyes at the adult's right or left hand; the right hand was used to indicate a 'yes' response, the left a 'no'. Support staff often did this discreetly, then interjected to tell the teacher what the pupil or student has just indicated.

19. When pupils need to be transferred between wheelchairs and standing frames, this is carried out with quiet efficiency by support staff, and the lesson continues uninterrupted. The skills of a bilingual assistant are used well, and teachers consult her during lessons to ensure that pupils for whom English is an additional language understand what is said.
20. Support staff also make a significant contribution to the direct teaching of pupils and students when they take whole classes, groups or individual pupils for lessons. For example, a member of the support staff, who is qualified to teach art and design to adults, teaches art and design well to secondary pupils. Personal, social and health education lessons are taught by members of the support staff too, and their teaching is also good.
21. Teachers plan well to meet the different needs of pupils. There is good use of specialist resources, such as enlargers and braille for visually impaired pupils, and sensory methods for pupils whose learning difficulties are more pronounced. Teachers know the pupils and students, and their individual skills and abilities very well, and use this information well to plan their lessons. Most rely quite heavily on human support as the means of ensuring that all pupils are included equally well, and a few occasionally vary the tasks that they set for pupils of different abilities. A very good example of planning for different abilities was seen in a mathematics lesson, where the teacher set more challenging tasks for the more able pupils, and grouped pupils by ability for a section of the lesson. She also asked more challenging questions of pupils who were more skilled. This worked well; pupils who were capable of getting on independently were able to forge ahead, those who needed support were provided with this, and all made very good progress. The teacher carefully monitored the progress of all pupils during the lesson, then brought them together, to go over their work orally. In this plenary session, the teacher provided good opportunities for consolidation, and pupils were able to learn from one another and from their own mistakes.
22. However, teachers rely too much on their thorough knowledge of the pupils. The school has not yet implemented recent guidance on planning by identifying different learning outcomes for pupils of different abilities. This means that differences in attainment levels, although noticed by staff, are not consistently recorded by all staff, making it difficult for a substitute or new teacher to plan the next steps in learning.
23. Staff provide good opportunities for pupils and students to acquire and consolidate their literacy, numeracy and ICT skills across the curriculum. All plans show the key vocabulary to be used and emphasised during lessons, and staff introduce new words carefully. In a music lesson, the teacher encouraged pupils to 'watch my mouth', as she said the word 'percussion'; this helped verbal pupils to articulate the word correctly. In many lessons, there are good opportunities for discussion, and all pupils are enabled to contribute, some through the effective use of new technology. Good reading opportunities are provided outside English lessons; pupils were seen reading instructions in design and technology, for example. At Post-16, good opportunities for extending and consolidating skills are planned into relevant tasks that appeal to students. For example, as part of an evaluation of different types of potato foods, students were setting oven temperatures, noting cooking times and calculating the cost per 100 grams of food. In a citizenship lesson, where biscuits were being

made for sale, to raise funds for charity, pupils were grading the biscuits on a ten point scale. In science, pupils calculated the waterproofing co-efficient of different materials; in a French lesson, pupils were encouraged to 'remember your three times table', when working out how many cards each should be given out of the twelve available. Computers are used to help pupils present their work well and to help the higher attainers research for information in subjects like history and geography. Interactive software is used in French and, in music, electronic keyboards help pupils to compose their own pieces.

24. Of the nine lessons seen in other schools or at college, five were good, one satisfactory, two unsatisfactory and one poor. Several key strengths include subject expertise, and the effective use of resources and equipment not available at the Ridgeway site. Weaknesses observed included the provision of activities that were not challenging enough, and disruption to lessons by disaffected mainstream pupils. In the poor lesson, the teacher had not prepared pupils adequately for a task that required improvisation in drama; this resulted in poorly motivated mainstream pupils who disrupted the lesson. In weak lessons, support staff from Ridgeway did their utmost to help the Ridgeway pupils make progress, but they could not make up for the deficiencies in the lessons, and too little learning took place.

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

25. The school provides a good range of learning opportunities, and the way in which it has strengthened the curriculum demonstrates a positive response to the findings of the last inspection. Statutory requirements are fully met. Subject policies and schemes of work are generally good and contain the necessary detail to ensure that pupils build upon what they already know, understand and can do, and that they do not repeat activities unnecessarily as they grow up and progress through the school. The school day is a little short when compared with national guidelines, but this does not have an adverse effect on pupils' learning. The provision for children below statutory school age is good and accords well with guidelines for the Foundation Stage, and there is satisfactory, separate provision for students at Post-16 that reflects their development as young adults.
26. There is an adequate range of relevant, accredited academic courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11, and the basic skills of literacy, numeracy and ICT are addressed well throughout the school, particularly in the key area of communication. The way in which both verbal and non-verbal children, pupils and students are successfully helped to access the curriculum demonstrates a strong commitment to equality of opportunity within the school, and ensures that pupils for whom English is an additional language are able to achieve as well as their peers. Access to GCSE, though, is limited to those pupils who are able to cope with the demands of attending lessons at a neighbouring secondary school; furthermore, there are no vocational courses for pupils in Years 10 and 11. As a result, the school misses opportunities to accredit the pupils' vocational core skills, such as communication, application of number and ICT. The accredited course for Post-16 students does not recognise the achievements of the most able at a high enough level.
27. The school has worked hard to establish a good range of links with local mainstream schools in the community that allow individual pupils the opportunity to be included in classes alongside their peers. However, some of these opportunities are of little benefit to Ridgeway pupils. Teachers in these schools are sometimes remote and do not interact with the visiting pupil; as a result, the pupil is marginalised within the class

and a considerable burden is placed upon the accompanying support assistant. There is sometimes unacceptable behaviour in classes; as a result, some Ridgeway pupils are angry at the way in which their lessons are disrupted, and others become sufficiently distressed for the placement to be terminated. On occasion, there is insufficient communication between Ridgeway and the host school; as a result, opportunities to reinforce the pupils' learning are lost. In addition, the school has difficulty ensuring that individual pupils do not miss out on activities at Ridgeway as a result of attending the mainstream classes. The school is aware of these weaknesses and is carefully considering the value of these placements.

28. The curriculum is modified well to take account of pupils' and students' different needs. For example, there is mobility training for pupils who have visual impairment and additional sessions for pupils who have communication difficulties instead of French.
29. There is a good scheme of work for personal, social and health education, which is reinforced by good quality programmes for citizenship, sex education and drugs education. These are adapted effectively to individual pupils' circumstances, and considerable work is undertaken to help pupils explore their personal qualities and raise their self-esteem, with the result that the majority of pupils and students leave school as responsible young adults with a good-humoured, positive outlook on life. There is satisfactory provision for careers education, and a useful range of courses available at local further education colleges, but the school's work experience programme is generally only available for more able students at Post-16.
30. There is a good range of extra-curricular activities, notably the popular lunchtime opportunities such as the horticulture, ICT and singing clubs, which make a positive contribution to pupils' and students' learning. The school makes good use of local community facilities such as swimming pools, shops and churches, and visits further afield have included museums, art galleries and residential trips to Derbyshire. The school also actively seeks to bring the community into the school, by inviting drama students from a nearby university to work with pupils in Years 4, 5 and 6, for example.
31. Provision for moral development is very good. Staff provide very positive role models and demonstrate good teamwork. In addition to emphasising the difference between right and wrong, the school promotes the message that an individual's behaviour and actions have an impact on others. In December 2002, pupils contributed their thoughts about peace to be displayed in a book under a town centre Christmas tree. Post-16 students have been considering the implications of war with Iraq and the significance of recent topical events. Through personal, social and health education and citizenship lessons, pupils and students are helped to understand and interpret different points of view. The whole school community has been involved in fundraising for charities such as Children in Need, Comic Relief, Jeans for Genes and Marie Curie Cancer Care.
32. Provision for social development is also very good, and has improved significantly since the last inspection. The school works hard to build up pupils' confidence and self-esteem through personal, social and health education lessons, circle times and participation in events such as Bedford's Day of Disabled People at the Town Hall. Pupils and students have many opportunities to take part in extra-curricular activities, regular educational outings and a popular five-day residential trip to Cumbria or Derbyshire. Post-16 students are well prepared for the next stage of their education by vocational link courses arranged at local colleges. All pupils and students benefit from a broad range of visitors into school and a high level of community involvement. For example, recent visitors include police dog handlers, elderly neighbours who

came to play bingo and the Chief Constable of Bedfordshire came to open the new library.

33. Provision for cultural development is good. Pupils are taught about the traditions and artefacts of different faiths and they learn about the styles of famous painters such as Seurat, Van Gogh, Miro and Toulouse Lautrec. Several drama groups and musicians visit the school, enabling pupils and students to appreciate, both their own and other, national cultural heritages.
34. Spiritual development is promoted effectively through religious education, assemblies, lessons in personal, social and health education and, in general, through the life of the school. For example, respect for the beliefs and customs of others is promoted well through the study of aspects of world religions and the tolerance for others that they share in their teachings. One class, for instance, celebrated the Jewish Sukkah as a special place by selecting different fruit and vegetables for a classroom display. Another used emotive images to depict significant life events in a striking three-dimensional display. Music plays a crucial role in whole-school assemblies when familiar songs and hymns provide a rousing start to the day. Class discussions and circle times provide opportunities for reflection and consideration of the wider world.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS AND STUDENTS?

35. The school takes very good care of its pupils and students. A particular strength of this provision is the team approach to ensuring that pupils' physical and intellectual needs are considered together. Therapists work closely with the school nurse and the teachers to plan and implement very effective programmes to improve or maintain pupils' physical and communication skills alongside their programmes of work. This means, for example, that the development of communication skills will be subject to the advice and, where applicable, the direct intervention of the speech and language therapist, but are taught and consolidated by teachers throughout the school day. Similar systems exist for pupils' mobility and physical needs. These systems ensure that all of the adults work very effectively together to the benefit of the pupils.
36. There are very good procedures in place for ensuring the safety and welfare of pupils and students. Child protection procedures are very good, and staff are regularly trained and are fully aware of their responsibilities. Health and safety are well promoted and monitored by the headteacher, governors and site manager. All statutory requirements are met. However, greater care needs to be taken to ensure that written records of risk assessments are more consistently maintained, such as those concerning visits off the school premises, and of lessons in subjects such as design and technology.
37. The procedures for the promotion of attendance are good. Although the school has a higher than average absence rate, this is almost always due to ill health. On very rare occasions, pupils have poor patterns of attendance. When this is the case, prompt and effective action is taken to improve this. A number of pupils arrive late in school due to the late arrival of their transport. The school has recently begun to monitor this more closely in order to have the information that they need to take action to ensure prompt arrival. A small number of parents at the parents' meeting expressed concerns about the quality of the transport provided. The school is vigilant in following up concerns and taking action where necessary. During the inspection, no concerns were observed or reported. Relationships between pupils and transport staff were seen to be good. This is also reported to be the case by pupils on the school council.

38. Procedures to promote good behaviour and to ensure that there is an absence of bullying and racism are very good. This is largely due to the excellent relationships that exist between staff and pupils and students. There is a sensible behaviour policy that underlines the importance of rewarding positive behaviours but also identifies clear strategies for dealing with poor behaviour. Procedures for dealing with pupils who have greater behavioural difficulties are in place, and include the appropriate involvement of external support where necessary. The strategies themselves are good, but it is sometimes the case that individual staff have difficulty in using them and occasional minor disruption of lessons occurs. All adults treat pupils with respect and consideration. Dignity is maintained during routine physical and personal care, and this has been successfully improved since the time of the last inspection.
39. A good range of health and education professionals visit the school and provide the necessary support for pupils who have additional special educational needs, such as sensory impairments. The proximity of the school to a child development centre means that access to professionals is good.
40. All pupils in the school have individual education plans. These plans are well linked to the priorities in pupils' and students' statements of special educational needs but vary in quality and usefulness. Over the last year, the school has changed the way individual education plans are written, in line with the changes advised in the new National Code of Practice. Pupils now have an appropriate number of targets set for them in their plans, but too often these targets are expressed either in vague terms or contain a target that will take a long time to achieve. Where this is the case, it is not possible to say whether the pupil has reached the target or not when individual education plans are reviewed. This means that the progress made by pupils is not easily tracked or measured. There are examples of better quality individual education plans, particularly for the youngest pupils in the school.
41. Assessment is satisfactory. Since the last inspection, the school has developed a policy and procedures, trained staff in the use of these and assessment is monitored by a hard-working co-ordinator. There is a good baseline assessment used in the nursery class; health professionals contribute to this and it provides a good basis for setting individual targets for children. Last summer, the school assessed each pupil's attainment level in every subject, using National Curriculum levels or P-levels¹, as appropriate. This information was used to predict the level that pupils might reach in the summer of this academic year. There is a rolling programme of teachers meeting to discuss work and levels; this increases accuracy of assessment in subjects.
42. In addition to this, at annual reviews of pupils' and students' statements of special educational needs, targets are set in those areas that the school considers to be priorities for each pupil. There is a good match between these targets and the needs outlined in statements. However, targets that subsequently appear on pupils' and students' individual education plans are not always specific and measurable, although most are. This makes assessment of progress difficult. For example, 'continue to develop fine motor skills' was one such target seen. It is not possible to say when such a target has been reached, and so these tend to be described as 'ongoing' when individual education plans are reviewed. In contrast, 'to name numerals one to five, and match them to the correct number of objects', is simple to assess; once achieved, such targets are replaced with more challenging ones, and this helps to promote progress well.

¹ P-levels are a national system of describing attainment that is below National Curriculum Level 1

43. Teachers know their pupils and students very well, and they use this information to plan suitably challenging work. However, they rarely plan different learning outcomes for pupils of different abilities, even though some classes have pupils with a very wide range of abilities. In this respect, the school has not yet taken recent guidance into account. This means that differences in the attainments of higher and lower attainers are not recorded. In music, French, design and technology and ICT, no ongoing records of attainment are kept. Weaknesses in record keeping make it difficult to track progress, and if a new teacher were to take over, planning suitable work would be very difficult. Reports on pupils' progress, sent to parents each year, do not contain sufficient detail on pupils' attainments, or identify areas for improvement; they focus mainly on what has been taught and how pupils have responded to tasks and activities.
44. The school has improved the range of accreditation it offers since the last inspection. However, at Post-16, the accreditation provided does not assess key skills, and some higher attainers are able to demonstrate achievement of these. In Year 11, although there is a range of qualifications for middle and higher attainers, lower attainers do not currently have their achievements externally recognised.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

45. Parents' views of the school are very positive. All those who returned the pre-inspection questionnaire said that their children like school and that the school works closely with parents. Very nearly all felt that they are kept well informed, that their children are making good progress and that the school is well led and managed. A significant minority did not think that their children are given the right amount of homework, although it was not clear whether they felt there was too much or too little.
46. Parents at the pre-inspection meeting were appreciative of the help and support the school offers on practical matters and all agreed they felt well informed. There was praise for the school's willingness to discuss and consider parents' suggestions and general confidence that parents' views are respected.
47. The impact of parents' involvement on the work of the school is good. A few parents help regularly with physical education and swimming sessions and others are very willing to come in if specifically asked to do so. Although the very active Ridgeway School Association concentrates more on social events than fundraising, around £1000 was donated to the school last year. This money went towards items such as transport costs, a visiting theatre group and wheeled toys for the nursery. Almost all parents attend their children's annual review meetings in school. If there are difficulties about coming into school, the headteacher will conduct the meeting at the family's home. There is very good attendance for events such as sports day, to which the annual meeting with governors is linked, and school productions. Most parents are supportive of their children's homework and help with reading, practise spellings and collect items of interest for topic work.
48. The quality and quantity of information for parents is satisfactory. Newsletters are sent out every week. Home-school books are used well as a means of communication and parents appreciate their usefulness. Opportunities are provided in the autumn and summer terms to meet the teachers. The school's high quality website is easy to use, is kept up to date and provides a useful contribution to the overall amount of information for parents and others.
49. However, annual written reports do not consistently contain sufficient information on attainment and progress or provide targets for future progress.

50. The governors' recent annual report to parents does not fully comply with statutory requirements. It omits information about action on any resolutions taken at the last annual meeting, information about the next election of parent governors, a statement on the progress of the OFSTED action plan, information about school security, implementation of the school's special educational needs policy, student destinations and examination results.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

51. Leadership and management of the school have improved since the last inspection and are now good overall. The headteacher provides very clear educational direction for the work of the school. He has established Ridgeway as part of a more inclusive pattern of special educational needs provision in the local education authority; strong links have been set in place with a number of mainstream schools and colleges in the area. He has also led the establishment of an effective senior management team, and the creation of a working environment where teachers and support staff work very well together and feel valued and supported. The headteacher and the senior management team set high standards, and all staff and pupils know that there are effective arrangements in place to support them. The headteacher, through his high profile around the school and the high quality of his teaching, is a very good role model. Very good support is provided for staff through the good induction arrangements, opportunities for staff development and performance management arrangements. Staff report that communication in the school is good and they are confident that concerns and proposals they may have are properly addressed. There has been significant improvement in the quality of teaching and learning since the last inspection and this is testament to the levels of monitoring and support that are in place; pupils' and students' achievements have improved as a result. Subject co-ordinators and members of the senior management team regularly monitor teaching. However, monitoring and evaluation arrangements have not detected the weakness in procedures for tracking pupils' progress, or the lack of rigour in individual education plan target setting.
52. The governing body is a potentially skilled and very supportive group. Suitable committees are in place to keep the work of the school under review, and governors are very knowledgeable about the school's strengths. However, the lack of rigour in their monitoring arrangements means that they are less secure in their knowledge and understanding of the weaknesses or areas for development in the school. The governing body's strategic role is underdeveloped. They approve policies presented to them by the senior management team after proper discussion and questioning, but they have little influence on the contents of these. Their knowledge of the standards achieved by the pupils and the school is weak. They do not interrogate comparative information about similar schools for example, which could enable them to know more about how pupils at Ridgeway were achieving and compare this with other schools nationally. Although there is a programme of governor visits to classes, these do not have a specific focus, so their scope is limited. Despite these shortcomings, the governing body is a vibrant and highly supportive group which is valued by the school. The newly appointed chair of governors is aware of the need to adopt a strategic function, and has plans in place for a more interactive role to provide governors with a better awareness of the school and its provision.
53. There are sufficient numbers of teachers and support staff. The ratio of support staff to pupils is high, when compared with similar schools nationally. These staff are effectively deployed and many work with individual pupils who have complex physical and communication difficulties. Almost all Ridgeway staff are experienced in dealing

with pupils' special educational needs. Amongst the staff are teachers with expertise in all subjects and they have enthusiasm and considerable skills gained on courses they have attended. Teachers' subject expertise is good overall.

54. Support assistants have considerable experience. Many have suitable qualifications. All work well alongside teachers and make a valuable contribution to the quality of the teaching. They take a full part in in-service training programmes to extend their skills, including learning about first aid and how to manage challenging behaviour or to meet the needs of pupils with a range of complex learning difficulties who join the school from time to time. The lack of an ICT and science technician results in teachers having to overcome equipment problems and complete preparation work. One suitably qualified person could fill this role. Administrative staff support the work of the teachers and senior managers well.
55. There are good arrangements for induction so that new staff quickly become effective in their work and the school's arrangements for performance management are good, linking well with the annual development plan.
56. All staff have experienced a good range of in-service training, much of which has been presented in school on issues that have been identified as relevant. The in-service programme focuses on both the school improvement plan and the staff's specific needs. It has a positive effect on the school's development.
57. The quality and range of displays are good. The staff use these to celebrate the successes of pupils very well and there is some very high quality display of pupils' artwork located around the school, together with a record in the hall of the recent science day. The accommodation is very clean and free from graffiti. The recent improvement to the bus access to the school has improved safety factors. The site is well maintained and secure.
58. The accommodation is satisfactory. Issues identified in the previous inspection report have been addressed, for instance new toilet facilities have been constructed, and the school now benefits from a new ICT suite, science laboratory and library. However, the ICT suite is small in area, and classes of older pupils often work in cramped conditions. The area of the combined design and technology and art and design room is small. Staff have explored how rationalisation of the storage space and the availability and placement of more appropriate benches and tables could ease this problem, but have not found a solution. The science room is spacious, but does not include specialised equipment such as a reduced voltage electricity supply or the availability of heat sources. This prevents pupils from being involved in more advanced scientific investigations associated with examination courses. Pupils from Ridgeway do visit the local secondary school to join science classes and use the physical education facilities. Classrooms at Ridgeway are spacious, enabling teachers to use a full range of teaching strategies. There is a good range of tutorial rooms, and rooms dedicated to pupil care. The sensory garden and swimming pool add to the provision the school offers, but the lack of a designated outdoor play area makes it difficult for children in the Foundation Stage to develop their physical skills by riding tricycles and pedalling miniature vehicles.
59. Generally, resources to support teaching and learning are suitable and sufficient. They are very good in mathematics and the Foundation Stage and are good in English, ICT, the humanities, religious education and music. Art and design and physical education are satisfactorily resourced. However, in science, the absence of specialist benching or insufficient equipment, such as electrical power packs and analogue balances, restricts the techniques teachers use in their lessons and

prevents pupils from being fully involved in some scientific investigations. In other areas, such as mathematics and music, the subjects are well served with textbooks, worksheets and visual apparatus, with a good range of taped music and instruments. In physical education, the school lacks some suitable climbing equipment and there is a need for a soft floor area. There is a good range of communication aids to help those pupils who have difficulties speaking or hearing, and the school ensures that there are suitable resources to support pupils' physical and care needs, such as standing frames and commodes. There are suitable resources, too, for pupils with visual impairment, such as enlargers and braille machines.

60. The school makes good use of all its resources, both human and financial. However, the increase in non-teaching staffing since the last inspection has put a strain on the budget. There was a small overspend in the last financial year, and the forecast for the next financial year shows a small contingency. This makes the school vulnerable. The situation arises because there is no insurance to cover the cost of staff on long-term sick leave. Although the school improvement plan shows clearly the costs of development, there is no indication of how governors or staff will evaluate the effectiveness of expenditure.
61. The school seeks to secure best value by obtaining several quotations for major purchases, and giving careful consideration to which services it should purchase. It consults parents, through regular questionnaires, and pupils through the school council. It makes little use of comparative information. The headteacher has made a few visits to similar schools to attempt to see how Ridgeway compares with these; some of the available comparative information has been examined, but this has not been found to be useful.
62. Financial administration is carried out efficiently by a member of the administrative staff, using suitable software. The most recent audit report found a number of weaknesses in the school's financial procedures, but the school has produced and implemented a suitable action plan to address these.
63. The school runs smoothly; administrative staff work well together, dividing tasks efficiently between them. They provide good support to the headteacher and staff, and a warm welcome for visitors.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

64. The governors, headteacher and staff should:
 - a) Improve assessment, recording and reporting so that:
 - i) all targets in individual education plans are specific and measurable;
 - ii) ongoing records are kept in all subjects; and
 - iii) pupils' and students' annual progress reports state clearly what pupils know, understand and are capable of doing in each subject, and include targets for the future.
(*Para refs: 42, 43, 49*)
 - b) Increase the range of accreditation in Years 11 to 13 so that pupils and students of all abilities have their achievements externally recognised.
(*Para refs: 26, 44*)
 - c) Ensure that pupils attending mainstream classes benefit educationally from these experiences.
(*Para refs: 24, 27*)

Governors should consider including the following development points in their action plan:

- rectifying the weaknesses identified in this report in the accommodation for the Foundation Stage, science, art and design and design and technology;
- improving resources in science;
- ensuring that support staff have the necessary skills to support pupils when they are using ICT to learn; and
- ensuring that their annual report to parents meets requirements.

OTHER SPECIFIED FEATURES

PROVISION FOR STUDENTS OVER SIXTEEN

65. The provision for students over sixteen is good, and they achieve well. The curriculum is broad, and builds well on the experiences that have gone before; teaching is good. There has been good improvement since the last inspection; the group is now discrete, with a curriculum that meets students' individual needs, and there are good opportunities to explore vocational areas through college links. The provision prepares students well for the next step.
66. The core skills of literacy and numeracy are taught through all other areas of the curriculum. This makes consolidation and new learning relevant, and provides a good rationale for the improvement of skills. As a result, students make good progress in both areas. Students with more complex communication difficulties make a great effort to respond to questions and discussions by using ICT, and support staff ensure that all students participate. Good opportunities to read and write in a variety of real contexts ensure that students continue to develop their skills. For example, they interpret the symbols for washing instructions, compile recipes, and wordprocess a report on the aftermath of the Afghan war. They also design and make invitations for visitors to join them for coffee and tour the school.
67. Students undertake a wide range of activities that require them to use their mathematical knowledge, understanding and skills. For example, they use money at college to purchase their lunch in the cafeteria, measure in practical activities, work out the time taken when travelling, and estimate quantities. In their mini-enterprise, a coffee shop, the more able students budgeted for selling their products and calculated profit and loss.
68. ICT is used well across the curriculum, and students extend their skills through a variety of experiences. The most skilled amongst them have a good understanding of Microsoft Windows, use wordprocessing and publishing software competently and are confident web browsers.
69. Students acquire a range of practical skills relevant to adult living. For example, most acquire greater independence in everyday tasks such as cleaning, washing and cooking. They extend their interests, in photography, for instance. The most skilled students compose pictures, develop photographs and use digital cameras. Students contribute well to school life, making items for sale at the Christmas fair, for example. They also contribute to and edit a magazine. In art, they make a range of decorative crafts, including glass painting and pebble decorating. In horticulture, students propagate cuttings, sow seeds and produce decorative vases. In design and technology, they make a good range of items, including Christmas cakes and window boxes.

70. College link courses enable students to become familiar with college life, and to sample vocational taster courses such as catering, carpentry, animal husbandry and motor vehicle studies. For the most able students, experience of the world of work is provided too. A deeper understanding of society is developed through citizenship and current affairs. For example, students learn about stereotyping. The most mature develop their opinions, about the roles of men and women in the family and society for example. A wide range of physical activities enables students to develop their physical skills and awareness of leisure opportunities in the community.
71. Teaching ranges from satisfactory to excellent, and is good overall. There is a more adult atmosphere in this group, wherever they are taught, and this promotes students' personal development very well. Staff work very effectively as a team to ensure that all are included well in activities provided; support staff play an important role in acting as a link between college and school and in supporting those students who need adult help to communicate or carry out tasks. Individual needs are met well through the setting of relevant targets, and these are reviewed regularly. Good use is made of the resources in the wider community, such as garden centres and leisure facilities, which widens students' horizons.
72. Although annual reports on students' progress report well on most achievements, they do not include a section on literacy or numeracy. The external accreditation used at present acknowledges the achievements of most students well, but it does not assess the achievements of the most able ones at a high enough level. Although the school strives to provide equal access for all, it is constrained in its ability to do this by the fact that local colleges do not all have facilities for meeting students' personal care needs. However, students who cannot attend the college are provided with a suitable alternative course at school.
73. Oversight of the provision is the responsibility of the co-ordinator of secondary provision. There is very good teamwork between all who have responsibility for the various aspects of the provision, and skills of support staff are used very well. Overall, leadership is good.

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	72
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	28

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	2	22	28	11	-	-	-
Percentage	3	35	44.5	17.5	-	-	-

The table gives the number and percentage of lessons observed in each of the seven categories used to make judgements about teaching. Care should be taken when interpreting these percentages as each lesson represents more than one percentage point.

NB. The table does not include lessons taught in other educational establishments.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	74
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	15

English as an additional language	No of pupils
Number of pupils with English as an additional language	8

Pupil mobility in the last school year	No of pupils
Pupils who joined the school other than at the usual time of first admission	4
Pupils who left the school other than at the usual time of leaving	0

Attendance

Authorised absence

	%
School data	89.8

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	0.01

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

Attainment at the end of Key Stages 1, 2, 3, 4 and at the end of the sixth form

Fewer than ten pupils were eligible, so results are not reported here

Ethnic background of pupils

Exclusions in the last school year

Categories used in the Annual School Census	No of pupils on roll	Number of fixed period exclusions	Number of permanent exclusions
White – British	58	0	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	1	1	0
Mixed – White and Black African	1	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	1	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	1	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	6	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	2	0	0
Asian or Asian British – any other Asian background	0	0	0
Black or Black British – Caribbean	0	0	0
Black or Black British – African	0	0	0
Black or Black British – any other Black background	0	0	0
Chinese	0	0	0
Any other ethnic group	3	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	0	0	0

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

Teachers and classes

Financial information

Qualified teachers and classes: YN – Y14

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	9.4
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	8.1
Average class size	9.25

Financial year	01/02
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Education support staff: YN – Y14

Total number of education support staff	31
Total aggregate hours worked per week	810.2

FTE means full-time equivalent.

	£
Total income	837,574
Total expenditure	850,672
Expenditure per pupil	12,888
Balance brought forward from previous year	12,688
Balance carried forward to next year	-410

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	2
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	3.2
Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	0

Number of vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of a term or more (FTE)	0
Number of unfilled vacancies or vacancies filled by teachers on temporary contract of less than one term (FTE)	0

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Questionnaire return rate

Number of questionnaires sent out	68
Number of questionnaires returned	36

Percentage of responses in each category

	Strongly agree	Tend to agree	Tend to disagree	Strongly disagree	Don't know
My child likes school.	89	11	0	0	0
My child is making good progress in school.	53	44	3	0	0
Behaviour in the school is good.	53	44	0	0	3
My child gets the right amount of work to do at home.	31	28	17	3	22
The teaching is good.	72	22	3	0	3
I am kept well informed about how my child is getting on.	56	42	0	0	3
I would feel comfortable about approaching the school with questions or a problem.	78	19	3	0	0
The school expects my child to work hard and achieve his or her best.	50	39	3	0	8
The school works closely with parents.	58	42	0	0	0
The school is well led and managed.	72	25	0	0	3
The school is helping my child become mature and responsible.	58	28	8	0	6
The school provides an interesting range of activities outside lessons.	53	28	8	0	11

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

AREAS OF LEARNING FOR CHILDREN IN THE FOUNDATION STAGE

74. The school has 15 children of nursery and reception age. The children are aged between two and a half and five years. They begin by attending the school part time. This time is gradually increased until they are attending the school full time, generally during the year that they turn five. The overall quality of the provision has improved further since the time of the last inspection; it now gives children a very good start to their education. Most, but not all, continue their education in the main part of the school. A number of the children also attend their neighbourhood school for a small part of the week. This is sometimes part of a planned entry to full-time attendance at the school, sometimes to widen the children's experience of school, and also in response to parental wishes. This inclusion plays a positive part in the education provided. The nursery class is accommodated in a large, well-presented classroom that provides a bright, attractive space. There is access to the school playground and the class uses this for a number of outside activities, but the otherwise very good quality curriculum offered to the children is restricted by the lack of a secure, outside area that they can use more freely.
75. As is the case in the rest of the school, cohorts of children vary in their attainments. The current group of children have a wide range of levels of attainment but, overall, this is below average. Although there are some minor differences between the quality of teaching and learning in different aspects of the curriculum, the overall quality is very good. A key feature of this teaching is the very strong team developed by the teacher. This team includes support staff and all the therapists involved with the children. All adults work very well together and all contribute very well to the quality of the education provided. Assessment is used well to identify the attainment of the children, to write good-quality individual education plans, and to plan programmes of work to help the children develop further. Parents are fully involved with the education of their children. Home-school books are of high quality and usefulness, and help to promote very productive home-school relationships.

Personal, social and emotional development

76. This aspect too is very well taught and children achieve very well. There is a consistent warm, friendly atmosphere in the classroom that is very productive in ensuring that the children are happy and settled in school. Children are comfortable with the routines in the classroom and respond very well to the expectations adults have of them; for example, they wait patiently for their turn to be offered a drink or a biscuit. The children are asked to undertake a good mix of formal activities and free-choice activities. The ability to choose is seen as important, and choice is offered in many different ways. Children gradually learn to extend their ability to choose from a very limited choice of two activities, to being able to choose from a far wider variety. In the main, they are willing to stay with an activity when adults require this, and they also increase the amount of time they spend on self-chosen activities. Independence in self-help skills is also encouraged, so children learn to eat, drink and move around within their capabilities. Because very good relationships are evident between all adults and children, the children learn to be increasingly self-confident.
77. Relationships are also strong between adults and children, and this means that children seek help when they need it. Adults encourage friendships between children, and whilst the majority of the children are content to work and play alongside each

other, a few are beginning to develop co-operative play. Children are given experience of a range of different traditions, for example making and eating samosas at the time of Divali; this begins to give them a basis for future learning about the lives and beliefs of others. Sensitive and age-appropriate foundations are also made for the development of later understanding of some of the more difficult situations with which they may be presented. For example, the death of a classmate was very sensitively touched upon by asking the children to help put together a small box of possessions to be given to the child's parents.

Communication, language and literacy

78. A very wide number of opportunities are offered in this very well-taught aspect of the curriculum. As a result, children learn and achieve very well. Communication is given a very high priority in the class. Each child is encouraged to communicate with adults and each other as much as possible. Individuals are well known and expectations of the manner and extent of their communications are well based on this knowledge. Some children are expected to ask and answer questions, while others are asked to communicate a choice of drink, indicating by gesture whether they prefer milk or orange juice, for instance. In this way, expectations for all children are high. Adults are very careful to talk to the children throughout all the activities they undertake. As a result, the children gradually increase the number of words that they understand and then use.
79. Books form an important part of the school day. Work is often linked with a book. For example, children decorated a dressing-up box after being read the story 'Masie Dresses Up'. Children enjoy being read to, and most will independently look at books as part of their free choice activities. Higher attaining children are given daily practice in reading simple books, and some have a small vocabulary of words that they can read by sight. Because there is regular teaching of letter sounds, children begin to use the first sound to help them read new words.
80. Opportunities for gaining early writing skills are a part of the everyday provision in the class. Children are given opportunity to learn to manipulate objects, then to hold and use a variety of mark-making equipment, such as brushes, crayons and pencils. For those who are ready, handwriting skills are taught and practised on a daily basis, and children gradually improve their skills, with the highest attaining being able to write their name unaided. Higher attaining children are assisted to compose simple sentences, generally about the events in their own lives. At present, the subject matter of this work is somewhat restricted and the provision could be further improved by widening this through use of the range identified in the National Literacy Strategy.

Mathematical development

81. Mathematical development is very well taught and children achieve very well in this aspect. Numbers and counting are a natural part of the talk in the class. Adults count children and objects as they work and play with them. Children experience number through such activities as counting the candles on their birthday cake, counting rows of teddies, or counting coins in a class shop. Number rhymes are said and sung, and children gradually learn first to recognise these, and later to sing or say them with the adults. Higher attaining children count objects with only a little help; for instance, they count the number of scoops of pasta it takes to fill boxes of different sizes. They recognise that the last number of their counting represents the number of objects in the set; for example, after having put numbers against a list of their class mates'

names, they can say how many children are in the class by looking at the last number.

82. The vocabulary of shape and size is also used and taught. Children are given experience of touching and building with shapes, for instance when building a castle of different shaped bricks. There are also good opportunities for handling different sized objects; for example, in the current topic on boxes, children are given different sized boxes to fill with sand or pasta, and through this they gain concepts of relative size. As a result, children learn to understand and use an increasing range of mathematical words and gain concepts of shape and size. The highest attaining children can, for instance, order boxes by their size and say which is the biggest and smallest.

Knowledge and understanding of the world

83. Although both teaching and learning in this aspect are very good, the children's achievement is good. This is because the lack of outdoor facilities restricts the curriculum that can be offered to them. In the classroom, a wide range of well-planned activities assists very good learning. Children are taught to have a sense of time and place through such activities as the daily routines of recognising and naming each others' photographs, looking at the weather and naming the day and date. Children are encouraged to talk about their homes, their brothers and sisters, and the things they like to do at home. Role-play areas and dressing-up activities also teach children to learn about the world in which they live. Activities, such as stripping pretend wallpaper from the classroom wall before painting and 'hanging' their own version, as well as visiting places near to the school, all very successfully help the children develop their understanding of what goes on about them.
84. Children are taught to use their senses through activities, such as finding out the differences between wet and dry sand, listening to sounds and tasting different foods. Every effort is made to extend this learning to outdoors; for example, watching birds from their home-made bird hide. However, experiences such as learning the differences between running a toy car over tarmac and grass are not possible, because there is no easy access to the outdoor environment and this affects overall achievement. Special occasions such as Christmas, Eid and Divali are celebrated, much to the enjoyment of the children, giving them a wider view of the world.

Physical development

85. Physical development is very well taught and learning is very good. Once again, the overall achievement of the children is affected by the lack of outdoor facilities, but is good nonetheless. Physical activity is an integral part of the school day. Children get the exercise they need to improve and maintain their physical condition. Activities such as painting and playing with sand are very well combined with the need for children to stand in standing frames for a given time each day. Children are encouraged to walk, crawl or move in their chairs, dependent on their ability, and are expected to do this with due care. This helps them to learn a sense of space and safety. Specific programmes of therapy contribute very well to the provision for physical development.
86. Children have regular opportunity to exercise outdoors, but this is not sufficiently freely available to help them to develop their sense of a larger space and the ways of moving within it. Swimming contributes very well to physical development, in part because of its therapeutic value and, in part, because of the experience of a different

type of movement. Children gain self-confidence through their work in the hydrotherapy pool and all swim independently, most with buoyancy aids, but a few without them. Manual dexterity is well taught, through the wide variety of activities, such as those described above, and through dedicated sessions in which the physiotherapist and occupational therapists join with the teacher to provide activities that successfully improve dexterity and strength in hand movements.

Creative development

87. Teaching and learning in the aspect of creative learning are good. There are many opportunities provided for the children to experience a wide range of tools and materials. They use paint when painting pictures and for painting the wall when making wallpaper. They learn to use scissors and glue, for instance, to cut and stick pictures on their new dressing-up box. Whilst these activities are planned with clear purpose in mind, the planning of the work does not always show in sufficient detail what the teacher intends children of different levels of attainment to learn from each activity. As a result, there are occasions when support staff are over-focused on the completion of the activity, and do not allow the children to work at an appropriate level; this has an adverse effect on their learning. Music is an everyday part of the day. Songs are sung to teach number, days of the week and for pure enjoyment. Imaginative play is very well supported by adults, who enter into the spirit of the pretend situations and thus provide good models for the children to copy. All the children enjoy such activities, and the highest attaining children initiate such play based on their own experiences, for example kicking an imaginary ball around the room while dressed in the teacher's football shirt.

ENGLISH

88. The school makes good provision for English and pupils make good gains in learning, particularly in the crucial skills of speaking and listening. This is a marked improvement since the last inspection, and is a direct result of the introduction of a broader range of activities, the way in which communication skills are addressed across the curriculum, and the development of additional and augmentative strategies for pupils with more complex communication needs.
89. Pupils throughout the school, irrespective of their special educational needs or whether English is their first language, develop their speaking and listening skills very well and, in this respect, the school's provision makes a significant, positive contribution to the pupils' personal and social development. Pupils listen very attentively; they are eager to follow instructions and sufficiently confident to make contributions in group settings. They exchange greetings and names during registration, chat cheerfully and politely to visitors, and more able pupils show patience and sensitivity in waiting for those with more complex needs to respond. By the end of Year 2, pupils match sounds to pictures, and join in with familiar songs and rhymes. Pupils build on these skills well so that, by the end of Year 6, they identify letters by their sounds and can recall the outcome of, for example, their research into water consumption at the weekend. By the end of Year 9, more able pupils can explain and discuss their ideas and opinions, and develop an increasingly sophisticated understanding of language; for example, one pupil interpreted the Suffragettes' motto 'Deeds not Words' colloquially, but appropriately, as 'less talk more action!' Pupils in Year 11 take these skills further. For example, they express their concerns about integration sessions, and discuss issues around day-to-day life in school, both fluently and confidently. Pupils with more complex communication difficulties make a great effort to respond to questions and discussions by using ICT,

and support staff, in particular, work extremely hard to ensure that such pupils can and do participate.

90. Pupils' levels of achievement in reading and writing are good and reinforce their communication skills well. Pupils with more complex needs identify words on their communicators and understand that pressing the word or symbol results in the spoken word. By the end of Year 2, pupils enjoy stories, and more able ones can identify key phrases in a book, and can assemble simple words into sentences. They use ICT software such as Intellikeys and Textease to good effect to help draft their written work, write sentences and practise their letter formation. By the end of Year 6, more able pupils can wordprocess stories independently and well, such as that of the 'Three Billy Goats Gruff'; their work has the occasional mis-spelling. They recognise the letters on the keyboard, space out words appropriately, and generally use capital letters and full-stops correctly, while pupils with more complex needs use communicators to say what they want to be written, with members of staff acting as scribes. By the end of Year 9, pupils can use role-play to recount the events from 'Stig of the Dump', can use apostrophes appropriately and adjectives with imagination. In Years 10 and 11, pupils consider more challenging texts, such as 'Animal Farm'; they identify and discuss the differences between a story in print and on video, and draft letters, such as one in preparation for a forthcoming visit to Wood Green Animal Shelter.
91. Pupils apply their English skills, particularly those in speaking and listening, very effectively in drama lessons. Younger pupils work with drama students in interpreting the movements of different animals, responding very well to the visiting adults, and demonstrating their ideas to the rest of the class with great confidence. Older pupils work on Shakespeare's 'The Tempest' with considerable enthusiasm; they know the main characters, and can recall characteristics and key points of dialogue. More able pupils introduce their characters convincingly, and there is very good teamwork between all pupils when they use instruments to create the storm. Teaching in drama lessons on the Ridgeway site is very effective and founded upon the very positive relationships between all concerned, with the result that pupils have the confidence to participate. There is also a very good variety of teaching strategies that make the lessons brisk and lively and keep the pupils interested and enthusiastic.
92. Teaching in English is good, and is very good for pupils who have lessons on the Ridgeway site in Years 10 and 11. Particular strengths are the way in which support staff enable pupils who have communication difficulties to be involved in lessons and to express themselves. Strategies, such as the use of symbols, are also used very well to reinforce key points and pupils' understanding, and staff are extremely considerate in allowing pupils the time they need to respond, with the result that pupils' interest and enthusiasm are maintained. In an excellent lesson for Years 10 and 11 pupils on the story and film of 'The Sheep Pig', the material was dealt with in a highly age-appropriate manner; a brisk succession of lively, related activities kept the pupils interested and involved, particularly those who were more able. All staff know the pupils very well, so all pupils receive the support they need. Relationships are very good, and there is most effective teamwork, not only between the classroom staff, but also with visiting external professionals, such as the speech and language therapist, who make a valuable contribution to pupils' learning. However, in a literacy lesson for pupils in Years 1 and 2, support staff were less effective because of their unfamiliarity with the relevant ICT programs. Also, on occasion, too much support is given to individual pupils with the result that they have less opportunity to use their initiative and consolidate their learning.

93. The subject is well led and managed. The school has undertaken a comprehensive review of its provision for English, and the scheme of work is currently being refined. The recent implementation of the Key Stage 3 Literacy Strategy has been successful, and the way in which pupils' literacy and communication skills are addressed within other subjects is particularly effective. Individual pupils' achievements are assessed well, and the school makes satisfactory use of this information to develop planning in the subject. Pupils in Year 11 take entry level examinations, but there are no opportunities for them to have their vocational core skills in communication accredited. Some more able pupils take English and drama lessons in a neighbouring secondary school but these opportunities are of limited value to the Ridgeway pupils because of weaknesses in teaching and, on occasion, the attitudes and behaviour of the mainstream pupils. There are good quality resources, the school is developing an attractive, well-stocked library which is used well, and provision is enhanced both by trips to local theatres and by visits from authors, actors and drama groups.

MATHEMATICS

94. Provision for mathematics is good in Years 1 to 9 and satisfactory in Years 10 and 11. Boys and girls achieve equally well as do pupils with different special educational needs. These levels of achievement are the result of good teaching, pupils' positive attitudes in mathematics lessons, the thorough interpretation of the National Numeracy Strategy and the excellent subject leadership. Improvement in the provision for mathematics since the last inspection is good.
95. The policy of implementing the National Numeracy Strategy across the whole school has had a good effect on pupils' learning in mathematics. There are clear introductions to lessons, and plenary sessions were particularly effective in most lessons seen. However, group work was rather less evident. Small numbers in most classes mean that able pupils work independently, there is good support for those that need this, and there is close monitoring from teachers and support staff.
96. By Year 2, pupils can count and recognise numbers up to 20, order numbers and match numbers below to items. Higher attaining pupils carrying out these activities up to higher numbers, can compare numbers and carry out simple additions and subtraction sums. In a mixed class of Years 1 and 2 pupils, the number game 'Five little ducks' showed that pupils understood in practical terms the effects of subtraction.
97. Pupils recognise coins and know that adding two 5p pieces together makes 10p. Lower attaining pupils can count the number of coins given and write the correct amount onto paper. Most know the basic shapes of square and circle, and higher attaining pupils can recognise a triangle. Pupils are beginning to understand simple measurement; they undertake practical activities so that they can identify who is the tallest member of the class, for example.
98. By Year 6, pupils have built on their early experiences working with numbers and shapes and are becoming more mathematically aware. The higher attaining pupils in a Year 5 class are beginning to be able to estimate; for example, they estimate how many Smarties there are on a plate. Provided the numbers are small, they can do this with reasonable accuracy. Lower attaining pupils who have not acquired this skill are at the level of making wild guesses running from two to 100. In a Year 6 class, pupils worked with money to build up quite large amounts from a range of coins. The higher attaining pupils recognised all the coins up to £2, the lower attaining pupils recognised most coins up to 5p. The most able pupils can make up a random amount of money

accurately, such as 38p; they do simple mental addition, such as 10p and 5p. Pupils can undertake a simple survey to ascertain favourite colours; for example, they know that if most of the class say red, then this is the favourite colour. Their work also indicates continuing work in shape and measure and simple exercises on time. The higher attaining pupils can tell the time to quarter hours. In lessons, pupils demonstrate their mathematical vocabulary at a simple level using terms such as 'add' and 'take away'.

99. By Year 9, pupils are confident in using mathematics in a range of practical applications, such as adding items and money, subtraction, measurement, and presenting data collected. In a Year 8 class, higher attaining pupils' work on comparing and ordering simple fractions, for example $\frac{1}{4}$, $\frac{1}{2}$ and $\frac{3}{4}$, indicated that they understood the practical application of fractions by cutting a pizza into quarters and using appropriate language, such as 'two people can have a half each'. The lower attaining pupils knew that when the pizza was split into four there were more pieces.
100. In a Year 9 lesson, at a neighbouring upper school, two pupils joined a lower attaining mathematics set and undertook work on mathematical patterns. They successfully completed the exercise to recognise and indicate the patterns emerging in a series of shapes; despite the noisy and chaotic start to the lesson, the pupils adjusted well and fitted into the lesson both at a practical and a social level. Scrutiny of pupils' work indicates an increasingly mature application of mathematics in practical settings; for example, they can recognise and describe a right angle. Higher attaining pupils understand compass points and lower attaining pupils can sketch a reflected shape. The higher attaining pupils have some understanding of classification in data collection and lower attaining pupils can make and organise a list.
101. Scrutiny of pupils' work in Years 10 and 11 indicates that much of it is focused on reinforcing previously learned mathematics, particularly with a practical emphasis. For example, they revise using numbers in practical settings, knowing number bonds, multiplication tables and basic arithmetical principles. Although this work is appropriate, the failure to use the prescribed mathematics programme as a basis for all work means that much of the work seen appears to be less challenging than that at the end of Year 9; this is at odds with the school's policy for mathematics. Some lessons do address aspects of the programme, and they are greatly modified. For example, a Year 11 class undertook basic work on probability. The repetition, lack of emphasis on accreditation and the limited educational benefit gained from some inclusion lessons means that pupils' achievements in mathematics at the end of Year 11 are less good than in the previous three key stages, although they are satisfactory.
102. There has been good improvement in teaching since the last inspection. Teaching is never less than satisfactory on the Ridgeway site, usually good and, on occasion, very good. Teachers' subject knowledge is mostly good and all staff use the National Numeracy Strategy very effectively. The very high quality of relationships between staff and pupils means that lessons are conducted with empathy, sensitivity and good humour, although they do not lack challenge. Pupils are almost always co-operative and behave very well. There is good use of ICT to support learning in mathematics, and good examples of pupils using mathematical skills in other subjects. Although the practice of including pupils in mathematics lessons in the neighbouring upper school is a good example of inclusive practice, in effect, the pupils involved gain little educational benefit. The lessons observed, particularly in Year 11, were characterised by inappropriate behaviour and attitudes by many of the other pupils; this had a negative impact on learning for the Ridgeway pupils.
103. Some very good examples of teachers planning well for pupils of different abilities was seen. However, most rely on adult support as a means of doing this. In general,

too little use is made of teaching in groups of different abilities, or setting different tasks. Teachers rarely specify different learning outcomes for pupils of different abilities.

104. Leadership of the subject by the co-ordinator is of very high quality. As a leading mathematics teacher, she has very good subject knowledge and understanding and has set in place a broad and relevant curriculum, particularly in Years 1 to 9. She has introduced greater consistency to teaching and very good subject coverage in Years 1 to 9. Good policies for mathematics and numeracy across the school are in place and assessment procedures are good; formative assessment occurs in all classes where teachers and support staff note the progress pupils make and record appropriately. More formal assessments are through baseline approaches, SATs and limited accreditation at Key Stage 4. The co-ordinator maintains a mathematics portfolio of pupils' work which indicates the range of pupils' work and reflects appropriate standards and good practice. The portfolio also contributes to the school's assessment evidence base by including samples of pupils' work at agreed attainment levels. Resources for the subject are very good. All classrooms have an adequate amount of mathematics equipment and the co-ordinator maintains a resource bank which teachers use to obtain particular sets of equipment to support specific activities.

SCIENCE

105. Achievement in science is good overall, although it varies across the school. It is very good in Years 1 to 6, and satisfactory in Years 7 to 11. Higher attaining pupils in Year 11 follow a GCSE double science course in mainstream, and their achievements are satisfactory. For those pupils in Years 10 and 11 who are taught science at Ridgeway, achievement is good. There is no discernible difference between the achievements of boys and girls, or pupils with different special educational needs. Schemes of work have been developed since the previous inspection and these provide clear planning for each lesson within a topic; P-levels and general National Curriculum levels are used to assess pupils' progress.
106. By Year 2, pupils recognise everyday materials and items, together with what they are made of. More able pupils identify their qualities and can distinguish whether they are smooth or bright. They identify various light sources and recognise parts of the human body and plants. More able pupils classify objects as being alive or not alive and investigate materials, sorting them into sets according to whether they are magnetic or non-magnetic.
107. By Year 6, pupils know about the stages of growth of a frog, realising that frog spawn changes to tadpoles and that tadpoles lose their tails, grow legs and become frogs. Pupils sequence the stages in the life cycle of a butterfly. They know how a shadow is made and can conduct an investigation to observe how a shadow changes over time, by placing a stick in the sunlight and observing how the shadow moves and changes length. They know that teeth are important for biting and chewing food, and what foods make up a healthy meal. They are becoming aware that eating a lot of fatty foods is unhealthy. More able pupils conduct investigations with increasing confidence and independence. For instance, they predict which materials will hold their new shape and which will spring back to their original form when they are squeezed. They know that clay will keep its new shape, but an elastic band and a piece of foam will spring back to their original shapes. Pupils are able to produce clear and accurate records. Lower attaining pupils require support in their work in science, particularly in the recording of their observations.

108. By Year 9, pupils know about balanced forces and use arrows accurately to show which force is having the strongest influence on a moving object. They investigate liquids to identify which are acid or alkaline by using indicators. Their investigations into the organs of flowers have helped them to understand the fertilisation process. Their research into ecology and habitat shows a good knowledge of predator/prey relationships but their investigations into cellular structure and the atomic structure of gases are not secure.
109. By Year 11, all pupils carry out investigations. They increase their understanding of magnetic force by using iron filings to observe magnetic patterns when the north and south poles are attracting each other and when the same poles are repelling each other. They complete detailed research into energy transfer and transpiration in green plants. Pupils investigate the melting rates of ice in different strengths of a solution of water and fruit juice, compiling detailed tables of results. Pupils experiment to ascertain the draining rates of water through different types of soils. They have a good understanding of how to set up a fair test. However, the lower attaining pupils require considerable support.
110. Overall, the teaching is good. It is very good in Years 1 to 6, but satisfactory in Years 7 to 11. In Years 10 and 11, teaching on the Ridgeway site is good. However, for higher attaining pupils who attend lessons at a nearby upper school, teaching does not always offer sufficient challenge; these lessons are occasionally disrupted by disaffected mainstream pupils.
111. The teachers' knowledge of their subject is good overall, characterised by the setting of clear objectives and effective planning. Precise questioning helps pupils to recall previous work and order their knowledge. Correct scientific vocabulary is used well, and pupils are encouraged to use words such as 'solution', 'dissolve', 'evaporate' and 'magnetic'. Pupils in Years 1 to 6 produce sketches and complete sentences about how sound travels. Younger pupils make observations about changes of state, such as when solid chocolate melts. Pupils in Years 7 to 11 make sensible predictions and observe carefully to assess their accuracy. For instance, Year 8 pupils predict that if they increase the number of windings in the coil of an electro-magnet it will be stronger and pick up more paper clips. A Year 11 pupil observes that, unlike other materials tested for absorbency, the rubber sheet does not take up water, instead it runs off the top. However, sometimes the work is over controlled by the teacher, and pupils do not have opportunities to investigate their own ideas about, for example what happens to some powders when they are stirred into water, or to consider the different rates of dissolving in hot or cold water. There is satisfactory use of ICT to help pupils learn in science.
112. Where lessons are good or very good, there is a direct link in the planning between the acquisition of knowledge and a practical task. For example, pupils in Year 2 are given good opportunities to touch chocolate and butter and to observe the changes in appearance as they are heated. Years 5 and 6 pupils have very good opportunities to experience at first hand how sound travels and to feel the vibrations in a taut piece of string between two plastic pots as they make the connection between them and the way sound travels. Year 8 pupils continue this practical experience, handling electro-magnets, and connecting them to a power pack. They quickly respond to the teacher's suggestion to add equal numbers of coils to the magnets to identify any addition of equal amounts of coils and the increase in power of the electro-magnet. Year 11 pupils continue to develop investigative skills because they are challenged to pour equal quantities of water (20ml) onto samples of materials and to weigh them using a digital balance to check whether the weight has increased because the cloth is soaked in water. They compile tables of their results. By Year 11, these pupils have

developed a clear understanding of a fair test. They carefully check their tables of results to analyse their predictions.

113. Pupils behave well in lessons. They enjoy their work, showing high levels of interest. They contribute their ideas to discussions and relate their findings to their own everyday life experiences. One Year 11 pupil, having completed the absorbency test, states that findings are at odds with personal experience; when they walked in the rain and wore rubber anoraks, their clothes beneath the outdoor clothes still became wet. Pupils form constructive relationships with one another and with adults. These very good relationships enable them to work together as members of a group to plan their work and to carry it out.
114. Schemes of work throughout Years 1 to 11 cover the National Curriculum and the subject is managed well by the co-ordinator who checks what pupils are taught and the planning to ensure that knowledge, skills and understanding are built upon.
115. The subject is well led, and leadership has secured good improvement since the last inspection. There is now a discrete science room, although it is not well appointed, as it lacks gas and low voltage supplies. Schemes of work have been improved, so has teaching and pupils' achievements.

ART AND DESIGN

116. Provision for art and design is good. Overall, pupils' progress and achievement are good. This good achievement is the result of generally good, and occasionally very good, teaching, very positive pupils' attitudes in lessons and good subject leadership. Boys and girls achieve equally well in art and design, as do pupils of different abilities. At the time of the last inspection, provision for art and design was good and this high quality has been maintained.
117. Due to timetabling arrangements, no art and design lessons were observed in Years 1 to 6. However, pupils' work and displays, discussions with co-ordinators and class teachers, and teachers' planning indicate that pupils cover a good range of work, teaching is good and pupils' achievements are good. Pupils work in a suitable range of media, including clay and textiles. Work influenced by other artists, such as 'Sunflowers' in Class 2 and the work of Miro in Class 1, shows they are developing the ability to apply paint to paper, and express themselves in exploring texture and colour. In work entitled 'Our faces', pupils demonstrate the ability to use their good observational skills.
118. By Year 9, pupils have developed a wide range of skills as a result of working in many different media and exploring different aspects of art and design. In a mixed Years 8 and 9 class, pupils are producing animated art. They have designed a mythical creature, and after completing the shape and colour aspect of the work, transferred it to card and disassembled it; in doing so, they have learned much about the concept of animated art. They talked confidently about their work; one said 'this is how cartoons are made'. Photographic evidence in Years 7 to 9 shows pupils considering the work of other artists; their work inspired by the artist and designer William Morris is of particularly good quality. Other work in clay and graphics is equally good.
119. In a Year 8 class, pupils were making models of stained glass windows, using card and colour tissue paper. The task was demanding, particularly for those pupils with weak fine motor skills, but due to their perseverance and the very good teaching, they produced models which were very attractive. Pupils discussed their choice of colour, and held the model up to the light to gain the full effect of a stained glass window.

120. By Year 11, pupils' understanding and skill of art and design application have developed to a point where they work confidently in a range of different media and can discuss their work with authority, including making an evaluation of their own work and that of others. They have good understanding of shape, form and style. For example, pupils in a Year 11 class made bead necklaces from clay, based on African designs. After a very high quality introduction and discussion about ethnic art, pupils produced beautifully crafted beads, which they will subsequently thread and make into a body ornament. Other work in this age group is equally good; particularly impressive within the photographic record is their work based on Andy Warhol, as well as examples which address art, craft and design from different styles, traditions and cultures.
121. The good, sometimes very good, standards of work in art and design are the result of the high standards of teaching in the subject and the interest and motivation which this generates in the pupils. Pupils concentrate and are willing to experiment because they are confident in the teacher's skills and attitudes towards them. This is particularly evident in lessons in Years 7 to 11 where teaching is undertaken by a member of the support staff who is very skilled, both in her own subject knowledge and expertise, and in her ability to encourage and support pupils in producing work of high quality.
122. The subject is well managed jointly by a teacher and a member of the support staff. Between them, they have produced a policy and approach to art and design which are very effective. Resources for the subject are satisfactory. The practice of sharing the design and technology room as a specialist area is unsatisfactory; it is small, there are no large areas where work can be left out to dry or act as exemplars, and there is no kiln or area where one could be situated. Although the unsuitability of the accommodation does not currently have a negative impact on pupils' achievements, it does restrict curriculum coverage and limits the possibility of even higher quality work in the subject. For example, currently, there are no pupils entered for GCSE in the subject, but the quality of teaching and organisation of the subject and the enthusiasm and motivation of the pupils suggest that a few pupils are capable of achieving accreditation. However, the existing accommodation is not suitable for use as a base in which a GCSE art and design course could be taught, as it is too small and cramped.

CITIZENSHIP

123. Citizenship is taught as part of the school's personal, social and health education programme. Although there are no discrete lessons timetabled, the school has audited the personal, social and health education programme curriculum and ensured that the requirements for citizenship are met. A good range of learning experiences is provided, and teaching is good. As a result, pupils achieve well in the citizenship element of the personal, social and health education programme.
124. As there are no ongoing records to show what pupils know, understand and can do in citizenship, there is insufficient evidence to report on pupils' attainments in the subject. However, a good range of learning experiences includes suitable enrichment by personnel representing community groups, such as the police and Red Cross; pupils also go out into the community to visit organisations such as banks and retail outlets. In Years 7 to 9, pupils find out about crime, local government, how Parliament works, how the law protects animals and how society cares for the environment. They build on this well in Years 10 and 11 by adopting a local charity, producing a school newspaper, and running a mini-enterprise. All pupils gain a good understanding of how the electoral process works by participating in elections for the school's own council, and a few experience representing their peers on this council.
125. Teaching and learning were very good in the single lesson seen; the session was led by a member of the support staff. Here, older pupils were making cookies for sale to raise funds for charity. Very constructive relationships between adults and pupils led to mature participation by pupils, more reminiscent of the workplace than a school. Pupils graded their cookies on a ten-point scale, taking factors such as texture and appearance into account. They developed a thorough awareness of the importance of quality in a product destined for sale.
126. Leadership of the subject is good; it has been developed well and supports pupils' personal development very effectively. Support staff are skilled and well prepared to teach the subject. The development of ongoing records is an area for further development.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

127. Pupils achieve well in design and technology. The consistency of the education provided in design and technology has improved since the time of the last inspection, with teaching and learning having improved in Years 1 and 2. Pupils gradually gain skills in understanding the design and make process. Units of work begin with pupils investigating manufactured products of the type they will later design, make and evaluate. For example, in Years 1 and 2, pupils gain experience of tasting various foods. In Years 4 and 5, pupils have tried different types of bread, and use this experience to choose the type of bread they would like to use to make a sandwich. By Years 10 and 11, pupils look in more detail at aspects, such as the material, fastening and shape of a container, before deciding which of each of these they will use when designing and making their own product.
128. Design skills become more sophisticated as pupils get older. Younger pupils draw what their product will look like. As they get older, they are taught to identify what materials they will use to make their product; for example, they make simple choices between a small range of fillings for a sandwich. The oldest pupils detail the process to be undertaken when cutting, sewing and finishing their bags. Skills in making also increase. The youngest pupils practise and gain skills in cutting and joining different types of material. As they grow older, the range and difficulty of such skills gradually

increase. By Years 10 and 11, pupils have gained experience and skills in food technology, such as weighing, mixing and beating, as well as reading a recipe. They sew by hand and with machines. They saw, join and finish wooden products and use simple electrical circuits to build devices, such as one that provides a warning when a cat gets on a wheelchair. The oldest pupils in Years 10 and 11 follow a nationally accredited certificate in textile technology and most successfully complete this. In the past, pupils have followed GCSE courses in the subject but, due to timetabling difficulties, this is not currently available. This restricts the possibilities for a small number of pupils who are capable of undertaking such a course.

129. Teaching and learning in the subject are good. Use of national guidance has developed a consistent approach to the planning of work. This consistency of approach helps pupils to learn well. In the lessons seen, teachers showed good knowledge of the whole design and make process, and structured groups of lessons accordingly. Teachers have secure knowledge of the present attainment of the pupils and most activities are well pitched to ensure that the majority of pupils make good progress over time. On occasion, lesson planning is too general, indicating what activity the pupils will undertake rather than what they will learn, and a small number of pupils, of higher or lower attainment, in the class do not learn as much as they could. Where this is the case, attention is focused on the outcome of the activity. A lower attaining pupil is then assisted to write a complete design process that is beyond their understanding, or a higher attaining pupil is prompted to cut butter in larger chunks when the experience of the time taken would have provided more memorable learning.
130. Pupils are very well managed in all lessons. The excellent relationships that are evident throughout the school mean that pupils are confident to try their best. Both teachers and support staff successfully encourage very good levels of concentration and effort. There is skilful management of the equipment that many pupils need, and physical difficulties in communication and access are successfully overcome. ICT is used well in supporting learning in design and technology. For example, communication aids are generally programmed for particular lessons so that pupils can contribute, and computers are used for writing when necessary. Literacy skills are very well consolidated, by reinforcing the need to use imperative verbs when writing a list of instructions, for example. Numeracy and mathematical skills are well supported through measuring and timing, particularly in textile and food technology lessons.
131. Assessment procedures in design and technology are in the process of development. At the end of the summer term in 2002, teachers assessed the pupils' attainments against national levels. This is a positive move, but as these levels have not yet been moderated and agreed between staff, they are not as useful as they might be in accurately charting progress made, or in planning future work. In addition, there are no ongoing records that show which skills pupils have mastered, and which need further work. The school is aware of this current unsatisfactory position and has good plans to improve. Lessons for the younger pupils in the school are of good length for their ability to concentrate on one subject. However, lessons for older pupils are sometimes too short. This means that pupils have to stop work before it is finished, or are over-assisted to complete work in the time available. This reduces the effectiveness of the teaching and adversely affects learning in a few sessions.
132. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The co-ordinator has a clear view of the way the subject should develop further and sensible plans for doing this. There has been some good monitoring of teaching that has resulted in the identification of weaknesses, and provision of further training and support for some

teachers. Because assessment is currently underdeveloped, the co-ordinator does not have the information needed to monitor and evaluate the success of design and technology teaching or the progress made by the pupils.

HUMANITIES (Geography and History)

133. The school makes good provision for the humanities. The subject endorses the aims of the school well and, by improving the gains in learning made by the pupils and strengthening the curriculum, the school has responded well to the findings of the last inspection.
134. Pupils make good gains in learning, particularly in terms of factual knowledge, and they enjoy their lessons. In geography, those in Years 1 and 2 gain a good understanding of a sense of place, following the adventures of Barnaby Bear, identifying him in various locations around the school and showing great interest in the photographs of him in the pupils' homes. They also develop a good foundation for their historical understanding through, for example, listening to the students who are over sixteen describe their recollections of the nursery and comparing them with their own, more recent experiences. By Year 6, they are aware of the industrial uses of water, record their own domestic consumption for homework, and have some understanding of the impact of drought in the Third World. They are keen to contribute, they draw and colour in maps of ancient Greece and learn about the origins of the Olympic movement, comparing them with the present day games. By Year 9, pupils build on this foundation well. They undertake traffic surveys, and apply their number skills well in creating pie-charts of the results, using ICT to do so. They learn about the Suffrage movement in Edwardian times, comparing the lot of women then and now, and consider the impact of the Peasants' Revolt and the Black Death on medieval England. In Year 11, pupils have their geographical skills and understanding accredited through an entry level examination; they understand some of the consequences of the destruction of the rainforests, and how volcanoes are formed, for example.
135. Teaching is good and based upon the very positive relationships that exist between all concerned; this means that pupils are enthusiastic and want to learn. Support staff play a very effective role, particularly in helping individual pupils with their communication aids. Lessons are well organised, and little time is wasted, with the result that pupils concentrate well and become absorbed in their work. Where teaching is most successful, as in a Year 9 lesson on the Suffragettes, good use of resources, in this case copies of contemporary photographs, captures pupils' attention and interest, and effective questioning by the teacher results in pupils using their understanding well in considering moral issues. In a Year 8 lesson on the spread of the Black Death, limited strategies for dealing with the awkward behaviour of one pupil meant that the flow of the lesson was interrupted several times. However, good teamwork between the teacher and support staff ensured that the remainder of the class stayed on task.
136. The subject is well managed, and the rolling programme of activities ensures that pupils continue to build on their knowledge, skills and understanding. The school is beginning to establish a yardstick against which to measure pupils' progress, but this is at an early stage of development, and has yet to fully inform planning in the humanities. There is a satisfactory range of resources and artefacts, and provision is enhanced by visits to local facilities such as the Bedford Museum.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY (ICT)

137. During their time in the school, pupils achieve well in ICT. The quality of the education provided in the subject has improved since the time of the last inspection. The school follows national guidelines and strategies in the subject, and this ensures that pupils achieve well in each of the required aspects of the National Curriculum. Accreditation is used for pupils in Years 9 to 11 through the National Inter-action Certificate Award Scheme (NICAS). GCSE courses are not yet available to the pupils and, as some pupils' attainments are now at a suitable level, the school needs to consider how to extend the curriculum to accommodate this.
138. The youngest pupils in Years 1 and 2 gain understanding of what computers do and what they can be used for through activities such as using a word bank to write a simple sentence or using an art program to draw pictures. Many of the pupils need a great deal of support in doing this, but the level of support required is noticeably less in lessons for pupils in Years 3 to 6. Year 4 pupils, for example, can almost all use a mouse to draw unaided, and the highest attaining can find the program, draw a recognisable picture of a dog, use the 'fill' facility to colour their picture and print their efforts out, for the most part unaided. Pupils learn to control devices by giving them instructions, so pupils in Years 8 and 9 give instructions to move a small robotic device forwards, backwards and to turn. The highest attaining pupils consider distance, and the degree of turn needed to make the robot move to a target. Pupils throughout the school use the computer to write and present work. Their use of computers gradually increases in sophistication as they learn to vary fonts and size of print, to add borders and pictures; by Year 11, some pupils can present their work using the PowerPoint program, including moving text and adding digital photographs. Good use is made of the Internet to allow pupils to explore and find information, and many older pupils use e-mail to contact their friends and family; the most skilful doing this unaided.
139. Overall, the teaching of ICT is good and pupils learn well in most lessons. Teachers have received appropriate training to allow them to teach all aspects of the curriculum. Lessons are well structured and managed so that pupils can receive the support they need. Teachers generally support work very well, making good judgements about how much help to give and how much to allow pupils to learn through experimentation. For example, in a Year 4 lesson, while lower attaining pupils were carefully guided in their use of a drawing program, more skilful pupils were allowed to experiment, and they clearly learned from their successes and failures. In the main, other staff are also able to provide this quality of support. However, there are occasions when they are not sufficiently conversant with the program being used to provide sufficiently good levels of support. An ongoing programme of training for support staff is provided, but this is not yet sufficiently well linked to the planning of work to ensure that the training has been completed for all who will need it.
140. Work is clearly planned for each unit undertaken and this ensures that there is appropriate coverage of the subject. Good use is made of ICT to support learning in other subjects, both through its use in allowing pupils to communicate and through the use of programs that give practice and reinforcement of basic skills in English and mathematics.
141. Assessment is a current focus of development work in ICT. Assessments were made for each pupil at the end of the academic year in 2002, and these, together with future assessments, will enable the co-ordinator to evaluate the success of teaching in ICT in terms of pupils' achievements. Currently, teachers evaluate the work completed at the end of each unit. The quality of these evaluations varies, and while some provide a record of what has been achieved, the majority do not provide this information. The lack of records, showing clear progression of skills and knowledge in ICT, means that

assessment information is not always sufficiently helpful in planning the next unit of work.

142. Leadership and management of the subject are good. The co-ordinator has guided the staff well through the recent introduction of new computers and programs. Plans for future development are sensible and based on secure knowledge of relative weaknesses of the education provided. The level of resourcing in the school is good, but the amount of equipment in the school now takes a good deal of maintenance. Although the school can call on technical support, the absence of an ICT technician means that organisation and provision of this support is time consuming for the co-ordinator and some support staff.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

French

143. Achievement in French is good; the school provides a good range of learning experiences and teaching is good. Although it is not possible to identify all pupils' individual attainments, because there are no ongoing records of this, pupils' work shows evidence of good progress. Those in Year 7 have little or no experience of the language, but they soon acquire key vocabulary and short phrases. Their understanding of spoken French develops more quickly than their ability to speak, read or write the language, because there is a greater emphasis on listening. Pupils are confident though, and enjoy acquiring skills in a foreign language. By Year 9, they are able to give and return common greetings, and know the vocabulary for a range of key topics, such as colours, numbers, the weather, and their preferred leisure activities. The most skilled can carry on a short conversation, introducing themselves, and giving basic information in response to questions, about their age, for example. They have sufficient language to order a snack and drink in a café. By Year 11, the most skilled pupils have reached a good standard of conversational French, and could survive in France with the language they have. Although a few are capable of obtaining accreditation, this is not yet provided.
144. Teaching and learning are good. There are suitable opportunities provided for pupils to listen, respond, read and write. Good use is made of games, songs, surveys, quizzes and ICT; these appeal to pupils, and help to maintain their interest whilst they consolidate vocabulary and phrases. The skills of support staff and volunteers are used well to give less able pupils the prompts that they need to keep their confidence high. Pupils try hard to improve their pronunciation; in this respect, the teacher provides a satisfactory role model, supplemented well by recordings of native speakers. Good use is made of a commercial scheme, supplemented by other resources, such as software. There are plans to extend the range of experiences to include contact with French pupils through electronic mail, and an annual visit to France.
145. Leadership and management of the subject are satisfactory. The co-ordinator does not teach the subject, but liaises with the part-time teacher to keep the subject under review. There is a suitable policy to guide the work of teachers. There has been satisfactory improvement since the last inspection; ICT is now used as a learning tool, for example. There is room for further improvement in the keeping of attainment records and the provision of suitable external accreditation.

MUSIC

146. Pupils achieve well in music; they are given a good range of learning experiences and teaching is good. Particular strengths are the subject expertise of teachers, the skilful management of pupils, the effective use of non-teaching staff, and use of appealing resources and activities. All of these ensure that pupils are involved well in lessons, which they enjoy. Teachers encourage communication well, by singing greetings to pupils at the start of each lesson, for example.
147. In a lesson in Years 1 and 2, staff enabled pupils to experience silences in music, and to make music with silences too. Most pupils were able to start and stop playing at a signal from the teacher, and the most skilled were able to beat in time to the music. Pupils showed great enjoyment of number songs, and the teacher skilfully used props to act out the sequence of 'Five Little Firemen'. This held pupils' attention well, and challenged them to think about numbers when asked, 'how many more do we need for the song?'
148. By Year 6, pupils recognise slow and fast music; the most knowledgeable identify and name common percussion instruments. In a lesson for this age group, the teacher selected music well to enable pupils to grasp the teaching points. Most were able to identify the Radetzky March as two-beat time, for instance.
149. By Year 9, most pupils sing in tune with an adult leading, and the most skilful can sing a round. Secondary pupils, particularly, enjoy the weekly lunchtime singing club, where they learn new songs, and rehearse these for performances in assembly. Pupils at this stage can identify a range of musical styles, and appraise music using vocabulary such as 'ostinato', 'tempo' and 'dynamics'. Teachers introduce musical terms carefully, and emphasise these well, encouraging pupils to use them too. Good use is made of new technology and percussion to enable pupils to compose music.
150. By Year 11, pupils play an accompaniment to a song, using a chosen percussion instrument. The most knowledgeable name tuned instruments, such as a violin and a flute. In a lesson for pupils of this age group, the teacher carried out a challenging assessment of pupils' skills, to see whether pupils could identify certain variations in a piece of music, such as the addition of chords. Pupils tried hard to do their best, and recorded their responses on a prepared sheet. Through assessments such as these, and their own observations, teachers build up a good knowledge of pupils' musical knowledge, skills and understanding. However, they do not use these to compile ongoing records, and this makes it difficult to monitor progress. If a different teacher had to take over, some considerable time would need to be spent assessing pupils, before suitable lessons could be planned.
151. Pupils' good attitudes and harmonious relationships help to secure progress in lessons. For example, one pupil spontaneously helped a very disabled classmate to hold a set of bells, and enabled him to experience the playing of music. Pupils co-operate very well with the adults who support them.
152. Support staff and volunteers also make a strong contribution in lessons, helping pupils to communicate their answers to teachers' questions by recording possible responses onto tape, which pupils then activate by pressing a switch. They also assist pupils in reading assessment sheets, and ensure that pupils are involved in activities by giving hand-over-hand support.
153. Leadership of the subject is good. The co-ordinator has secured good improvement since the last inspection; the curriculum is now better balanced, resources have improved, and there is increased use of ICT to help pupils learn; pupils with communication difficulties are now involved well in all lessons.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

154. The quality of provision in physical education is very good overall. The quality of teaching is very good in gymnastics and movement and it is good in games, hydrotherapy and other aspects of the subject. This results in very good achievement. The school makes very good use of facilities within the community and at the local secondary school.
155. By Year 2, pupils are developing rolling, jumping and travelling movements. They perform barrel rolls and, as they perform their repertoires, they stretch and curl as they change position. When pupils are using the hydrotherapy pool, they gain confidence in the water, being able to position rubber quoits on their knees, legs and arms. The teaching is good and pupils gain confidence and enjoy the experience of floating on their backs as they are towed through the water. Pupils respond enthusiastically to the teacher's directions in gymnastics, for example stretching their arms to create body tension to balance themselves on the sides of their wheelchairs in a sitting position.
156. By Year 6, pupils have gained in confidence and maturity and have further developed their body strength, balance and co-ordination. They repeat their repertoires of movements, for instance beginning with a body stretch, moving into a roll and completing the sequence with a balanced walk along a bench and a jump onto a mat. Individual pupils confidently move through the water in the swimming pool, taking their feet off the ground and floating with the support of swimming aids. Pupils made very good progress linking movement with drama when they simulated the movements of wild animals. They were seen moving around the gymnasium, acting out the roles of slithering snakes, chattering and cheeky monkeys, and loping elephants, using their trunks to rip branches from the trees and force a path through the 'forest'.
157. By Year 9, pupils are fully involved in a variety of team games including football, netball and basketball. During gymnastics lessons, they make very good progress. For instance, they hold balances using three body contact points with surfaces. Pupils experiment to produce poised stretches based on shoulder contact with the floor. They hold their positions then move into rolls to travel across mats and incorporate benches and towers into their repertoires. In small-sided games, they develop associated skills, such as passing and catching, and become aware of strategies and the importance of teamwork. This quality of skill development continues into Years 10 and 11.
158. Teachers have very good subject knowledge and are skilled at setting the objectives of the lesson to reflect the potential of the pupils. Warm ups are valuable in introducing the activities and in helping the pupils to understand the effects of exercise on their heart rate. Lessons move forward at a challenging pace with new skills often taught through the practice of asking pupils to demonstrate a balance or striking movement. This gives other pupils the confidence to attempt a similar activity and helps them to evaluate the quality of the work of their classmates. Support assistants play a vital role in the development of less able pupils who they support and encourage as they make gradual progress. The excellent relationships between adults and pupils ensure that children feel confident and secure. Pupils play an enthusiastic part in setting up and putting away the apparatus used during the lessons.
159. Physical education throughout the school is well led and managed. The co-ordinator is well qualified and experienced and ensures that the programmes of work meet the

individual needs of the pupils. Assessment procedures are very good and enable staff to identify the progress that pupils are making.

160. A wide range of activities in physical education is planned for all pupils. These include both competitive games and problem-solving activities involving collaboration and teamwork. Horse-riding activities are organised to improve pupils' balance and muscle tone. Climbing and abseiling are organised in the local sports hall and during the annual residential visit. In addition, orienteering, sailing and canoeing take place during this visit. Social development is included through the teaching of creative and modern dance and older pupils visit the local golf club for introductory lessons. Other leisure activities include ten pin bowling and bowls. A physical education activity is incorporated into the weekly leisure club for older pupils.
161. There has been a good improvement in the physical education provision since the last inspection and standards have risen. The quality of the teaching in the infant and the junior classes has improved. The school has good accommodation to support the subject and extends this through the facilities within the community. However, some of the equipment available is not suitable for the pupils because it is heavy and difficult to handle. The school makes use of sports coaches, which strengthens the teaching. Recently, during a science day, pupils used ICT to record and analyse their pulse rates before and after exercise. They produced tables of results and line graphs to forge positive links between physical education, mathematics, science and personal social and health education.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

162. Due to timetabling arrangements, only two lessons of religious education were observed during the course of the inspection. However, these lessons, scrutiny of pupils' work and teachers' planning and discussions with staff and pupils indicate that pupils' achievements are good overall.
163. In a Year 2 lesson, pupils were learning about the Jewish Sukkah as part of their work on 'special places'. Skilled teaching promoted the idea of special feelings and special places and the higher attaining pupils appreciated the idea of a place that is special to people. The lower attaining pupils were able to identify some special places of their own, for example their bed or their garden.
164. In a Year 9 lesson, pupils' study of different world faiths addressed Sikhism. The very good teaching introduced this by a role-play of the creation of Khalsa where pupils re-created the entry into the tent and the realisation that the deaths were staged. The 'Five Ks' were introduced with great sensitivity by the teacher, and pupils handled artefacts with respect. The lesson ended with a very effective discussion led by the teacher about the problems and advantages of practising religion around the world; the pupils made sensible observations about, for example the danger in some situations of practising a religion which is in a minority.
165. Teaching is good and the curriculum is based on the local education authority's agreed syllabus. As the pupils move through the school, they gain an increasing understanding both of Christianity and other religions and of some wider aspects of spirituality. Good links are made with other subjects, such as personal, social and health education. Literacy skills are reinforced well by the introduction of unfamiliar words and their spelling. Religious education lessons and coverage reflect the school's ethos well. Festivals in most world religions are addressed and the subject makes a clear contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. The subject is well managed by the co-ordinator and resources are good; there is a

good range of artefacts available. The local community is used for visits to churches and temples, and visitors are invited to address some aspects of the subject. At the time of the last inspection, pupils' achievements were satisfactory. Since then, good improvements have been made in the scheme of work, the co-ordination of the subject and the quality of teaching.