

INSPECTION REPORT

**ALTERNATIVE CENTRE FOR EDUCATION (ACE)
SCHOOL**

(previously Queensdown)

Brighton

LEA area: Brighton and Hove

Unique reference number: 114678

Headteacher: Mr M Whitby

Reporting inspector: Alastair Younger
23587

Dates of inspection: 14th-17th October 2002

Inspection number: 249359

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:	Community Special
Age range of pupils:	5 -16
Gender of pupils:	Mixed
School address:	The Alternative Centre for Education St George's House 43 Dyke Road Brighton
Postcode:	BN1 3JA
Telephone number:	01273 327389
Fax number:	01273 747059
Appropriate authority:	The Governing Body
Name of chair of governors:	Mrs P Hawkes
Date of previous inspection:	Not previously inspected

INFORMATION ABOUT THE INSPECTION TEAM

Team members			Subject responsibilities	Aspect responsibilities
23587	Alastair Younger	Registered inspector		What sort of school is it? The school's results and pupils' achievements How well are pupils taught?
8941	John Fletcher	Lay inspector		How well does the school care for its pupils? How well does the school work in partnership with parents?
13101	Mike Kell	Team inspector	Mathematics Physical education	How well is the school led and managed?
11239	Sue Flockton	Team inspector	English Religious education Educational inclusion	
22178	Kate Robertson	Team inspector	Information and communication technology Art and design Design and technology	
22821	Linda Wolstencroft	Team inspector	Geography History Music	
8810	Sue Aldridge	Team inspector	Science Modern foreign language Special educational needs	Quality and range of learning opportunities

The inspection contractor was:

Penta International
Upperton House
The Avenue
Eastbourne
BN21 3YB

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Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London WC2B 6SE

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PART A: SUMMARY OF THE REPORT

INFORMATION ABOUT THE SCHOOL

The alternative Centre for Education (ACE) is a new school with an innovative approach to offering a broad range of provision to pupils experiencing emotional and behavioural difficulties. However, it is designated a school in that it has a single, fully devolved budget and is controlled by one governing body. Its three main parts are:

- a special school for pupils with statements of special educational need (37 boys and girls. In the report they are referred to as registered pupils)
- provision for pupils who are usually on the role of other schools, but failing to thrive in them and often at risk of exclusion or having been permanently excluded (110 boys and girls; although these pupils dual attend they are not dual registered, they are at the stage of *school action plus* or may have a statement naming another school. In the report they are referred to as Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) pupils)
- a support service operating wholly in mainstream schools. (This was not included in the inspection)

Numbers fluctuate considerably according to need. Pupils are referred at any time of the year. There are about four times as many boys as girls. Virtually all pupils are white and all speak English as their main language. Most pupils have been underachieving in their previous schools, often on account of bad behaviour or attendance. There are currently no Year 1, 2 or 7 registered pupils. It operates on five sites.

HOW GOOD THE SCHOOL IS

This is a good organisation. Pupils learn well because teaching is good. As a result they achieve well in important areas of the curriculum and their personal development. Very good leadership has made this possible. Good management points to this achievement being built upon. At a realistic cost for this type of provision, ACE is providing good value for money. It is also serving other schools and the local education authority well. It is helping to reduce their rate of exclusions and keep as many pupils as possible on the roll of mainstream schools.

What the school does well

- Teaching is good, it leads to pupils learning well and making good progress.
- Pupils are well cared for.
- There is a very good headteacher; he is very well supported by location managers.
- Pupils nearing leaving age are prepared very well for life after school.
- Parents are kept fully informed about how their children are getting on.

What could be improved

- The curriculum; by ensuring that it meets statutory requirements for all pupils and that it is better managed
- The governing body; by increasing its membership from the wider community and by ensuring that it fulfils all of its statutory duties
- Provision for cultural, and especially multicultural, education

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

ACE has not previously been inspected.

STANDARDS

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

Progress in:	by Year 6	by Year 11	Key	
speaking and listening	B	B	very good	A
Reading	B	B	good	B
Writing	B	B	satisfactory	C
Mathematics	B	C	unsatisfactory	D
personal, social and health education	B	B	poor	E
other personal targets set at annual reviews or in IEPs*	B	B		

Pupils' achievement is good overall. It is good for all primary aged pupils, PRU pupils in years 7, 8 and 9 and all pupils in Years 10 and 11. Achievement is satisfactory for registered pupils in Years 8 and 9. This is because the curriculum for these pupils is weaker and their achievements are therefore spread over a narrower range of subjects. Achievement is good for all pupils in English and personal, social and health education, areas where the school focuses its attention. Pupils are also achieving well in meeting individual targets for personal development. Although primary aged pupils achieve well in mathematics, progress slows for older pupils because learning is currently less systematic. Primary aged pupils achieve well in science but for older pupils there is not enough investigative work and this contributes to pupils making insufficient progress in Years 7, 8 and 9. ACE meets its own targets well. These relate primarily to increasing the opportunities for pupils to return to, or stay in, school and achieve success there. They are good, ambitious targets which reflect ACE's desire to pursue the spirit of inclusion. Achievement is satisfactory overall in art and design, citizenship, information and communication technology and religious education. It is unsatisfactory overall in design and technology, geography and history, music, modern foreign language and physical education.

PUPILS' ATTITUDES AND VALUES

Aspect	Comment
Attitudes to the school	Good. Most pupils look forward to attending and arrive expecting to work. In most lessons they join in wholeheartedly with activities and try hard to succeed. Many pupils who have previously isolated themselves from education re-engage and discover that it has something to offer them.
Behaviour, in and out of classrooms	Good. Most pupils behave well in lessons but occasionally, bad behaviour limits learning. This is particularly so with a small group of registered pupils in Years 8 and 9. Older pupils behave very responsibly. Younger pupils behave well and many return to school full time. Over the past year, 82 pupils have been excluded for short periods. This number has been reducing for each of the last three terms.
Personal development and relationships	Good. Pupils often help one another. They learn to respect adults in school and the workplace. What prevents personal development from being even better is that pupils do not sufficiently learn how to study independently. A small group of Year 8 and 9 pupils is not able to show growing maturity because part of their education is in an environment that is unnecessarily restrictive.
Attendance	Although ACE pupils do not achieve the level of attendance desired of all schools nationally, nearly all succeed in improving on their previous attendance record. This is particularly so for pupils who have previously shown the most reluctance to attend school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

Teaching of pupils:	Years 2 – 6	Years 7 – 11
Quality of teaching	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.

Teachers put a lot of thought into what they want pupils to learn in each lesson. They ensure that work is relevant and matches pupils' ability and mood. Most lessons are enlivened by incorporating different tasks and styles of teaching. This helps to keep pupils interested. Teachers are good at checking what each pupil has remembered before embarking on something new. Marking of pupils' work is a weakness. English is well taught and nearly all teachers include good opportunities for pupils to improve their literacy skills, irrespective of the subject being taught. Maths teaching is good and so is the attention teachers pay to promoting numeracy skills. Primary aged pupils are taught science well but teaching of secondary pupils is unsatisfactory overall. Personal, social and health education is well taught. On occasion, bad behaviour tests teachers' behaviour management skills beyond

their limit but most lessons are characterised by skilful management of behaviour, often drawing significantly on very good relationships between pupils and teachers.

OTHER ASPECTS OF THE SCHOOL

Aspect	Comment
The quality and range of the curriculum	On the grounds that the curriculum does not meet statutory requirements it is unsatisfactory. Nevertheless, it has many good features. In important areas such as personal, social and health education and English it is good. The curriculum for PRU pupils is good and so is that for primary aged pupils. Pupils in Years 10 and 11 have a very relevant curriculum. It prepares them well for entering the world of work. Registered pupils in Years 8 and 9 are not receiving their full national curriculum entitlement.
Provision for pupils' personal, including spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	Good. Provision for helping pupils' moral development is very good. They are also given good opportunities to develop their social skills. Pupils are offered a lot of encouragement and made to feel valued and as a result, their spiritual development is satisfactory. Provision for cultural development is unsatisfactory. Insufficient attention is paid to multicultural education.
How well the school cares for its pupils	Good. Pupils are very well looked after in a safe environment. Attendance and behaviour are closely monitored and there are many good strategies for improving both. Many procedures for assessing pupils' academic progress are new. They are satisfactory but have not yet benefited curricular planning.

ACE goes to great lengths to involve parents as much as possible in their children's education. Parents are given very good information about how their children are progressing. They are kept fully informed about the good things their children do as well as the bad things.

HOW WELL THE SCHOOL IS LED AND MANAGED

Aspect	Comment
Leadership and management by the headteacher and other key staff	Very good. The headteacher and staff who manage each location provide leadership of a very high quality. They are implementing change speedily, sensitively and successfully. They have taken a visionary approach to solving a complex problem. Management is good but there is a weakness in the management of the curriculum.
How well the appropriate authority fulfils its responsibilities	Satisfactory. The governing body has provided invaluable support in getting ACE up and running. They have a good understanding of its strengths and weaknesses because they are receiving detailed information from the headteacher. What they are not doing sufficiently well is getting into ACE to see for themselves the work that is being done. The governing body has not fulfilled statutory duties relating to the curriculum. There is a potential risk of conflict of interest with the governing body being made up almost entirely of members of the education committee, local education employees, and school staff.
The school's evaluation of its performance	Good. Teaching is closely monitored and there is a strong approach to performance management. Performance in many important areas is closely monitored, helped by a very good school improvement plan.
The strategic use of resources	Good. Finance is very carefully managed and best value sought. There are occasional weaknesses in the deployment of staff and the use of specialist accommodation

ACE is suitably staffed. Most teachers show a high level of professionalism. Support staff work well with teachers and pupils. Accommodation is satisfactory overall but there are weaknesses in specialist facilities for physical education. Resources are satisfactory overall and there are enough computers to support learning and administration.

PARENTS' AND CARERS' VIEWS OF THE SCHOOL

One questionnaire was returned and three parents expressed their views in a meeting prior to the inspection. These parents strongly support ACE and feel it is significantly helping their children. Two parents expressed concern over whether their children were receiving their full curricular entitlement. Inspectors shared this concern.

PART B: COMMENTARY

HOW HIGH ARE STANDARDS?

The school's results and pupils' achievements

1. Most pupils achieve well. There are many different groups of pupils identified by the school but of the three main groups, two of them are characterised by good achievement. These are primary aged pupils, both PRU and registered, and PRU pupils in all other year groups. A small group of registered pupils in Years 8 and 9 are only achieving satisfactorily because the range of subjects offered is more limited than it should be and because their behaviour is inhibiting their learning.

2. PRU pupils of all ages achieve well because the school is working closely with their mainstream schools to present a good, coordinated approach to learning. As a result of close liaison, pupils are benefiting from the specialist support offered by ACE staff and also being helped to take greater advantage of teaching in their mainstream schools because of the improvements that are being made in their personal development. Most primary aged PRU pupils are making sufficient progress for them to return successfully to mainstream school full time. PRU pupils in Years 10 and 11 are unlikely to return full time to school but achieve success in examinations that would probably not have been taken without the support of ACE staff. These pupils are also being particularly well prepared for life after school through their achievements in work experience, careers and college courses. There is a significant group of PRU pupils who were initially referred on account of their reluctance to attend school or because they were becoming increasingly withdrawn in school. These pupils achieve well in all the subjects they are taught.

3. Primary aged registered pupils achieve well because every subject of the National Curriculum is taught in a well-planned manner by good teachers. Secondary aged registered pupils make satisfactory progress overall. In years 10 and 11 they are making good progress, alongside PRU pupils of the same age. This is because the curriculum is well suited to their needs and their personal development has reached a stage where they have become interested in life after school and motivated to do well. The problem group is one of about half a dozen registered Year 8 and 9 pupils. These pupils show little interest in learning and a lot in misbehaving. Several staff have difficulty in managing their behaviour and in many situations their needs are not being met. As a result they are making unsatisfactory progress.

4. English forms a firm foundation for pupils' achievement. The department is well organised, leading the way for other subjects. The whole school approach to improving pupils' literacy is good. Throughout the inspection, English teaching was never less than good and over half of it was better. As a result, all pupils achieve well in improving their reading, writing, speaking and listening. Achievement in mathematics is good for primary aged pupils and satisfactory elsewhere. The national numeracy strategy has been well implemented at primary level and this is helping pupils to achieve more because it has raised the awareness and ability of all teachers as to how they can improve pupils' ability to handle number. This is less pronounced at secondary level and alongside a less well organised curriculum explains why achievement is slightly less even though teaching is of a similar good quality for pupils of all ages. Achievement in science is good for pupils of primary age. They enjoy the practical approach to the subject and are well motivated to work hard. This is not the case for pupils in Years 8 and 9. They are less well taught, they lose interest in being taught and they do not achieve enough. In Years 10 and 11, pupils regain some of their enthusiasm, probably prompted by the opportunity of gaining a qualification. This helps them to achieve satisfactorily.

5. Achievement has more to do with pupils' attitudes and behaviour than to gender, age or race. Every pupil is treated as an individual and given suitable support. Pupils with additional special educational needs are well supported. The quality of teaching is very similar across all sites. In nearly all cases, individual targets for personal development and academic achievement are being met with a good degree of success.

Pupils' attitudes, values and personal development

6. Pupils' positive attitudes make a significant contribution to their progress. Discussions with pupils confirm most are happy to be attending the centre. Most show a genuine interest in their work and a determination to learn. When teaching captures their imagination, pupils are eager to contribute, show enthusiasm for tasks and become engrossed in their work. Pupils respond well to individual attention and many begin to feel comfortable with education for the first time in their lives.

7. Good behaviour contributes to a safe and orderly environment that is conducive to learning. Records show that pupils' behaviour improves considerably in the time they spend at ACE. In most lessons pupils are orderly, relate well with adults and each other and maintain concentration well. Nevertheless, in a few lessons, concentration waivers and pupils become uncooperative. Primary pupils tend to behave consistently well and older pupils behave more maturely as they prepare for the world of work and life after school. The unacceptable behaviour is mainly found amongst a small group of registered pupils in Years 8 and 9, especially when they are being taught on the Queensdown site. However, exclusions for unacceptable behaviour have been falling over the last year and are now at a low level.

8. Relationships are good. The high level of mutual trust and respect between pupils and adults contributes significantly to the progress pupils make. Most pupils are uninhibited and do not hesitate to discuss problems. They openly seek advice on personal issues. Growing confidence helps many pupils to return successfully to school and also helps leavers to tackle college courses or gain employment. Pupils often work harmoniously together, sharing equipment, taking turns and being supportive of each other, as in a Year 11 mathematics lesson where one girl took time to ensure that a boy in the group understood what was expected and knew how to do the exercise. There can be flash points between pupils when unkind exchanges occur but these are generally quickly forgotten. Many pupils remain very dependent on staff but a few of the older pupils show signs of taking responsibility for furthering their own learning.

9. The overall level of attendance is significantly affected by the frequent absence of a few pupils. The attendance of the vast majority of pupils greatly improves during their time at ACE. Those who attend part time show the biggest improvements. Punctuality to school and to lessons is good. Pupils arrive on time and do not take advantage of movement between sites to waste time unnecessarily.

HOW WELL ARE PUPILS TAUGHT?

10. Teaching is good. It is often very good and there is very little unsatisfactory teaching. Most of the best teaching tends to be seen in English and personal, social and health education (PSHE), probably the two most significant areas of the curriculum. Overall, there is very little difference between the quality of teaching on the five different sites or for pupils of different ages. The main area of concern relates to the ability of any but the most skilled teachers to manage the behaviour of the most difficult group of registered pupils in Years 8 and 9. These pupils are not un-teachable. With particularly good teachers they learn satisfactorily as a group. When they are being taught with PRU pupils at Dyke Road they often learn well. A pupil, who had been nothing but trouble throughout three days of the

inspection, became totally absorbed in an English lesson on the final day. Here, teaching was of the highest quality. The teacher had taken time to mix with pupils before the start of school so they knew what was being asked of them. As soon as they got into the classroom they started learning. Behaviour management never became an issue because pupils were totally involved and the lesson was beautifully broken down into short tasks with clear objectives.

11. All of the unsatisfactory teaching was the result of teachers being unable to manage the most extreme behaviour. In the vast majority of lessons behaviour, often difficult, is managed well as teachers draw upon good relationships with pupils to help them to cope at difficult moments. Every so often, however, this is not enough and if it is not backed up by dynamic teaching and a worthwhile learning activity, pupils lose interest. A science lesson for Year 9 registered pupils fell apart for this reason. There was simply not enough teaching, pupils were unsure what was expected of them and new ideas were not explained to them. As a consequence, they emerged from a heavily disrupted lesson no surer of what gravity is than when they had entered the room.

12. Nearly all teachers carefully consider what they want pupils to learn in each lesson. They understand individual needs well and adapt lessons so that all pupils share a realistic chance of achieving success and meeting their clearly stated targets. Lessons are often well broken down into short, linked activities. This helps to maintain pupils' interest throughout, even when they have short attention spans. Pupils' moods are well read by teachers and extra classroom support is carefully directed to help pupils learn as well as behave. There is nearly always a high awareness of how each lesson can contribute to improving pupils' literacy skills. This is slightly less pronounced for promoting numeracy skills but good science lessons often contain opportunities for doing so.

13. Invariably, the best teaching involves a lot of interaction between staff and pupils. Less successful teaching is more static with teachers talking too much and pupils not enough. When this happens, pupils start to lose interest before the end of the lesson and learning slows. Occasionally, praise is overused and unmerited but it is usually used effectively to let pupils know when they have achieved success and to encourage them to work hard and behave well. This often helps to revive flagging interest. Pupils are involved in setting their own targets and staff are good at referring to these in their planning and reminding pupils what they are during lessons. This helps pupils to realise that they have a contribution to make to their own learning.

14. Many lessons are characterised by an opening session where teachers discuss previous work with pupils. Many pupils enjoy this opportunity to show off what they have remembered. It ensures that pupils are paying attention and stimulates interest in what is to follow because it helps pupils to realise that what they have previously learned will be useful to them in the current lesson. The process is usually well followed up at the end of lessons when teachers use simple questioning to check that pupils have met their targets and have understood what has been taught. A more permanent record would be available if the marking of pupils work was as constructive. At the moment, this is an area of weakness because many teachers are not following the school's good guidance. All too often, marking is neglected and even when it is done it is no more than cursory, with a tick and a single word comment.

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

15. A good, broad range of learning experiences is provided for primary aged pupils. It includes all subjects of the National Curriculum, religious education and PSHE. Attention to national curriculum requirements supports well the school's aim to promote inclusion. Primary-aged PRU pupils are well provided for. There is close liaison with their schools to ensure that weekly timetables are organised in such a way that pupils are able to continue to build on their knowledge, skills and understanding in all subjects. Provision for primary pupils with additional special educational needs, such as specific learning difficulties, is good. The head of the primary department has a specialist qualification in teaching pupils with specific learning difficulties, and there are good links with support services for pupils with sensory impairments.

16. Registered pupils in Years 8 and 9 are provided with an unsatisfactory range of learning experiences. The curriculum does not meet requirements for a modern foreign language, physical education, geography, history, music and design and technology. This compromises pupils' potential for returning to mainstream schools. In Years 10 and 11, the curriculum does not meet requirements, but only on a technicality. It serves pupils well by providing good preparation for work, further education and adult life. All that needs to be done now is to formally disapply National Curriculum orders in favour of this work based curriculum in order to comply with legislation.

17. Secondary-aged PRU pupils are provided with a good curriculum. There is a suitable emphasis on English, mathematics, science and PSHE. Information and communication technology is sufficiently provided through other subjects, and there are sufficient opportunities for physical and aesthetic development. A particular strength is the identification of emotional literacy as an important area, and the setting aside of daily sessions for the promotion of relevant skills. Lessons at ACE significantly help pupils to continue with examination courses that they have started in mainstream school but were unlikely to continue without extra support.

18. Provision for careers and vocational education is very good. From Year 9 onwards, all pupils are taught careers. There is good involvement of careers personnel in providing information for pupils, as well as injecting a note of reality into pupils' occupational choices. Pupils draw on a well-stocked library of information, and use computers to find out about jobs and the world of work. From Year 10 onwards, pupils have opportunities to explore a wide range of vocational courses at colleges of further education and an agricultural college. These include courses as varied as tractor driving, motor vehicle maintenance and hairdressing. Many leavers progress to full-time courses at college. Work experience is provided for all pupils, and ACE staff and careers officers go out of their way to provide placements that pupils have chosen. Preparation is thorough, and during their placements monitoring is rigorous and helpful to pupils and employers. Pupils maintain diaries whilst they are at work, and are able to show how they have demonstrated key skills during their placements. Employers' reports show strong satisfaction with the way work experience is organised and supported.

19. The good quality PSHE has been the subject of much development in the past year. A working party has revised the content in line with Brighton and Hove's syllabus, to maximise the chances of pupils' success when returning full time to school. The programme provides relevance by giving a high profile to such aspects as bullying, managing behaviour and anger management. Although provision for citizenship in Years 7 to 9 is not fully in place, it is satisfactory, and the improvement plan shows that a fully compliant programme will be

developed by September 2003. Requirements for teaching about sex and drugs education are met well.

20. There is a good strategy for teaching literacy skills. This is based on the national strategy, and uses the same themes as mainstream schools, in order to facilitate return to mainstream. The ACE strategy for teaching numeracy is satisfactory. There are satisfactory opportunities for pupils to engage in extra-curricular activities. These include a variety of residential trips, a breakfast club, and lunchtime activities.

21. ACE makes a great contribution to the inclusion of all pupils. It provides them with the opportunity of being educated in the most inclusive setting possible, given their emotional and behavioural difficulties. The wide range of provision enables pupils to be easily moved between different models of support. Wherever possible, pupils are on the roll of ACE and of a mainstream school, and many attend both. For those unable to attend mainstream at present, the knowledge that they have a school place helps to make them feel that they have not become entirely separated from their mainstream peers. Registered pupils move towards inclusion by spending increasing time in classes with PRU pupils. For pupils age 16, the focus is, suitably, on inclusion in the context of a college or work placement.

22. Spiritual development is promoted satisfactorily. There is no collective worship but there are daily meetings on each site where the day's events are discussed and pupils are given the opportunity to express their views and encouraged to listen to what others have to say. Staff share a set of values and principles which encourage pupils to develop understanding and consideration for others. Pupils are frequently reminded that in every situation they have choices and they are well guided and encouraged to make the right ones; this contributes significantly to their very good moral development. A good range of activities is planned to help promote social development. Pupils are proud to point out their contribution to day and residential social events and time at the start of each day is well used to encourage good social behaviour as pupils play games, eat breakfast and chat to staff and each other. Flexibility in provision allows registered pupils to mix with PRU pupils and keep in touch with what is happening to friends in mainstream schools. Work experience and college placements help older pupils to learn about the different social demands on young adults once they have left school. There are not enough opportunities for pupils to develop their cultural awareness. There are limited opportunities for pupils to learn about the contribution to world culture, of great artists, musicians, scientists and religious leaders. Very little attention is paid to multicultural issues.

23. One thing that is slowing personal development is the environment at Queensdown, where all doors are kept locked to restrict movement around the site. The impact of this is clearly seen in the difference between the same groups of pupils been taught there and at, for instance, Dyke Road. Where more trust is invested in pupils they respond better and do not abuse it or the extra responsibility it places upon them. As a result, behaviour, attitudes and personal development of these pupils are much better at Dyke Road than at Queensdown.

24. Links with the community to enrich the learning experiences at ACE are relatively under developed. There are occasional visits to local shops for primary pupils and to leisure and sporting facilities for all pupils but there are few community visitors to the school and little contact with community institutions. Where the community plays a much greater role is in offering older pupils work placements to enhance their understanding of what life is going to be like after school. There are very good relationships with mainstream schools. In the case of PRU pupils, staff work closely and effectively with those schools to ensure that full time return is secured as soon as possible. Eight mainstream schools contacted the inspection team to confirm the effectiveness of the work done at ACE and to express their appreciation for the support provided. One begged to differ. There is a significant amount of effective

collaboration with the full range of external agencies which helps to secure pupils' emotional and behavioural development.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL CARE FOR ITS PUPILS?

25. Procedures for ensuring pupils' welfare are effective, consistently applied and have a positive impact on pupils' achievement and personal development. Staff have pupils' well being in their minds at all times and effectively and sensitively deal with some very difficult problems at individual pupil level. ACE fully meets statutory requirements relating to child protection. Staff are vigilant and sensitive in exercising their responsibilities. Health and safety procedures are very good. Staff are conscientious in ensuring that concerns are reported and eliminated as quickly as possible. First aiders hold up to date accreditation. Comprehensive records of incidents and accidents are maintained and parents are quickly informed of any illness or injury. In practical lessons, care is taken to ensure that pupils work safely.

26. Agreed goals for personal and social skill development are stated in good individual education plans. The significant level of success that many pupils achieve in reaching these goals owes much to the consistent level of day to day monitoring and the effective, flexible and rapid interventions made by staff whenever pupils experience difficulties. The one-to-one support for pupils, the use of good short term targets, the involvement of parents and the constant use of pupil self assessment to gauge progress all contribute to making the care package very effective.

27. Attendance is closely monitored and flexible strategies are used successfully with the majority of pupils to encourage attendance and hence increase learning opportunities. Unexplained absence is quickly followed up by telephone and there is regular contact with the educational welfare service. The provision of breakfast encourages pupils to turn up early in the mornings. Published attendance statistics are restricted to registered pupils. They do not include PRU pupils. As many of the most striking improvements in attendance are amongst these pupils the organisation is wisely and correctly planning to change attendance monitoring to cover all pupils.

28. Effective procedures have been successful in improving behaviour. There is a little inconsistency in expectations with the Queensdown site being over regulated. Generally, pupils understand behaviour expectations and respond well. This is particularly so in the primary unit where awards for good effort and achievement are used well. Unacceptable behaviour is usually handled effectively to minimise disruption. Pupils experiencing behaviour difficulties are given very good support through the sanction system and individual improvement plans to address their problems.

29. Procedures for the assessment and recording of pupils' progress are good overall. A new system, using a common format for recording achievement, is beginning to be used throughout the school. It constructively incorporates pupils' self-evaluation of their performance. Information from the new system has yet to make an impact on curricular planning but is being used to fine tune lesson planning.

30. Many pupils come with little or no information on their prior attainment, either because they have been out of school for extended periods of time, or because records from previous schools have not been forthcoming. Where information is missing or not up-to-date pupils are assessed, for instance in reading, as soon as possible after entry. This information is not sufficiently used to improve subject planning. The management is aware of inconsistencies in teacher assessments against national curriculum levels and recognises that this is an area to be developed. Records of annual reviews are thorough and contain subject progress

reports linked to national curriculum levels of achievement. Objectives in pupils' individual education plans, both academic and personal, are plainly written, and linked well to priorities identified at their annual reviews. Objectives are referred to on a day-to-day basis in lessons.

HOW WELL DOES THE SCHOOL WORK IN PARTNERSHIP WITH PARENTS?

31. The good links with parents and carers reflect the effectiveness of the work that staff put into developing the partnership. ACE has the positive support of most parents and carers. Although the response to the questionnaire and at the consultation meeting was limited it did reveal positive views about the progress their children are making. The high levels of attendance at meetings, the frequency of contact and clear interest that parents show in their children's education confirm parents' support for ACE. Inspectors support the concerns expressed by two parents over the limited curriculum for Year 8 and 9 pupils.

32. The frequency of contact with home and the quality of information provided, particularly in relation to personal development and progress are very good. Formal contacts with parents begin at referral and staff work effectively to build a trusting relationship and encourage parental support for their children's programmes. Regular phone contact is maintained and there are frequent opportunities for parents to participate in reviews of progress. Where difficulties arise, parents are quickly alerted and involved in determining future plans. The strength of the relationship with many parents is such that they are happy to approach the staff for advice and guidance on general aspects of life. The recent appointment of a full time home liaison officer is proving a positive additional route for communication with home. In a good new initiative, a parent support group is due to be launched in the near future to extend further the partnership and to encourage more involvement by parents' in their children's education.

HOW WELL IS THE SCHOOL LED AND MANAGED?

33. The headteacher and senior staff provide very good leadership and give the school a very clear educational direction. The sharp, critical perspective that the headteacher and governors maintain, encourages all staff to think about the best ways to help pupils. The senior managers at each location are particularly effective in ensuring that day-to-day work reflects ACE's overall aims and values and staff go about their work enthusiastically. This enthusiasm is maintained because communication is particularly good, resulting in full sharing of information. Everyone shares in identifying priorities for development and, as a result, there is a powerful sense of commitment throughout the organisation. This commitment is reflected in the very good progress made by ACE towards meeting two of its main targets. One, a very ambitious target to raise the attendance of pupils who also attend mainstream schools was nearly met, whilst another, to support mainstream schools in order to reduce significantly the number of permanent exclusions, has been met and sustained over a two-year period.

34. The governing body has been very supportive in setting up ACE and has continued to provide very high levels of professional expertise and support since then. Governors' input into areas such as the child protection policy and procedures and drugs education has been particularly effective. The governing body's support and understanding has enabled great strides to be made in providing a good service in a short period of time. However, the time has now come for the governing body to widen its membership by becoming more representative of the local community rather than continuing to be dominated by local education committee members and local education authority employees. This situation is leaving it open to conflict of interests. Nevertheless, the governing body is effective in fulfilling most of its responsibilities and helping to shape the direction of the school. It does not, however sufficiently fulfil its statutory duty relating to the curriculum. It has a good

understanding of what goes on in the school through its committee structure and regular reports from the headteacher, but governors do not make regular visits to different sites to gain first hand knowledge of the work that is going on.

35. There are many, good mechanisms for evaluating performance. The strategic management team has identified realistic long-term priorities and these have been skilfully balanced with more immediate activities required to address areas of weakness. Targets contained within this school improvement plan are carefully monitored and evaluated through structured and systematic mechanisms. The operational management team plays a very good role in these monitoring and auditing procedures. School improvement strategies are underpinned and very well supported by strong financial management; confirmed by the most recent local authority audit in November 2001. There are good procedures for ensuring best value.

36. Senior staff occasionally monitor teaching but subject co-ordinators are not sufficiently involved in observing and advising colleagues on how to improve their practice and to report back to them formally. As a result, co-ordinators cannot ensure consistency of approach, for instance in areas such as implementation of the national numeracy strategy. Weaknesses in overall management of the curriculum are evident in the failure to meet statutory requirements for registered pupils in years 7 to 11. ACE is aware of this shortcoming in provision through its curriculum audit and evaluation of whole school targets, but to date its level of response has not been positive enough to enable these pupils to receive their full curriculum entitlement.

37. Performance management has been successfully established for teaching staff and used positively to identify personal targets and professional development needs which relate to individual roles and to the developing needs of the organisation. The training needs of support staff are addressed through an effective programme of interviews by senior staff.

38. There are sufficient, well-qualified and experienced staff. Weaknesses in the curriculum are rarely the result of a lack of specialist staff but more commonly related to the difficulties of spreading expertise over five sites. Support staff provide effective support to individuals and groups of pupils. All staff attend a wide range of appropriate courses which enhance and develop the skills needed to meet pupils' needs. Arrangements for the induction of new staff are satisfactory. Accommodation is satisfactory. Buildings and facilities are being adapted to meet the needs of different groups of pupils. Facilities at the Queensdown site include good, but underused, specialist rooms for science, technology and art. All the accommodation is clean and well kept and staff work effectively to make it attractive by displaying pupils' work and photographs of activities undertaken by pupils. Facilities for physical education at the site for younger pupils are unsatisfactory. This has been recognised and good arrangements made with a nearby school to use accommodation there. There are no dedicated library areas although books are available in classrooms. Resources for learning are satisfactory.

WHAT SHOULD THE SCHOOL DO TO IMPROVE FURTHER?

39. In order to bring about further improvement the staff and governors should now:

- Improve the curriculum for registered pupils in Years 7, 8 and 9 and ensure that all statutory requirements relating to the curriculum are met (paragraphs 1, 16, 34, 64, 65, 68, 74, 76, 79)
- Improve the management of the subjects of the curriculum, by following the best practice as seen in English and personal, social and health education. (paragraph 36)
- Strengthen the governing body by making it more representative of the community and ensuring that members play a greater role in monitoring standards (paragraph 34)
- Improve provision for promoting cultural, and especially multicultural, education (paragraph 22)

PART C: SCHOOL DATA AND INDICATORS

Summary of the sources of evidence for the inspection

Number of lessons observed	41
Number of discussions with staff, governors, other adults and pupils	26

Summary of teaching observed during the inspection

	Excellent	Very good	Good	Satisfactory	Unsatisfactory	Poor	Very Poor
Number	1	11	16	12	0	1	0
Percentage	2.5	26	39	30	0	2.5	0

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 two percentage points.

Information about the school's pupils

Pupils on the school's roll	No of pupils
Number of pupils on the school's roll	37*
Number of full-time pupils known to be eligible for free school meals	22

* a further 110 pupils attend PRU provision but remain on the registers of other schools

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

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

Attendance*

Authorised absence

	%
School data	12

Unauthorised absence

	%
School data	8

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

*figures relate only to pupils on the school's register

Ethnic background of pupils**Exclusion 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	138	91	0
White – Irish	0	0	0
White – any other White background	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black Caribbean	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Black African	0	0	0
Mixed – White and Asian	0	0	0
Mixed – any other mixed background	3	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Indian	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British - Pakistani	0	0	0
Asian or Asian British – Bangladeshi	0	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	0	0	0
No ethnic group recorded	6	1	0

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

Teachers and classes

Qualified teachers and classes: Y1 – Y11

Total number of qualified teachers (FTE)	27.5
Number of pupils per qualified teacher	6
Average class size	6

Education support staff: Y1 – Y11

Total number of education support staff	15
Total aggregate hours worked per week	355

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Financial information

Financial year	2001/2002
	£
Total income	1388923
Total expenditure	1435341
Expenditure per pupil	12500
Balance brought forward from previous year	-1957
Balance carried forward to next year	-48375

Recruitment of teachers

Number of teachers who left the school during the last two years	8.37
Number of teachers appointed to the school during the last two years	4.6

Total number of vacant teaching posts (FTE)	2
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)	2.4

FTE means full-time equivalent.

Results of the survey of parents and carers

Summary of parents' and carers' responses

A single response to the questionnaire and the two parents who attended a meeting prior to the inspection expressed positive views. Two parents expressed concern over whether their children were receiving their full curricular entitlement. As they were parents of registered pupils they were right to raise this issue and their concern is justified.

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

ENGLISH

40. Pupils' achievements in English overall are good. Their speaking and listening skills develop well, closely linked with the development of their social skills, as they learn to listen carefully to others and to take turns. Primary age pupils answer questions about stories which are read to them and show that they have understood the main themes of the stories. They describe visits which they have made, for example, to the local supermarket. They discuss their behaviour and how they might resolve difficult situations and explain why rewards are given. By age 14, pupils use a good variety of vocabulary in talking about books and plays they are reading as a class. For example, discussing the meanings and use of stage directions. By the age of 16 pupils are taking part in discussions; talking about the difference between fact and opinion.

41. Pupils make good progress in developing reading skills. Nearly all pupils between the ages of seven and eleven recognise sounds at the beginning of words and some frequently used words. A few, more able pupils, read fluently and show understanding of what they have read. By the age of fourteen, pupils are using more sophisticated strategies for reading unknown words, such as gaining meaning from a passage. Pupils who have previously had limited reading skills begin to develop these skills, and several make very good progress. They read and listen to stories and plays such as 'Bugsy Malone' and are able to show understanding of the text. By the age of 16 pupils are often reading aloud in class and taking part in play reading. They read a variety of texts and develop an understanding of the ways in which the written word may be presented, for example, in non-fiction or advertisements.

42. Most pupils make good progress in writing. By age eleven, many are developing independence, being able to write simple sentences without the help of an adult. A few remain at the stage of copying under an adult's writing. Although they often have difficulties with spelling or with forming their letters, they begin to understand that there are different ways of writing for different purposes. Pupils learn about structure in writing, for example, in using different connecting words, and are encouraged to use a wide vocabulary. They know how to use dictionaries and word books. By the age of 14 most pupils are using basic punctuation, such as capital letters and full stops and more able pupils are using a wider range, including speech and question marks. Handwriting improves; many pupils use joined up writing, although some still find this very difficult. Pupils write for different purposes, for example, stories, diaries, play scripts and letters. Many require support with spelling. Pupils often produce a final draft of their work using word processing skills. A few pupils in Years 8 and 9 are very reluctant to produce written work and as a result are making little progress. By age 16, pupils are making notes about the topics which they are studying. They write information about legends and myths, and then their own stories in similar formats.

43. Teaching overall is good. It leads to good learning in lessons. Planning is good and clear objectives are shared with pupils, ensuring that they are aware of what they need to be learning. Pupils respond well to questions which are well targeted to ensure that all are kept involved. In a very good lesson about the format of play scripts, the teacher began by revisiting the previous lesson, asking questions which checked that pupils had remembered what they had discussed previously. Pupils are made aware of how they are expected to behave and generally respond well, concentrating on their work and making good progress. The use of support assistants is well planned to provide support to pupils in managing their behaviour and with their learning. Praise and encouragement are used well to help motivate pupils. More able pupils are challenged by work which broadens their understanding. Lessons

are rounded off with a summary of what pupils have done, and opportunities to share information with one another, thus reinforcing what has been learned in the lesson. Less progress is made when pupils' attention and interest are not sustained, so that they lose concentration and withdraw from lessons. Marking is often limited to ticks, and there are few developmental comments so that, although teachers do sometimes discuss pupils' work with them, pupils are not always clear how they can improve.

44. Much effective work has been done to develop the national literacy strategy for the primary pupils and to introduce the Key Stage 3 strategy for literacy. This results in teachers and pupils staying in touch with the mainstream curriculum. The development of literacy skills is supported in several other areas of the curriculum, but there is, as yet, no shared understanding of how this should be done and opportunities are missed. On the primary site, display is very well used to support the development of literacy. Planning for promoting literacy is of a very good standard and helps teachers to be aware of what is needed to develop pupils' skills.

45. There are good opportunities for pupils to study for accredited courses between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. Good use is made of initial assessment information, provided by mainstream schools or from testing on entry. This is used to set clear individual targets for pupils. Literacy profiles have been developed for registered pupils of secondary age. They provide a great deal of useful information. Most pupils work towards GCSE, often in association with their mainstream schools. A few pupils take the entry-level certificate in English, however, this is of too low a standard for several of them and alternatives are being considered to provide a greater degree of challenge.

MATHEMATICS

46. The provision for primary-aged pupils is good and pupils achieve well. Teachers have embraced fully, and well, the format and content of the national numeracy strategy. Registered pupils therefore receive a broad and balanced curriculum and other pupils follow a programme that resembles the timetables used in their mainstream schools. Achievement of registered pupils aged eleven to sixteen is satisfactory. Co-ordination is still at a very early stage, the format of lessons is inconsistent, and progressive planned learning is only just developing. The oldest registered pupils have limited opportunities to follow externally accredited courses, although this too is an evolving area. Accreditation in numeracy is available and GCSE and Certificate of Educational Achievement Entry Level examination courses are due to follow this year. Secondary aged PRU pupils achieve well because they follow courses that complement those in their mainstream schools.

47. Effective planning for primary pupils promotes a good and progressive approach to developing mathematical skills. There is a good emphasis on oral work, developing mental strategies, extending pupils' subject vocabulary, and introducing problem solving. Therefore, pupils make good progress in developing knowledge of number, space, shape and measurement, and money. By the age of eleven, higher attaining pupils understand place value up to hundreds and write their own sums using two digit numbers that add up to a hundred. They know the most appropriate equipment to measure different sized objects, such as a book or playground, and take measurements accurately using the correct units.

48. Registered pupils aged eleven to fourteen extend their understanding of number, shape and handling data. By the age of fourteen they demonstrate a suitable range of skills in all these areas. They halve and double and multiply two and three digit numbers. Pupils measure and calculate angles and construct a two-dimensional shape, such as a triangle, from written instructions. They read scales involving capacity accurately and record their readings using the correct units. They convert these appropriately, showing the ability to

change millilitres into litres. When handling mathematical data they calculate the mode and range of a set of numbers.

49. Registered and PRU pupils in Years 10 and 11 undertake projects that promote investigative skills such as examining the popularity of different football teams. By the age of sixteen they are collecting information systematically, tallying results, producing frequency tables and displaying data. They are beginning to make comparisons and drawing conclusions from their findings. These investigations encourage pupils' skills in using computers as they display information as graphs and pie charts.

50. Mathematics teaching is good. Lessons are often characterised by teachers' use of good activities that match pupils' needs, encouraging them to work with interest and understanding. Relationships are good and pupils are well managed, allowing teachers the confidence to present challenges that extend pupils' learning. Learning is further helped by good planning and preparation and effective support from teachers and learning support assistants. As a result pupils work hard, often collaboratively and independently. Pupils make good progress at these times as seen when a group of eleven-year-olds reinforced their understanding of decimal notation through activities associated with money. High teacher expectations of behaviour and a very good level of challenge and variety in the work presented maintains pupils' interest and enables them to achieve success. Pupils are suitably challenged to explain the strategies they use through well-targeted questioning.

51. There has been good improvement in the management of the subject over the last twelve months; most notably in developing long term planning that matches the needs of pupils on different sites and implementing new assessment procedures. However, marking and notes that tell pupils what they need to do to improve are very limited and consequently teachers are not always able to use this assessment information to suitably adapt work for individuals. Mathematics is taught by several non-specialist teachers. This has implications for monitoring pupils' learning and tracking their progress which are not yet being satisfactorily dealt with. There are no systems for enabling teachers to achieve consistency in their assessment of pupils' work through a process of comparison and moderation.

SCIENCE

52. The provision for primary aged pupils is good; it is satisfactory for pupils in Years 10 and 11, but unsatisfactory for those in Years 8 and 9.

53. Pupils in Years 3 to 6 achieve well. Teaching is good. A broad range of well-planned learning experiences are presented to pupils. These are based on the National Curriculum, and use investigative approaches well. This interests and motivates pupils, who thus enjoy lessons. A particular strength of teaching at this stage is the encouragement of literacy skills. In one very successful session for Year 5 and 6 pupils, literacy skills were very effectively developed whilst pupils learned how to make a circuit and alter the brightness of a bulb. Pupils were encouraged to focus on the words *paragraph* and *sentence* when seeking information. The importance of good presentation was emphasised, and pupils took great care with their written work. By the end of the lesson, pupils were able to explain why a bulb is brighter when two batteries are used. One wrote, 'When there's more batteries, there's more volts going through'. Higher attainers explained why using an old battery makes the bulb dimmer. Pupils' achievements are recorded well; records showing clear differences in the achievements of higher and lower attainers. By Year 6, all pupils carry out simple investigations, and record their results by drawing diagrams and writing about their findings.

54. In Years 8 and 9, registered pupils do not achieve well enough, because their behaviour limits their learning and teaching is not good enough. Nevertheless, scientific terms are used well and pupils become familiar with these. Concerns about safety and equipment mean that investigative methods are not used widely enough, and pupils are not interested and motivated during lessons. There is too little use of computers because teachers do not have the expertise to use them. Pupils' work is rarely marked, and as a result, they do not get sufficient feedback about how well they are doing or where they need to improve. In contrast, PRU pupils of the same age achieve well. They are well motivated by the practical approach, and literacy and numeracy skills are developed well. In an investigation to find out if dough would rise more if more sugar were used, weighing skills were carefully taught, and pupils were well prepared for calculating the *difference* between the initial height of the dough and its final height. They were clear about the need to make the test fair, and the importance of varying only one factor at a time in an investigation.

55. In Years 10 and 11, all pupils' achievements are satisfactory. Provision has improved since last year, when pupils in Year 11 did not have science lessons. This year, pupils are following suitable examination courses. Teaching is satisfactory, and pupils show mature attitudes towards the subject. Higher attainers in Year 11 know how metals are extracted from their ores, and that distillation of oil produces a wide range of products. Pupils know that blood groups are inherited; higher attainers knowing the difference between universal donors and universal recipients. Nonetheless, there is scope for improvement in the marking of pupils' class work, and in the extent to which computers are used to support pupils' learning.

56. At present, leadership in science is unsatisfactory. The subject is insufficiently co-ordinated across the whole school. However, in the primary department, the subject is well co-ordinated, and there is a suitable subject development plan. Teachers in the secondary department have begun recently to share expertise and plan developments, although there is no subject development plan. The science laboratory on the Queensdown site is satisfactory, but pupils on other sites do not have access to it and this limits opportunities for conducting experiments. The lack of a laboratory technician means that teachers who use the laboratory face the prospect of a great deal of additional preparation and clearing away if pupils are to tackle a wider range of practical, investigative work.

ART AND DESIGN

57. Pupils' achievements are satisfactory overall. Primary pupils develop the ability to represent what they see when they make observational drawings of the eye and face when working on self-portraits. They experiment with different textiles and media and use a colour wheel to identify primary and secondary colours. Pupils are developing satisfactory skills in two and three-dimensional activities but the design element is weak. Pupils have looked at the work of famous artists and successfully tried to imitate their style, for instance, repeated digital photographs in the style of Andy Warhol. This element though, remains underdeveloped. There is evidence of visual research, but exploration of media is not a strong feature. In Year 9, pupils have successfully investigated texture as part of a project on buildings and architecture. They have used clay to produce plaster cast reliefs and have made pencil drawings of historical buildings such as Brighton Pavilion. Year 7 pupils use colour washes to enhance seascapes and pupils in Year 10 use vibrant colour when painting tiger skins. Pupils learn about other cultures through work on African masks and aboriginal art. The use information communication technology within the subject is limited.

58. For registered pupils, achievement is limited by a lack of long term planning which has a negative effect on the development of skills, knowledge and understanding. Nevertheless, self-portraits show a good use of digital photography and the overhead projector to produce posters. Pupils are developing a variety of techniques such as pencil shading and the use of

contrast and shadows. They produce plaster and bead mosaics, masks and create natural wood sculpture. There is currently no accreditation for secondary pupils and this reduces motivation.

59. Teaching and learning are satisfactory. Several activities promote personal development, being therapeutic in nature. PRU pupils were seen to be absorbed in painting a design of their own choice onto tiles and were proud of their achievement. However, planning for sessions such as this do not clearly identify learning outcomes for art and for more able pupils and there is a lack of challenge. Pupils' attitudes to the subject are usually good, but at times the disruptive behaviour of a minority has a negative impact on the learning of others. Generally, pupils are productive and work collaboratively. Relationships are good and pupils are effectively supported by staff.

60. Coordination of the subject is satisfactory but no one has an overall view of subject development. As a result, monitoring of teaching and learning remains underdeveloped as does longer term planning. Day-to-day record keeping is satisfactory, but the use of assessment to inform planning is an area of weakness.

CITIZENSHIP

61. Achievement in citizenship is satisfactory. A working party for personal, social and health education has clearly identified where elements of citizenship are already taught. It has drawn up plans to meet citizenship requirements fully by September 2003. National guidance, and the Brighton and Hove scheme for personal, social and health education are successfully being used to ensure that pupils returning to mainstream will have had experiences in common with their mainstream peers. Pupils in the primary classes are following the Brighton and Hove scheme in its entirety. Staff are currently developing the citizenship element for pupils in secondary classes.

62. There is insufficient evidence of the subject at this early stage to make secure judgements about teaching, learning and pupils' achievements at each stage. However, some very good teaching, on the subject of rights, rules and responsibilities was seen in Years 10 and 11. In this session, the teacher encouraged pupils to present their own views, and consider the views of others. All contributions were valued, and this gave the pupils the confidence to take part. Concepts, such as *the majority* were carefully explained, and this helped to deepen pupils' understanding. By the end of the lesson pupils had gained a clear understanding of the difference between *power* and *authority*. A good feature of the subject is the provision of recently available external accreditation for pupils in Years 10 and 11.

DESIGN AND TECHNOLOGY

63. Achievement is unsatisfactory for secondary registered pupils, particularly for design and the use of resistant materials. In food technology pupils' achievements are satisfactory. Achievement for primary pupils in design and technology is satisfactory.

64. Primary aged pupils have made frames for photographs using balsa wood, effectively strengthening and decorating the finished product. Good links with other subjects are made, for instance history, when pupils in Years 5 and 6 make a castle keep from boxes. Pupils paint with care and are highly motivated to improve their designs. They use textiles and basic sewing skills to make simple collages. Access to the subject is limited to the craft and food technology element and there are no planned opportunities to use tools, or design. A little pupil evaluation of food products and activities is incorporated as part of food technology lessons but the curriculum in this respect is narrow.

65. Secondary aged pupils enjoy the practical activities involved in food technology. In a good link with science, Year 9 registered pupils have evaluated foods designed for children, identifying ingredients such as protein, calcium and sugar. Imaginative opportunities for making choices are created, for example, when Year 9 pupils decide on toppings for their pizzas. Pupils are encouraged to work independently. They follow written instructions to weigh ingredients and follow simple sequences to rub fat into flour to create pizza bases. Pupils have used the Internet to give them ideas for creating a dessert. They look at regional food when preparing Italian and Chinese dishes and this makes a valued contribution to cultural awareness. However, pupils do not have sufficient opportunities to work with wood, metal and plastics and as a result achievement is unsatisfactory overall.

66. Teaching and learning is satisfactory overall. Lessons are planned well, follow clear lines of progression and are appropriate for the needs of pupils. Demonstrations of how to use tools, food materials and equipment are competent. Lessons are generally well managed and safe practices are in evidence. There is, however a weakness in that registered secondary aged pupils are not taught enough about resistant materials and pupils therefore do not learn sufficiently.

67. Food technology and resistant materials are taught as separate subjects. Coordination for food technology is satisfactory, but there is no overall co-ordinator for resistant materials. As a consequence, planning is weak, especially for pupils of secondary age. There is no long-term plan for the development of the subject and workshop accommodation and resources are underused. For primary pupils, the subject is being developed well with planning being based on the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's (QCA) programmes of study. Good new resources have recently been purchased to support the development of the subject for primary aged pupils. Procedures for assessment are in place, but have not yet had an impact on planning.

HUMANITIES (GEOGRAPHY and HISTORY)

68. Pupils do not achieve enough in the humanities. Too little time is allocated to them to allow for coverage of all the required elements of the National Curriculum. Primary aged pupils study aspects of the humanities curriculum as part of a topic-based approach to learning. There are, however, several strong points in pupils' studies. They are encouraged to learn through practical experiences, to find out information for themselves and to use computers to support learning.

69. Primary aged pupils develop an understanding of the lives of other people both in the present and in the past. Topics are linked wherever possible to work undertaken in the other schools which many pupils attend. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 have limited access to humanities. As a result they do not achieve as well as they should. The statutory requirements for this subject are not met because all areas cannot be covered in the time available. In addition the behaviour of some pupils further limits learning.

70. Individual lessons are well planned to include a range of activities, including personal research into topics such as climate using both books and computers. Pupils have studied the differences between the geographical features and cultures of the country in which they live and those of countries such as Japan. Pupils' complete the work they are set and it is marked conscientiously. Liaison between teachers is informal and unstructured. Consequently there is no overview of the subject across the whole school. Assessment is at an early stage of development and systems are not sufficiently embedded to ensure pupils' learning is effectively monitored.

INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY

71. Achievement is satisfactory overall. Younger pupils type their work, use a mouse and recognise how to highlight and alter fonts. Several program a robotic toy to move in different directions on the floor. Pupils use a range of programs, including simple word-processing, to support learning in other subjects; for example, producing a fair copy of a story in English and using simple paint programs in art. Year 9 registered pupils make tables, type information onto forms, use word art and import graphics. Most pupils use the Internet for research and registered pupils have developed skills in control technology by using a program for sequencing traffic lights. By the age of 11 pupils are accessing programs and using word processing with growing confidence. The use of computers in other subjects is limited and has been recognised as an area for improvement.

72. Teaching and learning are satisfactory overall but many non-specialist teachers lack the subject knowledge or confidence to help pupils develop their computer skills. Therefore, opportunities for pupils to use computers in all subjects are not maximised. Information and communication technology is taught as a discrete subject for registered pupils in Years 8, 9 and 10. In a successful Year 10 lesson, pupils were encouraged to interrogate a database to find out which motorbikes were the most popular. Pupils learned new words such as database, and also that information can be gathered from a variety of fields. Occasionally, the disruptive activities of a minority of pupils in Years 8 and 9 have a negative effect on their own learning and that of others. Day-to-day assessment of pupils' progress is satisfactory and the recently introduced procedures for assessment linked to the National Curriculum more clearly identify what the pupils have learned.

73. Planning and coverage of skills varies from one site to another. The co-ordinator has a realistic overview of areas for development for the subject but there has been no monitoring of teaching and learning and this leads to inconsistencies. Planning for registered pupils in discrete lessons is good and appropriately addresses this need. For younger pupils, the curriculum is developing well with planning being based on the QCA schemes of work.

MODERN FOREIGN LANGUAGES

74. No modern foreign language is taught. The small number of registered pupils in Years 8 and 9 are therefore not receiving their statutory entitlement and are making no progress.

MUSIC

75. Achievement in music is unsatisfactory. There is an experienced and well-qualified music specialist on the staff but current roles and responsibilities result in registered pupils in Years 8 and 9 having no access to music. The school has experienced difficulties in recruiting a music specialist for younger pupils but now has good plans in hand to develop the area through liaison with other schools.

76. Primary aged pupils currently have very limited access to music but they participate enthusiastically in singing together. Year 10 and 11 pupils on the Sellaby House site make good progress in individual studies where they use a good range of computer programmes to compose and develop their own pieces of music. This is because they are particularly well taught by the specialist teacher who brings interest and excitement to the subject. The achievement of pupils in years 8 and 9 is unsatisfactory. The statutory requirement for the subject is not met because not all elements of the subject are covered by registered pupils. Opportunities for pupils to listen to the music from different periods and cultures, or to consider the music of a range of composers are very limited for pupils of all ages.

PHYSICAL EDUCATION

77. Achievement is satisfactory for primary aged pupils. Although there is no suitable accommodation on the primary site, good use is made of a local swimming pool and the hall in a local school. Consequently, pupils receive a satisfactory curriculum covering the areas of games, dance, gymnastics and swimming.

78. There is insufficient evidence to inform secure judgements on achievement in physical education for older pupils because records are very limited in their scope and not sufficiently detailed to demonstrate sustained achievement. Management of the subject is unsatisfactory because of significant shortcomings in assessment, planning and co-ordination. In addition, inadequate accommodation and resources mean that the overall provision for physical education is unsatisfactory.

79. The curriculum provided for registered pupils in Years 8 and 9 does not meet statutory requirements and is unsatisfactory. Pupils do not have sufficient access to planned opportunities to develop new skills, knowledge and understanding. Nevertheless, pupils have participated in activities including trampolining, dry slope skiing, and badminton.

80. In Years 10 and 11, pupils make satisfactory progress even though the vocational curriculum provided for them restricts the time for physical education resulting in the programme not meeting national curriculum requirements. Opportunities are severely restricted by the lack of suitable facilities in the school. However, teachers compensate for this lack by making good use of local resources such as a gymnasium, swimming pool and the local countryside and they provide physical activities that are well matched to the pupils' age and interests. These range from badminton to mountain biking. Although the weekly visit to a local snooker hall may make a good contribution to pupils' personal and social development, as they have to comply with strict rules on behaviour, it cannot be considered an appropriate element of the physical education curriculum.

RELIGIOUS EDUCATION

81. Teachers' records, and the work available, show that religious education meets statutory requirements and that pupils are achieving satisfactorily. Pupils are being introduced to the world's main religions. They discuss these and share their own opinions and beliefs. Primary aged pupils learn stories, such as the Good Samaritan, and link these to present day events. They learn about festivals of the different religions. Pupils in Years 8 and 9 compare beliefs and customs in Christianity and Islam, and learn about "rites of passage", particularly the birth and marriage customs. By the time they leave, pupils have had the opportunity to look at some of the moral issues associated with religions, for example, in studying a module on crime and punishment.

82. The development of full schemes of work is at an early stage. These are based on the locally agreed syllabus, and provide a satisfactory starting point for further planning. The sparsity of suitable resources is limiting learning because teachers are not able to use them to illustrate lessons. No teaching could be observed during the inspection.

VOCATIONAL COURSES

83. The vocational education programmes at ACE are very good and play a significant part in ensuring that all pupils leaving at the end of Year 11 go on to full time college courses or into employment. The individually tailored and well monitored work experience programmes are very effective in introducing pupils to the world of work and can lead to spare time and then full time job opportunities. ACE has developed close working

relationships with a number of local colleges and is able to offer a good range of taster and short courses to all pupils in Year 11. Many pupils go on to follow full time courses successfully at the colleges when they leave.